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Rural Tourism: a comparative analyses from Galicia and North of Portugal

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TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GALICIA AND NORTH OF PORTUGAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper unveils the results stemming from two parallel researches, whose scope of analysis was tourism in rural areas (TRA) structures, as established in both northeast regions of the Iberia Peninsula which shape the Euro-region Galicia-North of Portugal. Firstly, a descriptive analysis of the regulations and the TRA supply for both territories is presented, and an evaluation of the strategies which have been followed by the private entrepreneurs and the public administration of each of them, as far as the utilisation of resources is concerned, is done. The symmetries and asymmetries of the touristic structures of those regions are also underlined. In the second part of this study, the above mentioned strategies will be discussed at length seeking to pinpoint how they configure and shape very similar touristic models based upon the use of natural and historical resources, which somehow display common features. Finally, it is sought to materialise a brief conclusion.

Key Words: Tourism in Rural Areas (TRA), touristic strategies, TRA models

INTRODUCTION: LITERATURE REVIEW

Rural tourism is one of the most important alternatives to what it is considered to be the sun and seaside traditional tourism, which have been the basis for this sector development from the 1960's onwards throughout the Iberia Peninsula. Nevertheless, its sustainability and competitive advantages are currently at risk due to the fact that newcomers - countries and destinations which entered this market – are supplying similar services at lower prices. Throughout the last two decades, there appeared an entirely new generation of tourists who seem to prefer to spend their spare time in an ever more natural and rural environments, where they attempt to achieve other objectives like relaxing in ambiances other than urban areas, physical activity to make up for their sedentary daily work and the knowledge of different cultures or even win back their own identity in ancient cultures.

In this light, it seems to be difficult to design an unequivocal and complete definition for rural tourism, although the expression of tourism in rural areas (TRA) seems to better apply for this specific concept. In any case, both demand and supply should harmonise in a natural environment, the accommodation facilities should display rustic/rural features and/or have a certain architectural aesthetic, and finally the resources which configure the products and tourist attractions should appear strictly and intrinsically identified with the territory (Roberts and Hall 2001). This implies that there might always be some singularity in each destination, as opposed to the uniform perception of the so-called traditional destinations.

Although Galicia and the North of Portugal are not considered to be traditional destinations in terms of sun and seaside, these two regions may indeed offer particular resources and meet the expectations of this rising demand, as it can be shown if one observes the following available figures: 392 facilities devoted to rural tourism in Galicia and 346 in the North of Portugal. We will come to this figures in a more detail approach later.

By now, we would like to emphasise that we consider supply strategies should be interpreted according to the development paradigm based mainly upon territory and its local control, as opposed to the orthodox models interpretations followed during the 1960's and 1970's. Putting other way, in our analysis model we have followed an approach "from bellow" (Stohr 1984), currently named in the scientific literature as endogenous development or other concepts like "self centred", "territorial " or

"agropolitan" development (Friedman and Douglas 1975; Friedman and Weaber 1979), and designated in some European official reports as endogenous resources or potential (CEE 1981).

This study's basic hypothesis is that every territorial community may gather together resources (endogenous) which constitute its development potential, and that in a certain historical moment a territorial population builds up new ideas and concepts which allow for the utilisation of the available resources whilst designing competitive solutions for resolving their growth problems and constraints. This analysis shall therefore be considered within the above-mentioned paradigm methodological framework. On one hand, it shall consider that the touristic activity permits to utilize the territory endogenous resources; and, on the other hand, it seems to unveil that there has been a continuous increase of the resources' number and variety which might nurture and further the touristic demand (Pizam and Mansfield 2000; Vera 2002). Thence, the territory seems to insert an higher value while a resource "of its own" due to this new rising activity, no matter further modifications operated by mankind which facilitate, better, enhance or adapt their characteristic for the purpose of being supplied as a touristic product along with an entrepreneurial strategy.

The main purpose of this study is to analyse and draw a few proposals which may allow for the interpretation of the touristic activities' dynamics in rural areas. Yet, this is a topic of paramount importance for regional and local public administrations for designing and planning of the tourism activity in this Euro-region. It is worth mentioning that previous literature has already materialised quite relevant conclusions (Pardellas and Padín 2001; Cadima Ribeiro *et al.* 2002), whilst analysing the touristic sector as developed in the Minho's border area. The first diagnosis made was clear: both natural resources, the culture and the historical background gathered together a set of common characteristics in this cross-border area (north: Galician *Baixo Miño*, south: Portuguese *Alto Minho*). This is the Galician and Portuguese territory which holds the wider range of common features, and therefore has shared conflicts and social and economic ties and links throughout five centuries, although it has been split by an administrative border (Torres 1998). This perception of joint destiny/future was rather highlighted by recent tourists' behaviour: more that 90% of those who sought accommodation in hotels located in the *Baixo Miño* have also registered in *Alto Minho*'s hotels; the vice-versa figure is about 70% (Pardellas and Padin 2001).

Insofar that view is concerned, it seems to be clear that the objective of planning the touristic sector requires that the problems of its development shall be interpreted and analysed along with this Euro-region characteristics, even considering territory as an additional endogenous resource (Fuá 1988; Garofoli 1992; Vázquez Barquero 1999). In the available scientific literature we can find various references about the relationship between tourism and local planning, especially in rural areas (Ashworth and Dietvorst 1995; Fyall and Garrod 1998; Swarbrooke 1999; Roberts and Hall 2001), and underlying the sustainability as well as the need to integrate tourism activities within the local productive systems' framework (Manning 1999; Ryan 1999). This means that there is a need for establishing an adequate territory-resources relationship, envisaging to achieve positive externalities.

1. TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS LEGISLATION: COMMON ELEMENTS

Table 1. Compared Legislation

PORTUGAL	GALICIA
CURRENT LEGISLATION	CURRENT LEGISLATION
The <i>Decreto-lei (Decree-law) n.º 54/2002, March 11th</i> , describes tourism in rural areas as “the set of accommodation and entertaining activities and services provided to tourists in familiar households at a certain price in rural areas”. It is complemented by the <i>Decreto-Regulamentar n.º 13/2002</i> which establishes the minimal procedures and functioning rules required for all the touristic facilities in rural areas and the specific procedures required by each accommodation regime.	The <i>Ordenamento e Promoción do Turismo de Galicia Act (Law 9/1997, August 21st and Orde dated from June 2nd, 1995)</i> , defines as <i>Establecimiento de Turismo Rural</i> (Rural Turistic Firm) “those facilities located in a rural environment which, gathering certain construction specific features, galician ancientness and representativeness or that developing agrarian activities, may provide touristic accommodation services for a certain price” whilst maintaining remaining unchanged their former designation and their original architectural characteristics.

Source: Authors' elaboration on the basis of documents provided by Xunta de Galicia (www.xunta.es) and Diário da República, Portugal (www.dre.pt)

As we can watch in the above table, the most recent available legislation on rural tourism produced in this Euro-region does establish a rather similar facilities' typology, on one hand; on the other, it follows the strategic orientations defined by the European Commission. These orientations envisage to ensure a homogenous supply as far as quality is concerned throughout the E.U. whilst taking measures enabling regions to nurture their own features and specificities, (Dictame do Comité das Rexións 1995;

Comisión Europea 2000). Although this will be analysed further on, the above mentioned similarity should be the basis for launching joint proposals for the use of the available resources, which, in the case of this Euro-region, would most certainly imply a higher added value than otherwise.

It is deemed useful to mention that the main difference among the available facilities which define both set of norms is the so-called Rural Hotels in Portugal, which is not used within the Galician framework. This designation builds up a wider perspective of the concept of tourism in rural areas and it foresees the development of activities which may not be strictly related to the rural environment from the ethnographic point of view. Nonetheless, it does comprise an undeniable economic relevance for that territory (active tourism, mountaineering, hunting, *et cetera*). The main difference among Rural Hotels and the other kind of touristic rural facilities is the size (that is, Rural Hotels shall not have more than 30 rooms or suites while the other facilities do have a maximum of 10). Besides providing a sort of touristic accommodation, every touristic facility located in rural areas may plan and develop entertaining activities envisaging its clients' spare time whilst giving a contribution for the dissemination of characteristics, products and traditions of the region (for example: gastronomy, handicrafts, hunting, folklore, fishing, *et cetera*).

Table 2. Definitions of TRA considering type of facilities

PORTUGAL		GALICIA	
Types	Concept	Types	Concept
<i>Dwelling-house Tourism</i>	Provision of family like lodging service in private ancient houses which, due to their architectonic, artistic or historical feature, may represent a certain historical moment, namely manor-houses and palace like houses.	<i>Group A</i>	<i>Palaces, castles, monachal dwellings, big houses, royal palaces</i> and all those which, due to their specific features and architectonic characteristics, have been labelled as such by the Galician Autonomous Community.
<i>Rural Tourism</i>	Provision of family like accommodation in rustic dwellings/cottages which, given their characteristics, construction materials, <i>et cetera</i> , are part of the regional typical architecture.	<i>Group B</i>	<i>Cottages</i> in a rural environment which, considering their ancientness and construction features, respond to the galician rustic dwellings' traditional characteristics.
<i>Agro-tourism</i>	Provision of family like accommodation in typical farmhouses whilst allowing boarding guests to participate and know how to conduct the agrarian activity, or to participate in other activities within the premises of the farm, under the supervision of the owner or manager.	<i>Group C</i>	<i>Labranza dwellings</i> : those located in a rural environment which may provide accommodation and the possibility of participating in the realisation of agrarian activities (agro-tourism).

<i>Cottages</i>	Private houses located in rural areas that provide an accommodation service, being or not used for accommodation of their owners, householders or legal users.	<p>* Note: These sort of facilities may be designated in accordance with the concept of <i>vivendas únicas</i> (the owner makes available a certain number of rooms, which means a shared regime of use) or they can be divided into independent lodging units (bungalows' style, full use of apartments by the contractor).</p> <p>Group A and B: differentiation among <i>Residence</i> (the users make use of the facilities within a exclusive regime or, when they share it with the owner, they do not wish a boarding-house scheme, not even a partial based regime); and <i>Lodging</i> (when tourists and the family householder share a pre-established part of the house appointed to be used by tourists and wish the provision of boarding services, at least on a partial based regime).</p>
<i>Village tourism</i>	Accommodation service provided in a group of , at least, five private houses located in a <i>village</i> , and managed in an integrated way, being or not used for accommodation of their owners, householders or legal users.	
<i>Rural hotels</i>	Hotel structures located in rural areas out of the administrative town of the municipality whose population, according the last demographic census, shall be more than 20.000 inhabitants, whose propose is to offer accommodation and other related services, including meals; this services imply a monetary cost.	
<i>Rural camping dwellings</i>	Real state used in a permanent or temporary base for camping, being or not part of farming companies, whose total area shall not exceed 500 m2.	

Source: Authors' elaboration on the basis of the Decree-law 54/2002, March 11th; Law 9/1997, August 21st and Orde, 2 June 1995

2. SUPPLY COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Although rural tourism has first started in Portugal, it seems to be clear that its development has been more relevant in Galicia in the last years. Indeed, the available figures show a surplus of about 13,6 %, considering the available touristic facilities, and about 20,9 %, if one considers the available rooms accommodation, compared to the ones of Portugal, as summarised in Table I.

Table I. TRA Dwellings and Rooms in Galicia and North of Portugal, 2002

	Number of TRA Dwellings	Number of TRA Rooms
<i>Galicia</i>	392	4.313
<i>North of Portugal</i>	346	3.536

Source: Instituto Galego de Estatística - www.ige.xunta.es . Direcção-Geral do Turismo (2003b)

Insofar this type of dwellings is concerned, Table II summarises figures which highlight the considerable differences in this crossborder supply. Yet, there can be traced a certain equilibrium/balance in the North of Portugal between the two most frequent types, the Dwelling-House Tourism and Rural Tourism (107 and 172 in a total number of 346). Differently, in the case of Galicia there are more Cottages available (265 in a total number of 392). This kind of figures may be a result of each region's authorities' political orientations and objectives concerning the utilisation of the

historical and architectonic resources, as in the case of Portugal a major commitment was put in the rehabilitation of cultural heritage and in the preservation of fine architectonic constructions since the late 1970's. Meanwhile, in Galicia there might be pointed a wider concern towards facilities quantity instead of quality. As a matter of fact, the number of Cottages (other than rustic houses displaying no special architectonic features) are four times as much the number of Palaces, thereby implying a lower quality of the TRA as a touristic product (Pazo 2000).

Table II. Rural Tourism Dwellings, 2002
a) Galicia

	Decembro 2002			
	Total	Palaces	Cottages	Farmhouses
Galicia	392	60	265	67
A Coruña	102	13	68	21
Lugo	113	13	71	29
Ourense	60	18	41	1
Pontevedra	117	16	85	16

b) North of Portugal

	December 2002					
	Total	Dwelling-House Tourism	Rural Tourism	Agrotourism	Cottages	Rural Hotel
North of Portugal	346	107	172	45	19	2
Minho-Lima	106	40	47	14	5	0
Cávado	42	10	25	4	3	0
Ave	36	11	18	3	4	0
Grande Porto	8	4	3	1	0	0
Tâmega	74	26	36	7	5	0
Entre Douro e Vouga	6	2	2	1	1	1
Douro	46	11	25	7	2	1
Alto Tras-os-Montes	27	3	16	6	2	0

Source: Authors' estimations on the basis of Direcção-Geral do Turismo - *Guia Oficial do Turismo no Espaço Rural* and unreleased data of Direcção-Geral do Turismo, and Instituto Galego de Estatística - www.ige.xunta.es.

In what refers to the TRA demand in Portugal, the difficulty in finding disaggregate available data does not allow for the materialisation of a comparative analysis between Galicia and the North of Portugal. Nevertheless, considering that this area accounts for 36 % of the lodged rooms of the whole Portuguese territory, it might be interesting to observe that the origin markets for Galicia and Portugal considering the issue of geographic origin of the visitors.

Table III. TRA Demand considering Tourist's Nationality**a) Galicia**

	Total of Tourists, 2002									
	Total	Madrid	Barcelona	Asturias	Castilla León	Galicia	Other Spanish Regions	Portugal	Other European Countries	Other Regions
Galicia	129.805	24.242	10.669	3.759	4.769	53.907	21.514	1.775	6.577	2.593

Source: Instituto Galego de Estatística - www.ige.xunta.es

b) North of Portugal

	Forecast of sleeping nights by country of origin, 2002									
	Total	Portugal	Germany	Brazil	Spain	USA	France	Holland	United Kingdom	Others
North	157.760	88.472	10.050	341	9.940	2.920	4.491	10.724	16.346	14.476

Source: Direcção-Geral do Turismo - *Relatório do TER em 2002*

c) Portugal

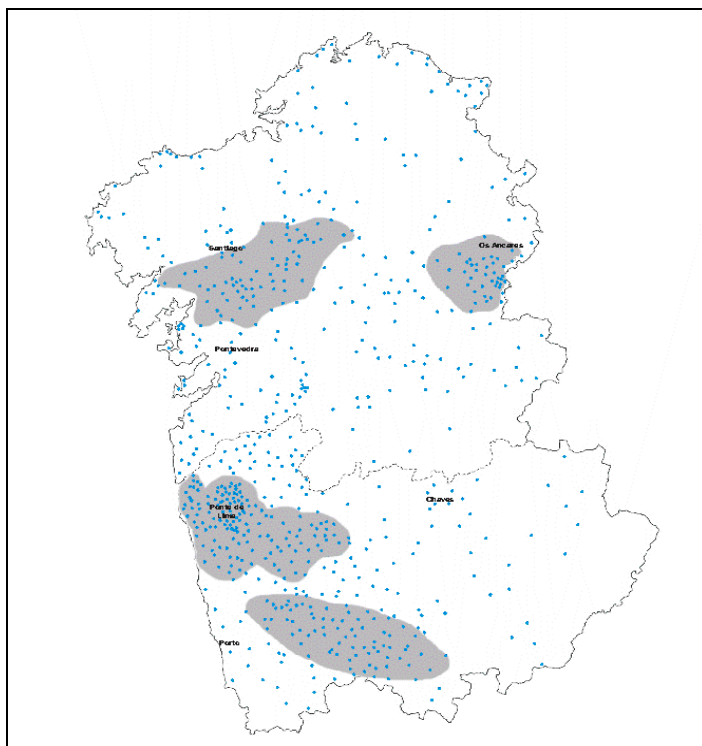
Country	2002	2001	Var % 02/01	Total %	
				2002	2001
Portugal	236.991	202.428	17,10%	47,60%	47,70%
Germany	77.608	69.451	11,70%	15,60%	16,40%
Brazil	793	1.626	-51,20%	0,20%	0,40%
Spain	21.906	20.272	8,10%	4,40%	4,80%
USA	18.409	14.998	22,70%	3,70%	3,50%
France	21.971	18.794	16,90%	4,40%	4,40%
Holland	27.109	18.327	47,90%	5,40%	4,30%
United Kingdom	41.522	37.123	11,80%	8,30%	8,70%
Others	51.195	41.608	23,00%	10,30%	9,80%
Total of Foreigners	260.513	222.199	17,20%	52,40%	52,30%
Total	497.504	424.627	17,20%	100,00%	100,00%

Source: Direcção-Geral do Turismo (2003 a ; 2003 b)

On way or another, the above summarised data emphasise that the TRA demand market it is this Euro-region own demand; that is 41,5 % of galicians in the Galicia's case, and 56,1% of Portuguese in the Portugal's case. On the contrary, the major difference one may find among the emitting markets lies on the number of foreigners, whom in the Galicia's case do not account for more than 6,4 %, while they account for 43,9 % in Portugal. In this light, this might unveil a clear implication of the effects of external market image in each case, which undeniably should be regarded in face of future promoting policies to be taken in the aim of the sector.

As for the furthering and strengthening of the TRA in these two border regions, the geographical analysis complements the data and remarks which have just been materialised, whilst providing a joint perspective of the different public and private strategies.

Chart 1: Current Situation of the TRA Dwellings in this Euro-region



Source: Authors' elaboration relying on data provided by Instituto Galego de Estatística and Direcção-Geral do Turismo, Portugal, in 2002.

The current situation and grouping of the TRA dwelling as displayed in the above chart, does uncover two areas of relative concentration in Galicia and a major area in the North of Portugal, in Minho-Lima NUT (namely in what regards the Ponte de Lima municipality), and which expands itself till the southern area of the Tamega River. Both Galician areas pinpoint the outcome of a quantitative strategy designed by Xunta de Galicia, on one side, uncover the entrepreneurial interests, on the other side. The concentration area along the Ulla River (which corresponds to the division of the provinces of Pontevedra and A Coruña), oriented towards south through Terra de Montes, Pontevedra. This area may be characterised by a supply of Cottages and a few Palaces (most of which have been restored with the European financial help of the LEADER programme), whilst supplying products for attracting tourists like nature, local and exuberant landscapes and local gastronomy. Other area of concentration, located in the neighbourhood of Parque Natural dos Ancares, does also comprise as its own features the supply of Cottages. The main touristic products are, in this particular case, the nature and material ethnography (the “pallozas”, pre-roman constructions displaying a circular architecture and roof of straw).

Regarding the North of Portugal case, the main area of concentration is located in the Minho-Lima NUT, along the Tamega River, toward the south. If one observes a certain balance among the Rural-Dwelling Tourism and Rural Tourism facilities, it is worth to mention that, after a first phase, most of the available facilities are those within the type designated by Rural Tourism, Agro-Tourism and Cottages/Farmhouses. This is the reason why there was a percentual decrease of the Rural-dwelling Tourism, considered to be the beginning of the TRA. Moreover, it presents itself in a similar symmetry between the architectural patrimony and nature, taken those as its supply basic resources.

As for the entrepreneurial structure, in both cross-border territories, the main model is the familiar one. In some instances there are seasonal employees, mainly throughout July and August. In most recent years, there may also be traced an outstanding enhancement made by entrepreneurial associations within the sector, both on the Galician side and on the Portuguese one. Generally speaking, the associations are supported and even encouraged by the national/regional public administrations, that, although not always taking an explicit form (this is the case of Xunta de Galicia), give them preference in the access to public funds (grants) – specially to the European ones: PRODER and LEADER -, projects that envisage establishing network initiatives and horizontal groupings of firms.

It is worth mentioning that one of the basic objectives of these associations is launching joint promotion and advertising of the touristic supply. In the case of Spain, there is the *Asociación Española de Turismo Rural (ASETUR)*, gathering together regional associations from almost nationwide. It promotes a diversified supply of rural tourism facilities for the Peninsula and European markets. Within Galicia there may be found two entities pursuing similar objectives, although they have designed different action strategies: the *Asociación Galega de Turismo Rural (AGATUR)* provides and disseminates general information on rural tourism facilities throughout Galicia; while the *Federación Galega de Turismo Rural (FEGATUR)* gathers together that kind of information along with local supply data, although one cannot materialise the accurate notion that there exists a real co-operation among all the territorial associations it brings together: *Agarim*-Rural Tourism Association of the South Pontevedra, *AHT de Allariz*-Asociación de Hostelería e Turismo de Allariz, *Costa da Morte*-Asociación de Turismo Rural and Ocio da Costa da Morte, *Eume*-Asociación de Empresarios de Turismo da Comarca do Eume, *Tabeirós*-Asociación de Turismo Rural e Ocio da Comarca de

Tabeiros-Terra de Montes, ***Terras do Avia***-Asociación de Turismo Rural Terras do Avia, ***Trevihost***-Asociación de Hostelería e Turismo de Trevinca, ***Turdeza***-Turismo Rural do Deza .

In Portugal, besides the official structures, there can be encountered private organisations that, directly or indirectly, participating in the organisation and development of tourism in rural areas. Currently, there are for associations: ***TURIHAB***-Associação do Turismo de Habitação/Solares de Portugal, ***PRIVETUR***-Associação Portuguesa de Turismo de Habitação, ***CASAS DE SOUSA***-Associação de Turismo no Espaço Rural do Vale do Sousa and ***CASAS AÇORIANAS***-Associação de Turismo em Espaço Rural dos Açores.

Although having specific dissimilarities, these organisations most certainly have a common objective, which is to ensure supply identity and quality of their members touristic offer, envisaging to protect these houses owners' interests. It also seems important to emphasise that these associations have designed and established more strict and demanding internal rule than those as enacted by law. They also use to classify the houses they represent into groups and have created a pricing scheme. Likewise, these owners associations play a rather important role as far as the booking is concerned, they establish contacts and do network with international touristic promoters and they act as "unions", trying to defend their associates' interests before public organisms.

It is worth mentioning that the most representative organisation in the North of Portugal is TURIHAB. It was founded in, Ponte de Lima. It set up the ***Solares de Portugal*** market brand product 10 years after being settled and it gathers together about 100 houses (67 of which are located in the North of Portugal), classified as Ancient Houses, Farms and *Herdades* and Rustic Houses. TURIHAB has drawn and developed a central booking scheme for all its associates envisaging to facilitate negotiation with tour operators, to promote and launch global supply of about 1100 beds. In this light, it plays the role intermediate agent between tourists and the houses, replacing them in what concerns booking and provision of complementary information on the particular features of the house, both before national and foreigner tourists. It is likewise important to focus upon the role played this organisation as far as the TRA internationalisation is concerned. Thence, in 1996 it has been constituted the European consortium *Europa Traditionae Consortium*, currently integrating 545 houses distributed among *Solares de Portugal* (100 houses) - Portugal; *Wolsey Lodges* (250 houses) – United Kingdom; *Hidden Ireland* (45 houses) – Ireland; *Chateau Accueil* (90 houses) – France and

Erfgoed Logies (60 houses) – The Netherlands. This co-operation has later on been enlarged to some European eastern countries (Germany, Slovenia and Hungary) and to Latin America (Brazil).

Under the above mentioned circumstances, having in mind both the supply structure and the demand evolution and its increasing in Galicia and the North of Portugal, one may materialise a few remarks. The first one goes to the very similar behaviour patterns of the sector we could find in the Euro-region and also to the complementarity of characteristic of touristic resources of this territory. The second remark is to note that the public strategy followed by Portugal seems to be rather coherent: it has set as a prior goal to restore the architectonic asset/patrimony. Although there can be traced a slower increase insofar as the quantitative supply is concerned, it unveils the Portuguese associations' drive to offer high standards of quality which respond to the European emitting markets' expectations. Finally, regarding the Galician case, it seems to be useful to remark that there has been a major concern with the development of a quantitative increase of rustic architecture houses, whose drive is to rely upon nature, active tourism and upon tracing and utilising the local communities ethnographic patrimony. This approach seems to be more coherent with the Peninsular emitting markets.

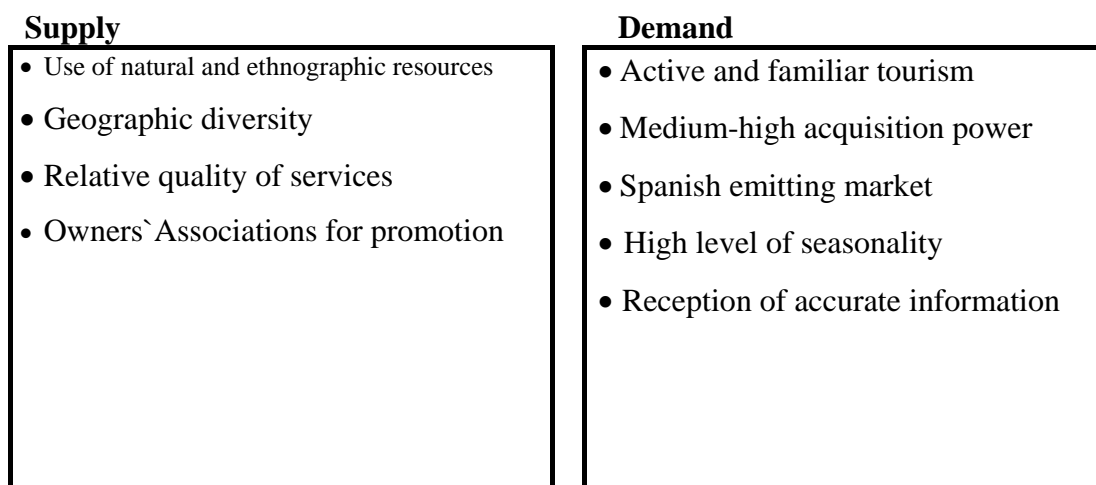
3. TOURISTIC MODELS AND JOINT DESTINATION PROPOSAL

As it has already been mentioned, there is relevant scientific literature on rural tourism models and specifically on destination planning. The contributions as those of Gunn (1993) are considered as rather important. As a matter of fact, they give a contribution for the description of the physical structure of destination regions. His conclusions are widely quoted, and he happens to be one of the very few whose scope of analysis focus upon structural models formulation of touristic destinations. Gunn has thoroughly designed a more structured regional planning whilst identifying five key concepts: border, accesses and internal circuits, attractions, non-attractive neighbour regions and entries. Other authors' scope of analysis (Swarbrooke and Horner 1999; Pizam and Mansfeld 2000; Ryan and Page 2000) allow for the comparison of the tourists' behaviour model and that one of local communities regarding destinations where there exist or might be created attractions and structures of close circuits, which coincides with Leiper (1995) analysis: he identifies three components of an attraction system – a nucleus, a tourist and an information scheme. The nucleus is the core element of

touristic attractions, the tourist is the one who travels and establishes a personal contact with the places he/she visits and the information scheme is the information system instrument designed for the tourist. Finally, and displaying a closer relation with our study, the research conducted by Roberts and Hall (2001), Richards (2001) and Seng Ooi (2002), summarise most relevant proposals allowing for the modelling and planning of rural and cultural tourism.

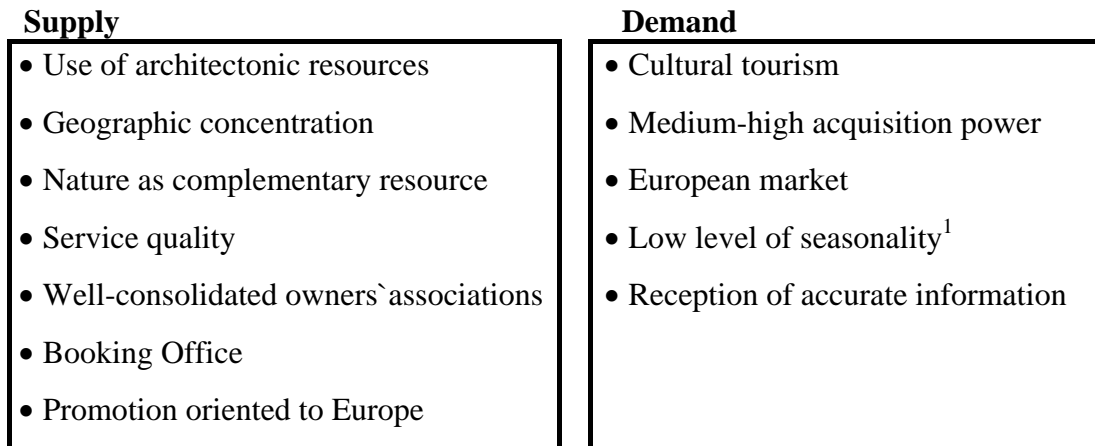
Resting upon the above mentioned contributions and findings and using this study data, we sought to elaborate two models for interpreting the TRA in both regions and draw a joint model, as there exists a considerable amount of common resources and characteristics in this Euro-region (Cadima Ribeiro *et al.* 2002; Pardellas and Padin 2002). On the supply side and insofar as the Portuguese case is concerned, the attraction nuclei appears to be based upon the use of architectural and historical resources. As for the Galician case, the attraction nuclei is the natural and ethnographic resources. Regarding the entrepreneurial strategy, it is of paramount importance to underline that there can be traced differences in terms of service's quality and associations' objectives. On the demand side, it seems clear that tourists assume certain behaviour patterns and they come from different markets, although the information scheme provide accurate information in both cases. The proposed joint model pinpoints attraction nuclei inserting cross-border peculiar features, organised in networks and *rutas* (routes), which may enhance and further demand, especially if supply tend to become better and refines its global quality.

Figure 3. Galician Current TRA Model



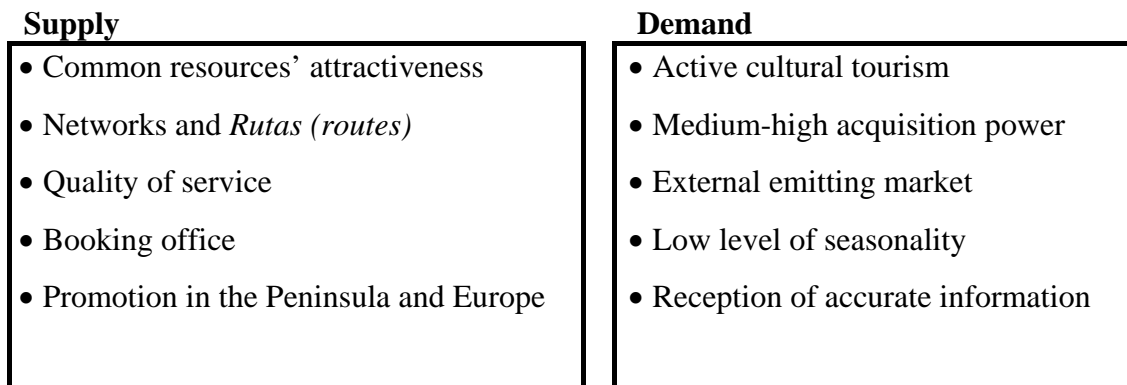
Source: Authors' elaboration.

Figure 4. Portuguese Current TRA Model



Source: Authors' elaboration

Figure 5. Euro-region Joint TRA Model



Source: Authors' elaboration

CONCLUSIONS

The cross-border regions of Galicia and North of Portugal share a common natural and historical patrimony, which appears to be an outstanding and diversified touristic resource of rural areas. Although they display structural differences, they end up complementing each other. The current analysis of the supply side, the acquired understanding of the use of available resources along with the one of the

¹ The TRA seasonal level in Portugal, specifically in the North, is also high (it might be considered low compared to Galicia, though the occupation rates do not even reach 20% - except for the months of July, August and September. Indeed, they are lower than 10% from November to March – in the North of Portugal). Such pattern may find explanation in the fact that some of the operating houses do not open on an annual basis (about 67 in the North). They are usually closed during the low season, that is during the sun and seaside touristic season.

emitting markets of tourists, provide us with data which allow to design a joint strategy, focusing upon the most favourable use of the territory: the co-ordination of public policies and the implementation of co-operative policies amongst owners' associations. In any case, the model permits to compare results and the implementation of pre-established objectives, and therefore provides the intervening agents with an instrument for the decision making process, whilst implicitly proposing to the Galician and Portuguese administrations a reflection on the future and dilemmas of the TRA activities within the framework of the Euro-region. In this sense, tourism in rural areas should not be considered just another kind of tourism, more segmented. Instead, it calls out for a more accurate and thorough territorial redefinition.

Although this scenario might be considered as too chimerical once one observes the current situation, scientific investigation shall always raise questions which require institutional answers, mainly if it adequately analyses the problems' different elements and materialises solution proposals. The Euro-regions social, economic and territorial environment constitutes a relevant challenge and therefore shall not go unnoticed by the surrounding scientific community. Therefore, further research would most certainly shed light upon unanswered issues.

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