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# Tourism territories in low density areas: The case of Naturtejo geopark in Portugal

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to supply some elements regarding tourism territories' building in low density areas, and to corroborate the creation of a specific tourism territory (the Naturtejo Geopark) by the role carried out by a new territorial actor – Naturtejo, EIM (a Portuguese geopark's management firm) - allowing tourism activities within a territorial scope different from the traditional territorial units' partition. The methodology applied is based on literature review and a specific case study used to show the creation of a new tourism territory. The results achieved suggest that concerted action in this new tourism territory has been producing positive effects from the supply-side point of view.*

**Keywords:** Low-density areas; tourism territories; geoparks.

**JEL Classification:** L83, M1, O1

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The importance and development trajectory of tourism led (among other things) to the creation of territories mainly devoted for tourism use, bringing added value to the territory. This paper aims, firstly, to supply some elements regarding tourism territories' building in low density areas, and, then, to verify the creation of a specific tourism territory (the Naturtejo Geopark of Southern Upland) by the role carried out by a new territorial actor – Naturtejo, EIM (a portuguese geopark's management firm) - allowing tourism activities within a territorial scope different from the traditional territorial units' division.

In a world where promptness and mobility, continuous changes, enlarged risks and externalities perceptions are part of everyday life, a strategic relevance is ascribed to stopping, slow living spaces, where people can simply enjoy staying in a place, real or fictional (Thrift, 2002). Territories holding a low level of man-made interventions become healing landscapes that alleviate the risk feelings and allow increasing potential quality of life (Williams, 1999). The societies humanisation, dressed has an illusion of returning to nature, impelled the search for low density places and gave less importance to artificial landscapes. This new perspective unveiled new ways for activities in society – the leisure and tourism enjoyment of new or rediscovered territories (Fernandes, 2007).

The paper is structured in two dimensions: a literature review about low density areas in its articulation with new perspectives of tourism practices, as well as the approach of new tourism territories; a structured discourse about a new tourism territory by using case study methodology regarding Naturtejo Geopark in Portugal, which is part of the Global and European Geoparks Network. Finally, the results achieved will be presented.

## 2 LOW DENSITY TERRITORIES AND TOURISM

As a result of privatization and opening of national economies to foreign capital, new strategic territories have emerged and developed, allowing a new articulation of the whole system. The weakening of national boundaries as spatial unit reference, due to the referred factors and to globalization, provided the necessary conditions for the rising of other spatial scales, calling the

attention to the role of territory in development and growth processes: cities and regions emerged as the most important scales in territorialisation – the centre becomes more dispersed and new, multiterritorial actors born and were created. Rediscovering space and territory as crucial economic elements follows the growing awareness about the fact that differences in growth and economic performance between regions depend of a set of resources that hold immobility and intangibility characteristics – knowledge, skills, institutional and organizational structure.

The globalization process made possible the emergence of intensive scientific, technological and economic relations between regions in different countries, where important network nodes of design, production, assemblage and commercialization of goods and services are located, giving rise to development concentration [a kind of Ferrão's (2002) maximised territories-archipelago or Dollfus' (2001) world metropolitan archipelagos], which is expanding and integrating more and more new economic territories. Globalization is, therefore, a regional exercise of economic and social Darwinism, where regions are subjected to global competition and the ones that survive are the ones who try to form and develop networks, linking local activities to the international competition scenario, resulting from clustering and networking strategies. In this scope, one other aspect must be mentioned. The flexible relationship between time, distance and cost assigns a significant importance to places in a world that is simultaneously ubiquitous, topological and euclidean, that is, a multimetric world. This multidimensional world allows low density territories (LDT) to be true competitors by inserting themselves in regional, national or international networks, which demands a regional strategy to create and develop this involvement (Mitchell, 2001).

One highlight the special relevance of LDT which are territories that hold feeble demographic and economic density, encompassing constraints at several levels: economic and institutional thickness in terms of exploiting the development endogenous potential; cultural, psychological and physic distance to more central regions; population downward trend (O'Donnel, 1997).

For territories, space is the beginning of everything once is where social relations are established, where societies and nature adjust themselves, where boundaries are placed and where communication elements that build up the boundaries' permeability or porosity are adopted; this permeability/porosity reveals that the character of changes is fundamental to know the way territories are affected – the capital dispersion (and not merely capital reproduction), social fragmentation, the role of marketing, new actors. The active flexibility of territories matches the resilience capacity of territories, places or communities in face of the changing world, through cooperative networking and institutional innovations (Fernandes, 2008).

In tourism, LDT become places to be consumed, where production is based on new products or services to tourists and/or in rebuilding/rediscovering places to be used by tourists (Cloke, 1992; Hall & Page, 2006). Tourism activities and attractions will differ depending of the place, management style, integration degree with the surrounding social structure and the type of tourism. The modern development approaches, assuming designations such as territorialist, endogenous and bottom-up, use a similar component to define their doubts – the conception of space that they want to follow in operational actions. Territorialism think space as a social space and the resources must be able to be used by actors, becoming development factors or enabling empowerment for those who want to start using them. The territorialism followers criticize the development approach attending only to the maximization of economic opportunities and understand territories based on the sense of belonging, suggesting the sociocultural regions (Cabugueira, 2000). The development strategy argued by territorialism is grounded on population's cultural identity weighting (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2007), on local actors' cultural values and on cooperation and support of all actors in a specific region.

The appreciation of cultural heritage, in LDT, matches a development strategy closely linked with tourism, preserving and encouraging cultures, beliefs and traditional values, deepening identities and allowing territories to be part of the global order. Tourism as producer of different social, cultural and economic effects is framed within a development belief in which the competitive factors are more and more dealing with human senses. Therefore, there are conditions to enclose the cultural heritage in the commercial field, producing and selling it to tourists, providing local population improvement of the quality of life (Carvalho, 2003; Santos, 2012; Gabor, 2015).

In face of tourism growth as an important set of economic activities, and taking into account the advent of new commerce, leisure and tourism spaces, tourism is perceived in a double dimension in LDT: (i) it is in fact a new strategy for territorial boosting and changing, bring in new social attitudes and behaviour, changes the consumption patterns and can engender new social practices, but also multiple impacts; (ii) consists of economic activities that build up and spread important economic benefits by enabling locally the natural and cultural heritage potentialities (Abella, 2007). Some areas of intervention in the tourism field are created in LDT, namely by marketing unexplored local natural and heritage resources, most of the times in small activity niches that can be explored by tourism.

## 2.1 Tourism territories

LDT hold a plethora of resources that are aimed by post-fordist travellers, and they are structuring themselves as opposing to mass tourism. Tourism practices in these territories favours local culture and traditional activities over urban way of life (Umbelino, 1998). In this sense, tourism allows to recreate several tourism products based upon resources endowment – a set of material or immaterial elements, activity and place focused (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan, & Ranchhod, 2009).

These territories allows the analysis in two main scopes: territory as resource, field of production and actors involved in the landscape dynamics – the built territory; territory as social and nature framework, in terms of resources, lifestyles and nature biophysics functions, all combined – the enforced territory (Galvão & Vareta, 2010). These two scopes are interconnected and porous realities, and can coexist built territories within enforced territories. For example, the establishment of an institutional

actor (innovator) that operates in cooperative/collaborative networks with the existing actors, but with such an importance that becomes able to build its own specific functional territory (a new territory). This multifunctional characteristic draw attention to economic diversification of territorial endowments, based on the appreciation of material and immaterial resources that are very demanded, especially in what regards tourism activities.

The relation between tourism development processes and the use of endogenous resources it is increasingly fundamental to promote appreciation and diversification of territorial development processes. Cristóvão (1999) and Cavaco (1993) refer to that relation focusing the intrinsic characteristics of local/regional resources (natural setting, built and heritage environment, local culture, traditions and values, handicraft) which are quite appealing to urban people, reason why its use should be simplified and they should be more accessible. This deformalisation is reflected, for example, in the landscape, in the freedom sensation, in the repose feeling or in the existence of facilities for extreme activities practice, which is opposed to the heavy spirit of urban order.

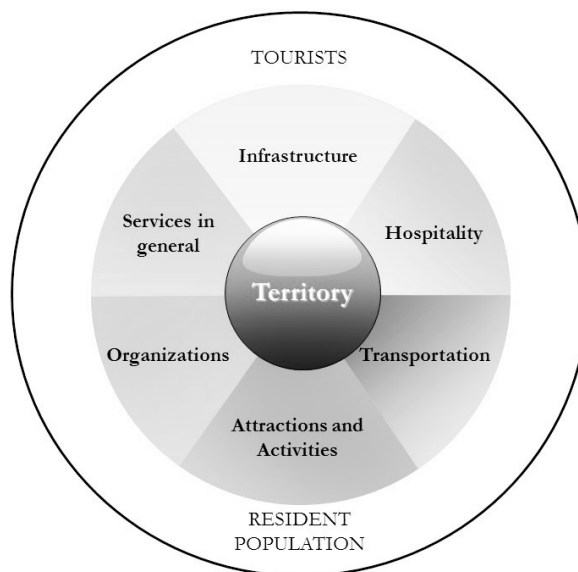
Besides endogenous resources, collaboration mechanisms towards integrated development are more and more taken under consideration. Relationships between actors in territories are enablers for territorial development and, especially, tourism development (Baptista, 2010). To find the best way to put all actors working together it is a complex task in a world typified by cultural reproduction, pointing out that the communication is a much-valued element in tourism, but harder will be the development efforts if territories can't seize the social capital and characteristics existing in LDT (Mandl, Oberholzner, & Dörflinger, 2007).

Tourism space, as any geographic space, it is not enclosed by euclidean borders once that at least one of its primary aspects is exterior to it – the demand side. Despite the absence of borders defined by abstract elements, it is undeniable the fulfilment of tourism space completion declared by a territory as spatial wholeness larger than that territory. A tourism territory, embodied with infrastructures, public services, attraction resources, able to mesmerize visitors and investments, producing existing resources' use value growth, is a fundamental communication tool, an alignment instrument between organizations and between organizations and the institutional environment where they operate (Machado, 2009).

The concept of tourism territory can be analysed according to Giotart & Balfet's (2007) theory of complex sets, to which tourism is considered as a set where elements interact in system respecting rules that enable expected and identifiable phenomena by clustering and networking. Those rules match local norms once the agents promote interactions based on proximity (although mainly technical) (Machado, Costa & Sousa, 2010). The territory-space centrality is presented in Figure 1. Tourists and resident population are understood as non-integrated agents in organized groups, and they are further away from the territory-space. The entrepreneurial agents engaged in the different dimensions of tourism play a relevant role in the tourism territory organization. The territory centrality, as a consensual commodity in terms of operation in tourism, it is implicit in the conception of product-space in tourism argued by Costa (2001).

The transformation of a geographic space into a tourism territory arises from the market creation of symbolic values, transforming general processes into specific issues; place, landscape, region, different elements that give identity to geography are captured by tourism activities and rebuilt to value its meaning, increasing the tourism activity value for promoters, whether by reinventing traditions, creating representations or re-functionalizing nature as a commodity.

Figure 1: Territory-space centrality in the tourism territory [adapted from Machado (2009)]



Another trajectory matches the capture of the tourism territory dynamics by approaching the social processes that have shaped it. From this approach arises the analysis categorising – shape (space completion), function (territory's synchronic analysis),

structure (spatial usability) and process (development diachronic analysis) – that pretends to split up and piece together the wholeness (Santos, 1988; 1992), comprising a tourism territory interpretation methodology.

The territory production by tourism reflects different times in space and allows the analysis of important historical conditions that favour the historicity and territoriality appropriation by tourism to (re)create new spaces. The way as social organization layouts and their effects in space are linked it is crucial to understand tourism as a social phenomenon (Jorge, 2010). The construction and/or development of specific tourism territories can be seen as resulting from working space and leisure space separation, conceptually but also in spatial and time terms (Meethan, 2001). At a time when the competitive abilities of each place/destination are constantly changing, the competition environment turns fiercer. Each place, territory or destination must not only base its competition abilities in its current comparative advantages but has to recreate them or build new ones to try to attract activities able to produce income, employment and wealth. The tourism territory layout, based on the tourism destination integrating elements, results from: on the one hand, the appropriation of territorial resources by tourism enterprises, seeking to achieve greater investment profitability and benefiting from positive externalities inherent to free and public goods and services that pleases tourism demand; on the other hand, natural resources appropriation by tourists to accomplish a more pleasant experience. Both production and consumption dynamics could not give rise to a cohesive tourism territory alone. This is only possible by public participation complement, in its different ways of intervention, and that affects the tourism territory production. In this sense, we agree with Machado (2009) in his definition of tourism territory: it is a form of organization rooted in a formal consensus, acknowledged within a society by a power structure in order to encourage and establish transactions between that organization and tourism in a specific geographic area.

Time-space compression match a contemporary characteristic partially assigned to technological progress (Harvey, 1990; Bauman, 1998), bringing the society closer to individualist and self-aware behaviour and comprising a greater need for experiences, a more introspective and reflexive demand (Firat & Dholakia, 1998). Ryan (2002) argues that tourism express a time paradox – on the one hand, it matches routine liberation periods, on the other hand can only be enjoyed by a limited period of time. These and other changes which have influenced the evolution of the society sponsor development opportunities that tourism territories can exploit, overall tourism development and leverage effect on other economic activities.

The tourism territory, privileged arena of social interactions, is sensitive to historical changes and to the landscape dynamics which are contiguities arising and committed to the own cultural values, influencing individuals' practices and actions in search for renewed experiences. Castrogiovanni (2007) states that in tourism one consume tearing down and building up the geographic space. The same author also says that natural elements become social objects in the process of tourism space appreciation. Tourism is a process that determines forms, functions and social meanings and the landscape is the reflection (re)produced in society in its relationship with the territories and the nature, embodying subjectivities inherent to the human condition (Moreira, 2009).

This construction of new territories in relation with tourism development poses some problems. The Habermas (1978) approach about the knowledge constitutive interests sets a useful research strategy in the identification of the conflict occurring between economic, technical, scientific and practical interests in protected areas, such as national parks, but that can be extended to geoparks as argued by Farsani, Coelho, & Costa (2011: 72): "Consequently, the role of local communities in preserving the park in geoparks is more highlighted than in national parks or protected areas". Potential problems arise when the scientific reasoning (overwhelmed by measuring, monitoring and predicting concerns) and economic rationality (based on commodification, control, efficiency and productivity) cross the people living system in and around protected areas. With no opportunities of participation in decision making or the area's economic and ecological well-being trajectory, practical knowledge (local-based knowledge) is at risk of staying in the sideline of the territory's management (Jamal & Everett, 2007).

The view that runs from Habermas's approach is useful to analyse aspects like the role of scientific and traditional knowledge in the interpretation and management of nature in the scope of protected areas management, such as the destinations' discourses that mould perceptions about nature and about visitors' experiences and how resident population interests are (or could be) colonized by economic, politic or other kind of interests.

Other dilemmas are related with the commodification of territories: any product (good or service) can be understood as a production of readable signs arising from the cultural and socioeconomic context, but tourism as a composite product holds unique characteristics once it is distinguished in time and space (Lash & Urry, 1994; Mowforth & Munt, 2003). In this sense, tourism territories, like protected areas, may be appropriated as local-global shuttles, designing cultural and socio-political meanings (Franklin, 2007). The case of Grand Canyon National Park, in the United States, is rich in observations in such matter, as reported by Neumann (1991). One of the biggest fears is related with the possibility of tourism activities could lead to preserved territories' destruction. The problem with this issue is that some protectionism over these territories can result contrary to the desired effects: when dealing with people's presence in territories by drive them away, the social, cultural, affective bonds will be lost and territories become museums, raising indifference (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998).

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### 3 NATURTEJO GEOPARK IN SOUTHERN UPLAND

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On the 13th February 2004 an international reunion took place at the Unesco headquarters in Paris, with participants of different nature and origins, with the objective of presenting the final report regarding Guidelines and Criteria for National Geoparks seeking Unesco's assistance (Frey, Schaefer, Büchel, & Patzak, 2006). This report provided detailed information related to

criteria to be followed in order to establish a geopark and levered the creation of the Unesco's Global Geoparks Network (GGN). It was also decided that the geoparks who were part of the European Geoparks Network (EGN) will be part of the GGN, without further ado (Zouros, 2004; Frey et al., 2006; Eder & Patzak, 2004).

According to Eder & Patzak (2004), geoparks under the auspices of Unesco undertake the following responsibilities: to protect the geologic legacy on the benefit of future generations (conservation); to educate the public in general about geologic landscapes and environmental matters (education); to encourage research in geosciences (science); to ensure sustainable development (development and tourism). According to the GGN website, a geopark "(...) is a unified area with geological heritage of international significance and where that heritage is being used to promote the sustainable development of the local communities who live there".

The definition involve a triple foundation within the concept (Zouros, 2004): (i) an European geopark must focus the scientific issue (geology), i.e. must possess a set of relevant geological sites, of international interest, but can also hold archeologic, ecologic, historic and/or cultural heritage; (ii) the competent authorities in each geopark must coordinate a sustainable development strategy in the host region, once it is a territory that holds clearly defined borders and has an appropriate scale for the strategy implementation, framed by the exploitation of tourism and education related activities; (iii) the final characteristic is related to the compulsory networking (EGN or GGN), benefiting from protective legal measures and observing a set of accurate and methodical management criteria (management transparency, voluntarism in heritage protection and impossibility of destroying and market that heritage). In April 2015, 110 geoparks from 33 countries throughout the world were part of GGN, of which 64 geoparks were part of EGN.

The GGN geoparks develop synergies with other national and international programmes (Eder & Patzak, 2004; Catana, 2008). The sustainable development issue arises as basic element of actions carried out in geoparks' territorial development, as well as management structure strengthening concerns. The geological heritage is assessed and considered from de point of view of local population presence and needs. The geopark's contribution rests on focusing and promoting a specific image related with geologic heritage and tourism development, and concerting actions with that focus. The purpose of the geopark comes out clearly: to have a direct effect on territory, positively influencing population living conditions and the environment; to revalue territorial heritage resources; call local population to action in order to improve culturally the territory (McKeever & Zouros, 2005).

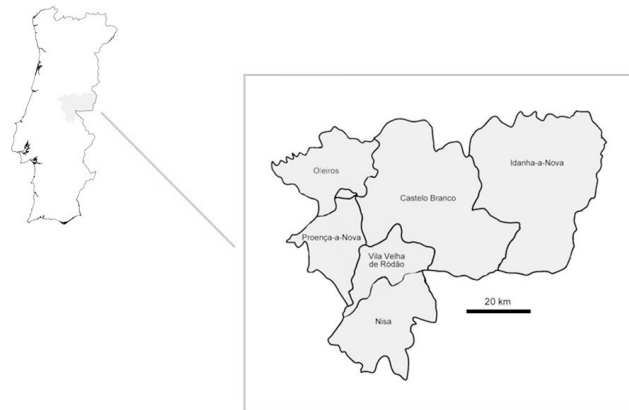
The protected geological heritage in the scope of a geopark allows an instinctive integration with de historical, cultural and natural heritage of a given region. A geopark must assume an important role in the process of economic development, in a sustainable way, using the image projected from the available and usable archaeological heritage and providing the demand for geotourism activities. A european geopark must develop its activity in the scope of a network (the EGN), promoting its growth and unity, work with other geoparks and with local enterprises to achieve common goals, create and market new products related to geological and cultural heritage, in a spirit of complementarity with other EGN members (Zouros & McKeever, 2008). To fully assume this role, geoparks must carry out an intensive work of associations with endogenous economic agents in order to be able to create/market new products concomitant to the basic symbolism attached to geoparks: the 'geo' broad concept. This concept is relevant in these kind of tourism territory once it possesses favourable conditions towards the creation of a representative brand for activities, products, events that take place in geopark.

Geoparks are new territories whether for education or for geological use, failing to live up to protected nature areas' traditional required abilities. Once geoparks embody Earth's space-time dimension, geoparks propend to create new, different things, turning easier to feel the space, to think the time and to put present time in a past-future continuous flow. It is a different approach about the relation between society and environment, considering new management ways and infrastructures, it is a new philosophy for the territory who proposes a new holistic reflection about the meaning of geological heritage (Martini & Zouros, 2008).

This aim implies a redefinition of the communication means, a reconsideration about the role and use of museums, the merging of art and culture, the use of new information technologies, the transformation of the simple vision of the past to the multiple visions of the future. The interpretation of new tourism territories, like the ones occurring due to the existence of geoparks, will be incomplete if the effects resulting from interrelations between the agents and the processes that occur in tourism production and tourism demand flows are not taken into account (Ivars, 2003).

Naturtejo Geopark is a territory build up by gathering 7 neighbouring municipalities in the centre interior of continental Portugal (Castelo Branco, Idanha-a-Nova, Nisa, Oleiros, Penamacor, Proença-a-Nova and Vila Velha de Ródão), assuming continuity of economic, cultural, geomorphological, identitarian specificities, searching for common interests and roots that sustain its existence. The territory and its location can be found in Figure 2.

The territory encompasses an area of 5182 square kilometres, equivalent to little bit more of 5% of Portuguese territory, and it is part of the EGN and GGN since 2006, due to its outstanding scientific and educational geological heritage value, as well as other relevant ecologic, historical and cultural aspects – altogether embrace a local sustainable development strategy. It includes the International Tagus Natural Park (ITNP), located in International Tagus Special Protection Zone (SPZ). The ITNP holds extraordinary botanical assets, comprising the presence of several endemic species and a large variety of migratory birds and birds of prey. The ITNP is also characterised by the historic and cultural values, and one can refer to the Neolithic traces, roman tombs and some edifications of vernacular and popular architecture. It includes also a Natural Monument, the Portas de Ródão Natural Monument, which holds relevant natural heritage, namely the Portas de Ródão geosite, alongside with other geologic, biologic and landscape resources. In the geopark's territory that are also 3 Sites of Community Importance (SCI) included in Natura 2000 network.

Figure 1: Location and composition of the geopark's territory (retrieved from [www.naturtejo.com](http://www.naturtejo.com))

*Note: Due to the recent rearrangement of the territory with Penamacor's municipality new entry (September 2015), the map does not include this new area. Penamacor municipality is located on the north of Idanha-a-Nova municipality*

The defensive activities and the fortified castles highlighted the role of the region's bordering villages. Due to its twofold historic frontier [to south, due to the Reconquista (wars that ended with the Portuguese and Spanish expelling the Arabs out of the Iberian Peninsula), to east, due to the Reconquista and to the historic rivalry with Castille], due also to the strategic points defences provided by the Tagus river at north and Erges river at west, the region holds a heritage that is worth emphasizing. There are also diverse monuments classified as property of public interest, property of municipal interest and national monuments.

From the geologic point of view, the geopark's territory is a landscape that tell about the history of Earth in the last 600 million years (Rodrigues & Carvalho, 2009). In the geopark's territory, past and present merge into the history, the art, the people's experiencing, the culture, the richness of the handicraft or cuisine, the mystical festivities and pilgrimage, the fairs and markets, all framed by a defining and unifying landscape.

This territory is a living, dynamic, multidimensional territory, product and producer, process and result; it is a point of departure and a place of arrival where interrelations (at cultural, economic, politic level) between individuals and the context occur, which build and fragment different social spaces; a multidimensional territory of complementarity, conflict and interactivity which allows to build its identity. The Naturtejo Geopark is a space socially built, holder of natural resources and owner of a story build by the men living in the territory, through agreements on values and rules, institutional arrangements that confirm its validity and social forms of productive organization.

The existing worthy geological, paleontological, mining, biodiversity and historical-cultural heritage joins a set of productive initiatives that enhance endogenous elements that start to reach market. In the scope of gastronomy and food products, traditional gastronomy development have been applauded, starting from local products acknowledged by different forms of quality certification, developing a range of geoproducts made in geofarms. The harnessing of these gastronomic elements led to the creation of a georestaurant in the small village of Monsanto, marked also by its symbolic and identity burden. This is the most visible form of connection of 'geo' to the market, which is complemented with a comprehensive range of related services: from geotourism practices to itineraries and routes, from health and wellness tourism to an extended list of cultural events, from organised programmes to sporting events and museums, this is a territory that offers a variety of combinations, with diverse environments, for different audiences.

To achieve this situation, geopark have come a long way. The geopark's management is carried out by a tourism inter-municipal enterprise – Naturtejo EIM – consisting of a municipalities' association and 13 private firms. The implicit objective of this enterprise was/is to promote the development of the territory through tourism.

The creation of the Naturtejo Geopark draw upon itself the rights of belonging to UNESCO's GGN and EGN. But this participation allocates a number of duties to the geopark once a set of elements related to quality should be maintained in an intertemporal dimension, following a group of formal requirements underlying EGN's operation, but also being able to show evolution and development efforts. This assessment is carried out by EGN every three years.

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#### 4 GEOPARK ACHIEVEMENTS

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The integration of ideas and major stakeholders' expectations derived from geopark's management is the beginning of a holistic and informal approach regarding land use management. On the other hand, the integration of conservation and local community active participation in the geopark's development process will benefit its identity and heritage, while opening the spectrum of possibilities of private economic activities.

Some of the results already achieved in the geopark's territory involve the production of gastronomy, handicraft and artistic goods (called geoproducts) based on territory's agricultural, livestock and game resources. These geoproducts mean an

economic contribution for local communities as well as allows tourists' education and geology spreading by using the geologic symbols available. The Naturtejo geopark identified 16 geomonuments spread throughout its territory which enables raising the geopark's identity due to the diversity of those kind of monuments.

The participation of the private sector in marketing practices linked with geotourism is one other important aspect regarding the tourism territory building. The existence of geofarms, geobakeries, georestaurants and, even, rural hotels are elements that witness the connection between tourism activities and geology.

Also the association between leisure and sports activities and topography and geology intend to contribute to build geopark's identity. The different georoutes and territory's resources themed routes (Schist Ways, Vultures Route, Egitânia Route, Fossils Route, Georoute of Orvalho, among others), birdwatching activities and photographic safaris, mountain biking and off-road routes, boat trips and canoeing and, more recently, geocaching and earthcaching stimulus with caches located in geomonuments and geosites, are all elements that encourage the development of supply based on more allocentric type of tourists, also supported upon the affirmative and complementary facet of geologic heritage.

Finally, cultural exchange and identity preservation programmes have been encouraged, as well as population's active involvement, both actions in order to pursue the sustainable development strategy (as an example, one can refer to the project "Idanha-a-Nova Sustainable House"). These local population involvement elements are important for the territory once it allows to spread the awareness that the ability to control economic activities and decision making in the territory are, in a large degree, in the hands of local population. The capacity to be innovative in the territory, whether through local cooperation or national/international cooperation or even the involvement with firms, artists, tour operators, accommodation facilities, restaurants and producers in general, have been pursued affirmatively.

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## 5 CONCLUSIONS

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The space boundary of a tourism territory is only shaped starting from its use value by economic and social agents, in terms of tourism consumption. Tourism territory is a space projection of the tourism product involving the resources (tourism supply) and the social demand (storytelling). This tourism product/territory comprises two spatial assets: on the one hand, the material, produced, planned spaces – accommodation, transportation, animation and entertainment equipment; on the other hand, the immaterial spaces, the images build by tourism promotion and marketing to sell the material space, where landscapes become images.

The search for recreational and leisure activities plays a relevant role in defining a tourism territory (which is itself a tourism destination) and in positioning it as an attractive territory. The today's market segmentation in tourism points to the forms of tourism necessary analysis comprising the new segments components and characteristics – post-fordist, flexible and customized segments. Frequently the typologies developed when analysing the tourism phenomenon are established based on the space used by tourism activities; in this sense, the characteristics of the space affect the attractiveness and repulsiveness of its use for tourism.

The creation of the Naturtejo Geopark is an achievement of strategic importance in a LDT where the tourism system will allow to value the heritage from a commercial point of view. The creation of this tourism territory, different from normal administrative planning, restructure the territory by enabling interactivity (partnerships, cooperation, complementarity) between the diverse agents and engendering new opportunities. The work we have been developing is driven to report the territory's use value by linking symbolic meaning to experience, but is also directed to specific targets: comprising a higher weight, scientific tourism, mostly related to geotourism practices, is the foremost reason for the geopark's existence, but also health and wellness tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism and active sports tourism.

All the aspects considered and the results achieved allow validating the new territory with tourism ambitions embodied in the Naturtejo Geopark. The consideration of conservation and education aspects in activities and knowledge and local art sharing within this development process complements the territory's identity building.

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