Chapter 15
Dynamics of Tourism Development and Resilience in the Medium Mountains of Portugal: Challenges for the Sustainable Management in Mountains of the Central Mountain Range

Gonçalo Poeta Fernandes
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1278-0369
Polytechnic Institute of Guarda, CITUR, Portugal

ABSTRACT

The mountain areas have seen a growing ecocultural and tourist appreciation in the face of natural and cultural resources and housing due to the perception of integrity and authenticity associated with them. However, in Portugal, specific territorial policy interventions as well as guidelines for concerted development of tourism have stayed away from the mountains. It appears that the practises of recreation and leisure are becoming wider, which implies new forms of tourism and environmental planning. These perceptual changes, and even occupation, mean that these areas, previously isolated and hostile due to natural constraints, today have a distinct ownership as a result of awareness and their opening to the outside. Increased accessibility, use of resources, dissemination of ecocultural values, the extension of recreation and leisure activities, and the increase of visitor flows have contributed to their revival as a space for production and consumption, associated with quality and integrity standards.

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INTRODUCTION

Mountain areas reveal, as a whole, a complex and difficult to understand reality, due to the mosaic of situations they encompass and their diversity in terms of location, altitude values, climatic conditions, forms of occupation and use and functions. The transformations experienced by the monyanhosos spaces, especially from the middle of the twentieth century, led to a differentiated perception, with expectations, protagonists and problems that originated from the reconfiguration of the productive bases, social organisation and landscapes. Many traditional activities have regressed as a result of migrations to urban areas, protection policies and the inertia of valuing mountain resources. At the present time, we are witnessing a general revaluation of the mountain in terms of its perception (resources, functions and heritage), the productive processes and the forms of use due to the emergence of a new social value system, which rewards the natural and social qualities of these territories. These changes in perception, even of occupation, mean that these spaces, previously isolated and hostile due to natural impositions, now have a distinct vision and appropriation as a result of awareness and openness to the outside. Increasing accessibility, exploiting resources, disseminating ecocultural values, expanding recreational and leisure activities and increasing visitor flows have contributed to its revitalization as a space of production and consumption, coupled with quality standards.

In general, Portuguese mountain ranges share the problems that affect traditional rural spaces, strengthened by the constraints of their physical characteristics, which are permanently felt in productive activities. At the same time, they have an ecocultural richness that values them in terms of new practises and functions, especially for activities related to tourism and leisure.

Several objectives of diverse nature structure this research and seek to develop an analysis of the mountain areas in Portugal, particularly in the central mountain range, and of the dynamics and transformations that these territories and their communities have known, and to simultaneously check the problems and logic of local administrations in the face of ongoing changes and the role that tourism has played in the reorganisation of these territories. The objectives are structured from three different but complementary perspectives and articulate methodological phases (literature review, analysis of municipal plans, application of surveys to municipalities and review of strategic documents) capable of promoting the collection of data and contributions for analysis and reflection.

- From the theoretical point of view, we sought to clarify the territorial significance of the mountain in Portugal, the changes registered and the local strategies of valorisation of these territories, highlighting the western sector of the Central Mountain range, the main object of the investigation.
- From the empirical point of view, we intend to contribute to the understanding of the problems and potentialities of the mountain, the perception of these territories by the local administration and the contributions and actions to be considered in a tourism planning model.
- From the methodological point of view, we seek to design an investigation that uses the techniques of qualitative and quantitative analysis, allows the establishment of an evolutionary analysis, the determination of the problems and the means to be considered for the mountain’s sustainability and the valorisation of tourism in the strategies to be developed.

The perception and intervention of mountain municipalities with respect to their territories within the framework of management policies and strategies, based on the information collected through a question-
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