

Vernacular architectural tourism network: The case study of rural coast zones area in Portugal central region

ANA GARCEZ * [apgarcez@ua.pt]

DINA RAMOS ** [dinaramos23@gmail.com]

CARLOS COSTA *** [ccosta@ua.pt]

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The aim of this work is to analyse the feasibility of a tourism network comprised of buildings with the typical features of coastal zones in rural areas of the central region of Portugal. The creation of this network seeks to present the richness of this local popular architecture, in order to convene the cultures, traditions and prevailing architectural knowledge of the places where these buildings are located to the future generations. This network would require the local community involvement in ensuring the success of the initiative, namely with regards to the transmission of knowledge, seen from the perspective of female community members. Culturally, women are assumed to be the main users of houses, fact that demonstrates the need for a project like this. By giving them the power and freedom to decide on the space that will be mostly used by them, this project is giving women more than visibility in the process of designing architectural projects. The working methods involved in this project were composed, at first, of a review of the available literature on the subject, putting into discussion the possibility of creating a network of vernacular architectural tourism in the coastal zones of the central region of Portugal. This network would allow the combination of synergies between the coastal tourism in rural areas, and vernacular architecture. By definition, vernacular architecture is all the type of architecture in which are employed materials and resources of the environment in which the construction was built. In this manner, it presents local or regional character. They are also constructions where the knowledge is transmitted of generation for generation. It is later intended to effect a well-taken care of retraction of data of the representative universe for sampling, being followed itself an analysis and conclusions of the same ones. A set of guidelines for the definition and practical implementation of the strategy will also be proposed.

This research aims to provide a contribution to the development and deepening of the existing knowledge about vernacular architecture and of its use as a driver of coastal tourism in rural areas. Since this is a topic not yet explored at the academic level, nor even at the business level; and, due to the absence of any in-depth study on the question under consideration,

* **PhD student in Tourism and Master in Visual Arts Teaching** from the University of Aveiro (Portugal). **Member of the Research Group** on Tourism in Coastal Areas (University of Aveiro- Portugal).

** **PhD student in New Features and Sustainability in Tourism** at the University of Salamanca (Spain). **Member of the Research Group** on Tourism in Coastal Areas (University of Aveiro, Portugal).

*** **PhD in Tourism** from the University of Surrey (UK). **Full Professor** at the Department of Economics, Management and Industrial Engineering. **Integrated Member** of the Research Unit on Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policies of the University of Aveiro (Portugal).

it is believed that the development of this study will be a positive contribution to the development of tourism and to the creation of a tourism network.

To support the diversification of products and services, to identify and to promote the best practical ones through the introduction of elements of architecture to vernacular and to integrate the community in activities that keep the authenticity of the places can represent a competitive advantage for the tourism in the region. The apposite one in a differentiated type of tourism, through the development of alternative methods, and emphasizing the importance of the existing resources for the success of the local economy also will be promoted.

The use of existing Portuguese traditional *Casas de adobe* (adobe houses) in the rural area under study together with the *Palheiros* (traditionally called 'haystack', which are houses made of wood and used in the past for housing or for storage of fishing gear or salt) that exist along the coast, could be an example of what can be done in this process of integrated tourism development. The coast tourism promotion (sun and sea), together with the use, observation, and complementarity of other products (gastronomic, cultural, agricultural, fishery, etc.), could provide a competitive advantage for these areas, because it diversifies the offer and allows them to be more independent for the most rural zones. In the central region of Portugal, for example, traditional houses of different types are found, known as *Gandaresa*, *Gafanhoeira*, *Murtosa* or *Mira*, as well as haystacks such as *Tocha*, *Costa Nova do Prado*, *São Jacinto*, *Vagueira*, among others. These houses represent the culture and tradition of the people who once lived there and can be successfully used in approaches aimed at boosting tourism in these areas. This project should be seen as an incentive to the creation of an integrated network of knowledge, resources and activities, using all the human, economic, landscape and architectural potential of these regions.

This research was also aimed at raising awareness and promoting a critical reflection on the role played by female community members, whose contribution and participation is usually absent in the history of architecture. Throughout the evolution of the architectural study, the ruling classes have appropriated and fueled a culture justified by their economic and social power, leaving women in the backstage.

The results obtained in this research should enable a practical application of the study conclusions, while its distinctive advantage is likely to have a significantly broader application than the study itself. More specifically, this study can easily be integrate in the first stage of a future project of applied research aimed at creating a network of synergies between the coastal tourism in rural areas and vernacular architecture. To be developed, such project could promote the creation of optimal conditions for the development and viability of these regions' local economy.

The creation of an integrated network of vernacular architectural tourism in the rural coastal zone of the central region must rest on integrated and planned strategies in a balanced way. It should mainly focus on sustainable tourism practices, improving the conditions of the hosting community, and the protection of the coastal, rural and architectural heritage of Portugal central region. It should also reflect an historical sense while projecting the continuity of generations, allowing for the emergence of new visions regarding women's role in the tourism activity. This integrated network not only would allow to effect the spreading, cultural promotion, and recreation and tourism promotion as a whole; but also would foster the creation of a global image for these destinations, increasing their capability to face competition and new challenges in terms of tourism development and market penetration.