

TOURISM URBANIZATION IN ALGARVE (1965-2004)**João Carlos Figueira Martins**

PhD Student, New University of Lisbon

joaomartins.cf@fesh.unl.pt**ABSTRACT**

The main task of this extended abstract is to discuss the processes of urban transformation and functional specialization through tourism in a certain region. With this purpose the spatial configuration of the municipalities of Albufeira, Loulé and Faro was chosen, as strong points of a *touristification* dynamic. The Algarve was a peripheral region in the Portuguese context till the 1960's, mainly dedicated to agriculture, fishing and shellfish gathering and some low mechanized industries of natural products transformation. Following the urban and metropolitan input in Lisbon and Oporto, Algarvian cities started an urbanization process not towards industry, but tourism, creating an urban design and infrastructure suitable for leisure and entertainment. Geographically connected to the Spanish Andalusia where the touristic input started before 1965, the Algarve and its waterfronts became a new touristic territory for tourism travelers. This phenomenon involves a social, economic and cultural context marked by the reception of tourists, a region organized according to their needs, an economic subservience and strong dependence on this particular sector.

KEYWORDS

Algarve, Tourism Effects, Urbanization, Leisure.

1. OBJECTIVES

The initial goal of this abstract is to analyze the urban processes towards tourism occurred in this region since the 1960's till 2004. In order to achieve that purpose I'll develop three different steps. The first one is creating a territorial framework, in this case, the territory between the National Road 125 (a regional road) and the waterfront in Faro, Albufeira and Loulé. The second is creating a historical framework. The timeframe of this investigation starts in 1965, year of the International Airport opening and use of the first Regional Planning Instrument approved in Portugal (Plano Regional do Algarve), two important dynamics to explain the effort made by the national state and the private sector towards tourism. The third step is related to a theoretical framework. In this case I'll use the concept of Tourism Urbanization (Mullins, 1991), as a process of territorial and social transformation towards tourism activities, bringing important consequences on the cultural, labor and consuming field. The second conceptual field is related with the processes of extended urbanization, the creation of a Street Road (Domingues, 2009) with touristic attractions and infrastructures outside the city center, apart from traditional urban processes, like we can see in the urban borders of the National Road 125.

2. METHODOLOGY

i) *Creating a territorial framework.* In order to understand the touristic use of these territories is important to reference the tourism urbanization in these cities, understanding the centrality dynamics occurred and the urban transformation in these contexts. This framework will be important to reveal the territorial strategies used to create a territory useful for pleasure. This task will ask us for two different methodological approaches. The first one is the direct observation of these spaces, finding some interesting examples of this tourism use, trying to make sense of its users and the economic structure behind them. I'll use the in locus observation to remark the territories where these touristic inputs were more relevant. This choice naturally will neglect other touristic choices in the region, emphasizing the importance of the metropolitan use of the territories of Loulé, Albufeira and Faro, the relation between these cities and the seaside attractions among the National Road 125. The second step will be the analysis of institutional programs and plans according to tourism urbanization processes. In this moment is relevant to analyze the Municipal and Regional Master Plans, its own objectives and aims, and the results in the territory and regional economy, making sense of its developments.

ii) *Creating a historical framework.* This step will be important to underline the different urban and tourism processes, since its beginnings in the 1960's, the tourism enlargement to lower classes in the 1980's and the orientation towards golf and high standard tourism in the 1990's. The last big international event, the Euro 2004, will be also important to understand the last urban transformations in this region and the results of big themed events and its results on urban space (Hannigam, J. 2003). The use of a historical approach will create a chronologic narrative that will be useful understand the changes occurred and the behavior of different tourism agents. Being able to understand almost four decades of social history will help to contextualize all the different transformations in this field, making sense of the public and private interests and choices.

iii) *Creating a theoretical framework.* It will be important to underline the importance of the Tourism Input and its materialization on space. With this first conceptual board we will discuss the results of the tourism experiences and urbanization, the creation of a new society, based on consume and the importance of free time in actors representations, the creation of a *social right* according to leisure and multicultural contact and its effects on urban space. According to Tribe J. (1997) the studies about tourism don't create a single academic field, using non-exclusive concepts, being a field of observation of other macro sociologic dimensions like urban space, consuming, travelling and leisure. Like other authors (Hannigam, J. 2003; Brito, S. 2009, Mullins, J. 1991), Tribe J. introduces the importance of the market and client satisfaction as major concerns on tourism research, forgetting its own inputs, flexible work system and effects on labor market and residents. So a big part of this activity remains undercover and it's most important effects and features. At the same time will be important to underline the urbanization process, it's achievements and developments. We are dealing with a new form of creating urban spaces in an extended way, far away from traditional processes, using transportation corridors, so the observation processes and analysis should be reconsidered. The National Road 125 created the possibility of installation of hotels, amusement parks on its borders, an urbanization process between the waterfront and the regional road, crossing the territories of these municipalities. At the same time the Nation Road 125 contributes to the creation of a shared and metropolitan space, with the installation of several trade companies (rental and selling cars, pool's installation devices, shopping centers), a territory among different municipalities based on a specific activity, the economic exploration of a Seaside model of tourism, creating new forms of urbanization (Domingues, A. 2009).

3. MAIN RESULTS

i) *The territorial framework.* In Faro it was chosen the airport according to its big impact on the labor market and the patrimonial use of the historical heritage and architecture in the *cidade velha* (Ferreira, A. (2006), showing the importance of the regional capital, its orientation towards a *cultural tourism* and its intuitional importance as headquarters of public and private tourism organizations. In the Loulé context will be important to underline two different touristic modalities: low cost in Quarteira oriented to middle and lower classes and gentrified in the territories of Vilamoura, Quinta do Lago and Vale de Lobo. Albufeira, as the major city according to economic earnings from tourism will also be a territory to explore according to its night attractions, hotels and importance in the region. The traditional urbanization processes in Portugal in the 1950's resulted from the mechanization of agricultural activities, a strong migration movement towards the main cities and the constitution of metropolitan areas based on industrial and port activities. In Algarve as other coastal areas the urbanization process presents this originality: the related tourism activities were the main urban input to the creation of competitive cities and the constitution of extended forms of urbanization under an *urban corridor*. So the main result here is to acknowledge these differences and create a typology useful to read the territory.

ii) The use of a *historical framework* is also important to underline the different phases that occurred in the region. Till the 1960's, despite some achievements in Costa do Sol in Cascais, the Portuguese regime saw tourism and travelling as a way to express ideology. So after the first tourism experiences in *Andaluzia*, Algarve will be the reconfigured as the first touristic region in the country, expressed by two different steps: the creation of a planning plan that would set the different uses of the land and the opening of the international airport, creating good travelling conditions to the region. Brito, S. describes the chronology of tourism in the region, expressing the first international companies related to hotels and amusement that are introduced in the region. The author also describes the processes of informal housing and urbanization that were developed in the 1970's and 1980's in Portugal, especially in Algarve, through the construction of houses on natural parks, like *Ria Formosa*. This mechanism expresses the increase on wages and holidays on national and foreign medium classes that start to use Algarve as a tourism destination. In the 1990's trying to *refresh* some of the tourism typologies, some entrepreneurs introduce high class tourism in this urban space, creating high standard territories, replacing some of the original users of these spaces. The EURO 2004 was the first and last big event happening in the region. With this championship the region was shown to the rest of the world, but the main goals, the creation of future sport events were not achieved.

iii) The changes towards the analysis of tourism and its scientific credibility on Urban Studies are result of profound changes in the evolution of the productive systems, the creation of new models of social and economic organization, which involves an increase on consumption and its integration in lifestyles. In this moment leisure questions get a more prominent place in the academic field (Baptista, L. 2005). The results expected in creating a *theoretical framework* will be to construct a conceptual field that could cross the acknowledgments on Tourism Studies, its relation with the urbanization processes and the economic orientation of cities and regions towards this activity. It will also be important to underline the consequences of tourism on the local labor market, the proliferation of symbols and social representations underlining the authenticity of this space and the evaluation made by its own residents of this context. Using the Street Road concept of Domingues, A. (2009), will be possible to express the context of suburbanization of some of the most important and vibrant regions in Portugal, in the Algarve case, through Tourism.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this extended abstract I expressed some of the first achievements on my PHD on Sociology, Urban and Tourism Studies related to the process of Urbanization through Tourism in the South Portugal. To be able to start this investigation was important to create find territory where the tourism was important, creating a shared and leisure territory (Baptista, L. 2005). Observing the territory and its mobility issues it was relevant to report the importance of this specific road, the EN 125, its processes of extended urbanization, the transformation of city centers, creating a polycentric urban area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BAPTISTA, L. (2005), “Territórios Lúdicos”, *Fórum Sociológico* (13/14), IEDS/UNL, Lisboa.

BRITO, S. (2009), *Território e Turismo no Algarve*, Centro Internacional de Investigação em Território e Turismo da Universidade do Algarve, Edições Colibri, Faro.

CAVACO, C. (1979), “Turismo e demografia no Algarve”, *Monografia pela ESGHT*, Faro.

DOMINGUES, A. (2009), *A Rua da Estrada*, Dafne Editora, Porto.

FERREIRA, A. (2006), “Novos Turistas no centro histórico de Faro”, *Análise Social Vol XLI* (180).

HANNIGAM, J. (2003), "Branding, the Global Entertainment Economy and Urban Place Building: Introduction to the Symposium on Branding, the Entertainment Economy and Urban Place Building", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27(2), 352-60.

INE, I. P. (2010), *Anuário Estatístico da Região Algarve 2009*, Lisboa.

MULLINS, P. (1991), “Tourism Urbanization”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol 15, 326-341.

TRIBE, J. (1997), “The Indiscipline of Tourism”, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 24, n° 3, 638-657.