

A MODEL FOR RECONFIGURATION OF TERRITORY: THE EURO CITY CHAVES-VERÍN AND TOURISM COOPERATION IN THE ALTO TAMEGA

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I. INTRODUCTION

Territorial cooperation within the European Union, namely the border, are entering the second generation, or more precisely, from the dominance phase of the infrastructure phase of the preponderance of living of citizens, by artificially separated. This is the *pari-mutuel*: local cooperation. In this context, the Eurocities are very important, understood as genuine public laboratories and experimental construction of shared experiences among peers.

Chaves and Verin are two cities with strong historical ties of exchange and cooperation and the idea of establishing institutional structures to strengthen relations between the two has a long run relationship between the two local institutions for some time. However, the opportunity was opened by the impact of two new factors who allowed the implementation of the ongoing construction of a Eurocity: the incorporation of the two cities to the Atlantic Axis and the new EU agenda for 2007-2013, with special emphasis on territorial cooperation, to aim high, along with the convergence and the commitment to growth and employment.

In the scientific discussion of this analysis must be remembered that in the early 80's produced the confluence of two lines of research that will lead to what is known as endogenous development: a theoretical, born as a consequence of the attempt to find a conceptual idea to allow the prosecution to the development of localities and regions, and one empirical, arising from the interpretation of the processes of industrial growth in specific locations in southern Europe.

From this same philosophy, the current economic context, characterized by continuous technological change, market uncertainty and high competitiveness in all sectors caused new challenges for economic systems and enterprises, they must develop new products and also differentiate competitors at all levels. In this framework innovation and cooperation play a major role in competitiveness, extending the term to the territories. However, the application

of the concept of competitiveness to the territorial problems, urban and regional, in recent years had serious methodological problems, considering two different planes of focus: the micro which is restricted to business and macroeconomic issues, from the viewpoint regional or national, which will be studied later.

At the same time, from the tourism analysis, it is important that the two municipalities of the Eurocity start from an almost marginal in this area of economic activity, despite the existence of significant resources in their territory, both in its natural heritage as historical, as well as in their unique and joint thermal resources.

Taking into account the circumstances of the construction process of the Eurocity seems possible to analyze the role of tourism as an important factor in their development using various inputs on multi travel, and the elements of attraction, forming from a demand approach important basis for predicting the behavior of tourists, and proposing a bid circular on the basis of thermal resources, with periods alternate and successive visits, not only the whole territory of the two municipalities, but all the surrounding geographical area that formed in the day the administrative border between the two countries

II. THE AREA OF STUDY: COOPERATION AND TOURISM MARKET

Chaves is a town with about 45,000 people (including about 20,000 in the urban area), with urban structuring of the territory of the Alto Tâmega (6 municipalities with some 100,000 inhabitants). Verin, meanwhile, is a municipality with about 13,000 inhabitants, the center of a large functional area (which includes the District of Monterrei-Verin, with over 35,000 inhabitants and some towns in neighboring districts). The two cities are far from each other about 30 kms along the old road (slightly more for the new road that connects them) and even within the periphery of the peninsula, there are well framed in the Iberian area as part of the «Y» that brings plateau at the two main coastal cities of the Euroregion, through the Portuguese motorway A7 liaison to the Metropolitan Area of Porto and the Spanish A52 to access the area of Vigo. Other factors reinforce this functional central location, the Park Activities and Logistic Chaves Chaves-Verin Border (part of the Program Logistics Portugal) are already reality of a future multi-center, multi-functional logistics platform, under the Strategic Plan Ourense 2010-2015.

Noting the history of cooperation between the two cities, we can say that is already anchored in various dynamic convergent

- Geographical proximity, historical, cultural and political-institutional, which was reinforced in recent years through previous initiatives of cross-border cooperation, improvements in accessibility and mobility, and the consolidation of a common living space (residence, leisure, employment)
- The existence of common complementary factors, such as land resources (the area of the river valley, hot springs), economic (business logistics of that), cultural (language, music), and urban management issues and also common land
- Joint community projects, as they were within the Interreg III, two museum interpretation centers, promotion of a cultural network of the border or smuggling route

- Exchange and experienced in the fields of education and health, which involved on one side rooms and shared teaching for high school students, and on the other hand, health care in hospitals in two cities in terms of unmet needs.

In this context, the creation of the figure as a bet Eurocity ambitious and consistent with the recent past, bringing together two very important characteristics to become a unique European experience of this type. First, the political will of governments (local, regional and national) to take forward the initiative. Second, its status as gateway to the interior shaft of the Euroregion Galicia-Norte de Portugal, an area in need of support measures by their nature of land with low population density and low economic growth, and that such actions would improve their competitiveness and opportunities for convergence with the Axis coast.

As was pointed out, tourism in the two cities until 2009 was clearly seen as a marginal factor in their economy despite the existence of significant and unique resources, a large number of them still remain untapped or underutilized. Among them obviously highlight the importance of thermal and mineral waters, thanks to the same north-south fault line from Peco da Régua Verín up on the banks of the River Douro. Tourist use of complementary resources of nature, history and ethnography, exist already, but with the potential for much greater development and promotion to the current presentation, the Route of Gold and magical views, that of the Reservoirs (Barragens) The Rock Art of Smuggling and the addition of a branch of the Camino de Santiago, which rises from the Algarve, along the border with Castilla and widely used by the Mozarabic converts in s. XVI and XVII.

With regard to the application, no quantitative data are disaggregated to the two municipalities, but a study by the authors in 2008 on tourism in the cities of Atlantic Axle, revealed some features of the characteristics and motivations of tourists visiting these two cities. Data from a survey conducted in the local tourist information points about 200 visitors in each city, in the spring and summer months of 2008.

According to this study, compared to younger Chaves go to Verín (24% versus 8% of children under 30 years) and the main source market in the two cases is the national, but also more pronounced in Chaves. However, major differences appear in the prior information that consulted to decide the journey and personal motivations. As visitors to Chaves used more Internet technologies to determine their trip (25%) and have a high fidelity (17% had made a previous visit), which were mostly in Verín were guided by the recommendations of friends and relatives (72%) and only 8% previously used the computer network.

III. THE STRATEGIC DESIGN OF DESTINATION

With the above data and taking into account the above factors, it was considered that the core of attraction of the destination should be the combination of the river Tamega and thermal resources, which allowed you to define a brand image with the name «Eurocity the water», adopted by the two local councilors. As the river runs perpendicular to the border allows a circular route round with two nodes in the urban core of the two cities and several nodes and complex secondary attraction in nearby villages, which account for historical resources, and ethnographic landscape, as well as hot springs.

The strategic design of the Eurocity as a tourist destination and was structured in two main areas, acting simultaneously as connecting links for activities and as factors in remodeling of the entire territory, «the Green Corridor area of the river» and «City of Health», that share should tend to form a «Thermal Destination Excellence.»

The main lines of action to promote Tâmega Ecological Corridor, contains a very broad as they are also very different aspects that influence the concept of sustainable land and therefore affect the environmental quality of a tourist destination treatment of surface and underground, biotope care, sources of energy, landscape and natural and cultural, etc.. Consequently, the proposed measures aim to collect those aspects and make them social and institutional commitments to the configuration of the destination, which will aim to parallel the quality of life for residents:

1. Improve water quality and rivers as a key development
2. Create a quality green
3. Transform environmentally Eurocity through a Shared Agenda 21
4. Rehabilitate rural and traditional urban

In parallel, lines of action to promote the City Health should follow the European guidelines for improving the quality of life of citizens, which are clearly intended to get here by the government greater efficiency in the management of health resources. To these actions must be added that modern spas appears much more oriented to the enjoyment and relaxation that the nineteenth century idea of curing some diseases and this change, made in that larger welfare was included in the draft to Eurocity form an attractive current definition of health, so that the proposed measures also affect residents and visiting tourists:

1. Ensure universal access to public health
2. Increasing social and market value of the thermal resources through business cooperation
3. Turning a European reference Eurocity health, nature and water

Ultimately, the goal of these measures will make the Eurocity (whether under the name Water Eurocity), a wellness destination of excellence, focusing on health, nature and leisure. Logically, the consolidation of an area of thermal tourism excellence in this area requires an integrated approach: an innovative offering, quality equipment and specialized services (spa), a professional in the field offer hospitality and restaurant development complementary services and activities that stimulate and generate synergies (interpretive center for spas, health and beauty products, business, cultural and leisure) and in any event, a special emphasis on the existing tourism offerings have already been mentioned (the golden path and magical views, the path of dams, Rock Art routes and smuggling, in addition to the branch of the Camino de Santiago in the Algarve, among others). All this combined with the construction of an environment friendly, healthy and environmentally sustainable.

Finally, as conclusions can be highlighted:

- The whole area has the resources, some of them turned into products and current offers, allowing you to develop a coordinated and attractive tourist source markets for the peninsula and Europe.
- The river Tâmega appears as the core target named Eurocity water, for its geographical location and its flow north-south, perpendicular to the border, it becomes the main

factor in remodeling of the territory. At the same time, the thermal resources constitute the second generic element that identifies the uniqueness of the destination

- The two cities take the place of basic units of configuration spa destination, with excellent potential, with secondary attraction nodes (based on landscape and culture) to the demand segments interested in these offers. Each also features resources that complement the neighbor, so objectively, it is reasonable to imagine in the medium term a new economic structure of its production system that may be presented and promoted as a benchmark in the modern European Hydrotherapy
- The ultimate objective of the proposed measures is to increase regional competitiveness and territorial cohesion as possible, which together with the history and practices of cooperation observed, would favor the construction of a new cultural landscape, based on the common language and the high degree of social acceptance Eurocity project
- add, the substantial institutional support to this project can also imagine a scenario of reduction or even elimination in some cases, the barriers and obstacles arising from asymmetries in the management competencies of the two regions
- The main weakness however is the apparent lack of knowledge of business collaboration in tourism activities and more specifically in paragraphs relating to thermalism, essential to develop any project for joint use of resources and without which there is Eurocity as possible to promote the wellness destination of excellence.

