

ACCESS TO RURAL DESTINATIONS: A PERSPECTIVE FOR A SPATIAL TOURISM PLANNING IN AN INLAND REGION (CASTILLA-LA MANCHA)

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The article proposes a typology of touristic areas, based on functionality and with the aim to assess the possibilities for touristic development on rural areas according to its location concerning the actual demand markets. There is a gap in the literature for this approach, where origin, destination, and its connection flows are studied in relation to locations.

The motivation of this study are the recent changes in touristic trends, together with the outstanding growth in mobility and reduction of travel times. These elements have determined the transition from a predominant tourism for masses towards new touristic patterns (Martínez Quintana, 2006: 94-95), also linked to social changes (Cohen, 2005). They have an important influence over the spatial variable (Hiernaux, 2006; Pearce, 2014; Pillet, 2015), opening a way to re-interpret the connection of inland rural areas, essentially focusing on the touristic travel by road.

The outcome of the empirical procedure proposed allow us to build an origin-destination matrix with the distance-time vectors between the nodes emitting flows and inland destinations in Castilla-La Mancha, taking as origins the main cities (market areas) in a national scale. These space-time relations yield as a result four types of market areas with specific touristic dynamics according to their degree of accessibility:

- Areas of urban leisure; placed close to agglomerations and important cities and can develop activities limited on time.
- Areas of intensive leisure; the touristic activity is framed within one day with no need to sleep over one night. The estimation is that travel time does not exceed 45 minutes (90 minutes round trip).
- Areas of alternative tourism in rural environments; in these there is a need of lodging and services to meet the demand of visitors. It is estimated a travel time of 90 minutes (180 minutes round trip).

- Areas of extensive or spatial tourism where the territory acquires more relevance becoming an attraction itself. In this case, the need of more travel time leads to longer stays in order to take advantage of the trip.

The image of rural places as inaccessible remains associated to these areas. The main touristic assets of the regional supply are predominantly rural, and lead us to consider link nodes as a guarantee to access destinations (thought as a territory). Nowadays the spatial and social process of tourism is characterized for the extension of the touristic function to all the territory (Vera, 2011: 33) and put the areas under the pressure of a constant search of products environmentally attractive (Marchena, 1993: 123).

The strategic approach reveals as a proper tool for managing the tourism under a systemic viewing taking advantage of the territory as a whole and not limited to only one asset or one specific experience. There is a lack of a proper strategic regulation of the sector, both for peripheral or inland destinations; in this latter case we have accounted a raise in the competitiveness among similar destinations (Cohen, 2005) together with a raise of demand for leisure activities closer to main urban agglomerations.

This fact requires a review of the epistemological content of destination as an academic concept. In practice, the conceptualization of destination is attached to the view imposed by those agents responsible of touristic management. One vision that not always considers tourism as a friction, as an interchange between origins and destinies, networks and nodes (Subirats, 2002: 415) and therefore, the national transport network is a key element to understand new touristic products.

According to Pearce (2014: 32) contextualization and characterization of a destination (as a territory) in a scale system ease the approach for strategic action. Its treatment as an open system may 'constitute a useful framework to tackle the problems of the administrative limits and so the level where managing tourism and destinations are better implemented'.

This assessment lead us to analyse the touristic destination from a structural perspective of origin-link-destiny that many spatial system are taking in as a counterpoint of the traditional definition. However, we should not forget the spatial dimension of tourism, and the need for spatial limits for touristic planning neither. Because of that, in the absence of normative shrines of sub-reginal scale in Castilla-La Mancha we take the reference of the consolidated rural areas in the last Rural Development Program 2007-2013 in Castilla-La Mancha, considering this supra-municipality scale of great relevance in this extensive and heterogeneous region (Antón y González, 2005: 24).

The transfer of functions to intermunicipal entities beneath the province can be carried out officially, just like the Spanish legislation recognizes in the 1985 Law on Local Regime. The LEADER territories, and so the national program PRODER, were thought to apply spatial strategies to overcome the negative aspects of rurality and introduce multifunctionality in these areas. They adapt by definition to the touristic spatial planning, and we can find numerous cases of efficacy in valuing of the local touristic systems, led by the Local Action Groups (GAL), since these processes were respectful with identities, transversely and aware of the diversity of the tourism phenomenon.

In our opinion, the analysis of the interaction between touristic market areas and rural areas is relevant for decision-making and touristic planning for several reasons. It

combines different elements and put them in relation with a systemic approach, allowing the understanding of the process and its planning at the same time. More and more the choice of a destination is determined for the adaptability and respond to the needs and touristic preferences. In this sense, the leisure time available and distance arises as crucial variables of decision. This article develops some results connecting these variables and build some synthetic cartography up. These results highlight the possible relevance of such analysis to understand the potential of touristic destinations from the connection perspective, the precedence of demand and the paths followed by it to get access to destinations, which may be helpful in complement with other policies.

Therefore, this line of research offers a new field of work in spatial management. Following the spatial base of rural developments groups (GAL), they are interested in boost the touristic sector and should identify their potential markets of visitors, the nodes and links between supply and demand, so they can adapt their strategies to a touristic profile including location. In that sense, we have identified three kind of relations for the case study:

1. The first type of market area corresponds to the *intensive recreational areas*. It would be included territories such as ADAC, FADETA, Don Quijote de La Mancha and Castillos del Medio Tajo (Madrid's metropolitan market); Monte Ibérico-Corredor de Almansa and Campos de Hellín (Southeast market). In general, there is a low level of specialization and activities directly related with tourism.
2. The second type of areas show a lower level of accessibility and form the so-called *areas of alternative tourism in rural areas*: Sierra de Guadalajara, Alcarria Conquense, ADESIMAN, Dulcinea, PROMANCHA, Montes Toledanos, Tierras de Talavera, ADECOR (northern market area; ADIMAN, La Manchuela, SACAM (Mediterranean market area); and Tierras de Libertad (Southern market area). Not all of them have followed the same evolution, because some of them show a high level of touristic function while others lack the effect of better integration in transport corridors.
3. The third type corresponds to *areas of extensive tourism* in peripheral areas in terms of access. They have a twofold condition: on the one hand they take in a noteworthy supply based on rural assets and an important value of their landscape: Molina de Aragón-Alto Tajo, PRODESE, Sierra del Segura, Cabañeros and, in a lesser extent, Valle de Alcudia-Sierra Madrona. In these cases it is confirmed a high touristic function rate because of the availability of accommodation together with their geographical location. On the other hand, we find territories with an extensive transport network: La Mancha del Júcar Centro and El Záncara, in Albacete, or some rural areas in Ciudad Real; Campo de Calatrava and Alto-Guadiana Mancha. These have failed to consolidate a sufficient touristic supply to boost specialization in this sector.

In conclusion, the accessibility can be another resource to attract tourism towards the destination, combining its inner characteristics to the quality of being accessible. In the absence of a driven process. The spatial analysis of this work reveals that this geographical

condition, accessibility, is a relevant factor in the development of tourism as an economic element. Especially in those areas located in a context with different levels of rurality and values of high touristic level, whether natural, landscape or cultural. Meanwhile, the areas with a higher connectivity level, literally crossed by transport infrastructures, and these areas in a short time-distance range from the main origin places, present in their accessibility a negative factor for the development of tourism.

From the theoretical perspective, this relation is out of question, because tourism is based on movement and an important part of the tourist is to decide about this. In the light of the results achieved we highlight the relevance that accessibility acquires, as well as its direct impact in the touristic development. Thus, we insist in the interest of including accessibility elements in touristic planning, for its explicative potential and its relation with the configuration of touristic markets. In this way, we point out the possibility for alternative ways to the sectoral treatment of tourism despite the complexity and diversity of inner rural areas of tourism.

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