

PERCEPTION OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM IN THE VISION OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE WESTERN SIERRA MORENA (ANDALUSIA, SPAIN)

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Abstract. Rural spaces take into account the multifunctionality of uses and economic diversification as adaptive strategies for development, while becoming areas for new socio-economic activities. Tourism is regarded as a tool for generating local development processes in this context. The goal of this study is to investigate the local development processes triggered by tourist activity in the three westernmost Nature Parks of Sierra Morena: Sierra de Aracena and Picos de Aroche (Huelva), Sierra Norte de Sevilla (Seville) and Sierra de Hornachuelos (Cordoba). A mixed methodology was applied: (1) conducting interviews with stakeholders so as to ascertain the perception of those who participate in the development processes or influence them; (2) using secondary data to evaluate the impact of tourism on local development. The results of the work indicate that: (1) turning the areas into Nature Parks has repercussions on the tourist supply and demand; (2) the economic dimension of tourism in local development is prevalent in the dominant discourse, while expectations are not found; (3) socio-cultural impacts on the community are barely perceived by stakeholders, with few positive impacts of tourism on the local community; (4) the environmental dimension is regarded as a personal, rather than a collective matter, underestimating environmental impacts; (5) tourism development in the different municipalities and Nature Parks is irregular. In conclusion, the effect of tourism on local development processes in the study area is limited, although there are differences between municipalities and Nature Parks.

1. INTRODUCTION

In rural areas where traditional activities have declined and employment opportunities are scarce (Marini & Mooney, 2006; Saxena *et al.*, 2007; Ramsey & Malcolm, 2017; Pezzi *et al.*, 2019), the multifunctionality of resource uses and the economic diversification around those resources are adaptive strategies for development (Saxena *et al.*, 2007; Wilson, 2010; Woods, 2011). Thus, rural spaces are no longer just spaces for agricultural production (Mormont, 1994), but also places that stimulate new socio-economic activities, such as leisure, tourism, catering, production and consumption of specialised foods, as well as the maintenance of biodiversity, among others (Saxena *et al.*, 2007; Pinto-Correia & Breman, 2008; Anton-Clavé *et al.*, 2008; Woodhouse *et al.*, 2018; Belliggiano *et al.*, 2020). In these spaces, capitalising on natural and cultural heritage as resources and their reinterpretation becomes an opportunity for regional and local development (Ray, 1999). Thus, tourism is seen as a desirable

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diversifying agent (Brouder, 2012) and a challenge (Sharpley, 2002) capable of leading to the endogenous development and consolidation of local development processes (Sharpley, 2002; Cànoves *et al.*, 2003; Cànoves *et al.*, 2006) and to the regeneration of peripheral spaces during a crisis, making it possible to overcome the obstacles of peripherality, including accessibility, competition, and depopulation (Priedaux, 2002; Bohlin *et al.*, 2016; Ramsey & Malcolm, 2017).

In the European Union, the Common Agrarian Policy (CAP) established a favourable context for the implementation of rural tourism (Cànoves & Villarino, 2000), which frequently insists on tourist activities (Wanhill, 1997; Márquez-Fernández *et al.*, 2006; Nieto-Masot & Cárdenas-Alonso, 2017; Engelmo-Moriche *et al.*, 2021; Tirado-Ballesteros & Hernández-Hernández, 2016; Gómez-Moreno & Rubio-Barquero, 2020) and establishes the competitiveness of the tourism services (Wanhill, 1999) as a development strategy (OECD, 1994), sometimes being the only strategy proposed (Carson, 2018). Rural and protected nature areas (PNA) will be attractive for tourism, establishing themselves as backgrounds for tourist activities. Although the environmental strategy is the classic motivation in PNA, it is a segmented rural tourism that incorporates nature products (Flather & Cordell, 1995; Anton-Clavé *et al.*, 2008).

Sustainable development appears as an ideology or as a “culturally assumed pre-understanding of the environment” (Serrano-Barquín, 2008: 330) which generates sustainable tourism. While local development is a holistic and long-term concept in a specific space (local/regional) (Serrano-Barquín, 2008), rural development is a context (Gómez-Moreno, 2011). Thus, sustainable development as a framework for tourism activities is essential for tourism to be a development instrument (Berno & Bricker, 2001). Sustainability is often attributed to rural tourism (Belligiano *et al.*, 2020), based on the premise that there is a certain harmony between the needs of the visitor interested in the host community, the place based on the landscape and environmental attractions of the spaces, and the receiving community, since there are a limited number of visitors, who do not need a wide range of services, infrastructures and equipment (SIEs) (Cànoves *et al.*, 2006). However, this is not always the case (Cànoves *et al.*, 2006), and many sustainability measures have not effectively contributed to achieving this objective (Belligiano *et al.*, 2020). For this reason, tourism in rural areas and PNAs must raise the sustainability question related to endogenous local development processes (Felicidades-García & García-Delgado, 2004), such as rooting, empowerment, and improving the quality of life in the long term (Saxena *et al.*, 2007; Saxena & Ilbery, 2008). From this perspective, Integrated Rural Tourism in lagging regions (Saxena *et al.*, 2007; Saxena & Ilbery, 2008; Saxena & Ilbery, 2010) is seen as local and small-scale tourism, with a more significant correlation between sustainable development and sustainable tourism in a broad sense by generating connections between the economic, social, cultural, natural and human structures of the areas where it takes place (Sharpley, 2000; Saxena *et al.*, 2007; Saxena & Ilbery, 2008; Saxena & Ilbery, 2010).

At the same time, the perspective of rural development focused on tourism runs the risk of neglecting other important factors and processes at the peripheries (Carson, 2018). It is necessary to reconcile it with the PNAs objectives, with socially viable strategies for nature conservation, public use, socio-economic development and quality of life (Troitiño-Vinuesa, 1995; Adamowicz, 2010; Gómez-Moreno & Rubio-Barquero, 2020). For this reason, the analysis of the interdependent dimensions of sustainability (Renfors, 2020) and local development processes (Saxena *et al.*, 2007; Lopez & Ivona, 2018; García-Delgado *et al.*, 2020) is of interest. Although local development processes are linked to the global context (Cànoves & Villarino, 2000), the article considers four dimensions from the immediate local scale of observation and comparison:

- a) Environmental. The optimal use of natural resources compatible with ecological processes, the conservation and protection of the environment and of biodiversity (Bramwell, 1994; Troitiño-Vinuesa, 1995; Cànoves *et al.*, 2005; Cànoves *et al.*, 2006; Anton-Clavé *et al.*, 2008; Cànoves *et al.*, 2014), where tourism appears as an instrument for its enhancement (Bramwell, 1994).

- b) Economic. The economic growth of the community (Bramwell, 1994), the maintenance of economic activities (Cànoves *et al.*, 2014), and tourism as an instrument of economic-business development (Pulido-Fernández, 2007; Roberts & Tribe, 2008).
- c) Socio-cultural. The achievement of equity and social cohesion, the appreciation of social capital and local culture and the respect for local identity and authenticity (Bramwell, 1994; Cànoves *et al.*, 2005), tourism being an instrument for improving the quality of life, thus responding to the interests of local communities (Bramwell, 1994; Cànoves *et al.*, 2005; Cànoves *et al.*, 2006) and their decision-making, especially important in PNAs (Zawilińska, 2020; Gómez-Moreno & Rubio-Barquero, 2020).
- d) Political-institutional. Understanding governance as a political system, legal framework and distribution of transversal power, including the participation of stakeholders and the relations between them, in either a favourable or undeveloped context (Panyik, 2015). Within this political-institutional dimension, territorialization (integration) appears as a result of the contribution of tourism to the reduction of regional disparities and territorial cohesion (Cànoves *et al.*, 2005; Bohlin *et al.*, 2016).

Multifunctionality has prompted marginal and marginalised spaces to search for these new functions, highlighting the fact that tourism is perceived as a panacea (Greffé, 1994; Cànoves *et al.*, 2003; Yubero-Bernabé & García-Hernández, 2019; García-Delgado *et al.*, 2020) that generates expectations in academic, political and popular discourses (Hjalager, 1996; Araque-Jiménez & Crespo-Guerrero, 2010; Bohlin *et al.*, 2016; Dinis *et al.*, 2019), when the reality is that for many rural communities the capacity for tourism development is limited (Koster & Baccar, 2016). In addition, tourism generates environmental, economic, social, cultural and territorial effects and impacts (García-Delgado, 2014), often adverse, on the territories in which it is established (Lane, 1994; Cànoves *et al.*, 2006; Hernández-Hernández, 2009; García-Delgado, 2014; Ramsey & Malcolm, 2017).

Tourism is a development binomial that has been insisted on (Opperman, 1993; Telfer & Sharpley, 2015). Yet, it is necessary to verify whether this correlation is myth or reality (Sharpley, 2002; Bohlin *et al.*, 2016) and analyse the contribution of tourism to development at the local level. There are many proposals for analysis at the micro-scale (Spangenberg, 2002) with the establishment of environmental indicators (Šadeikaitė, 2017) applied to the sustainability of rural tourism and PNA (Blackstock *et al.*, 2008; Torres-Delgado & López-Palomeque, 2014) or to the company (Roberts & Tribe, 2008). However, what is more interesting to analyse is the perception of these elements and processes in the community periphery so as to understand the contribution of tourism to local development in three Nature Parks (NtPs) of Andalusia, Spain, through the issues that stakeholders consider essential with regards to the tourism-development binomial at the local scale, and by contrasting them with secondary data.

2. CASE STUDY

The study area is the Mediterranean mid-mountain of Sierra Morena (Andalusia, Spain). Its ecological and landscape richness has led to the creation of 6 NtPs in 1989, the three westernmost being the focus of this research (Fig. 1): Sierra de Aracena and Picos de Aroche NtP (SAPA), Sierra Norte de Sevilla NtP (SNS) and Sierra de Hornachuelos NtP (SH).

Subsequently, other nature protection figures overlapped in the territory: Special Conservation Zones and Special Protection Zones for Birds, Dehesas de Sierra Morena Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO (2002) and, in the case of the SNS, the UNESCO Global Geopark establishment (2015). In addition, there are four Natural Monuments (CAGPyDS, 2021a) and an essential protection of Cultural Heritage, with 187 real estates protected, among which 17 Historic Sites (GDPHA, 2022).

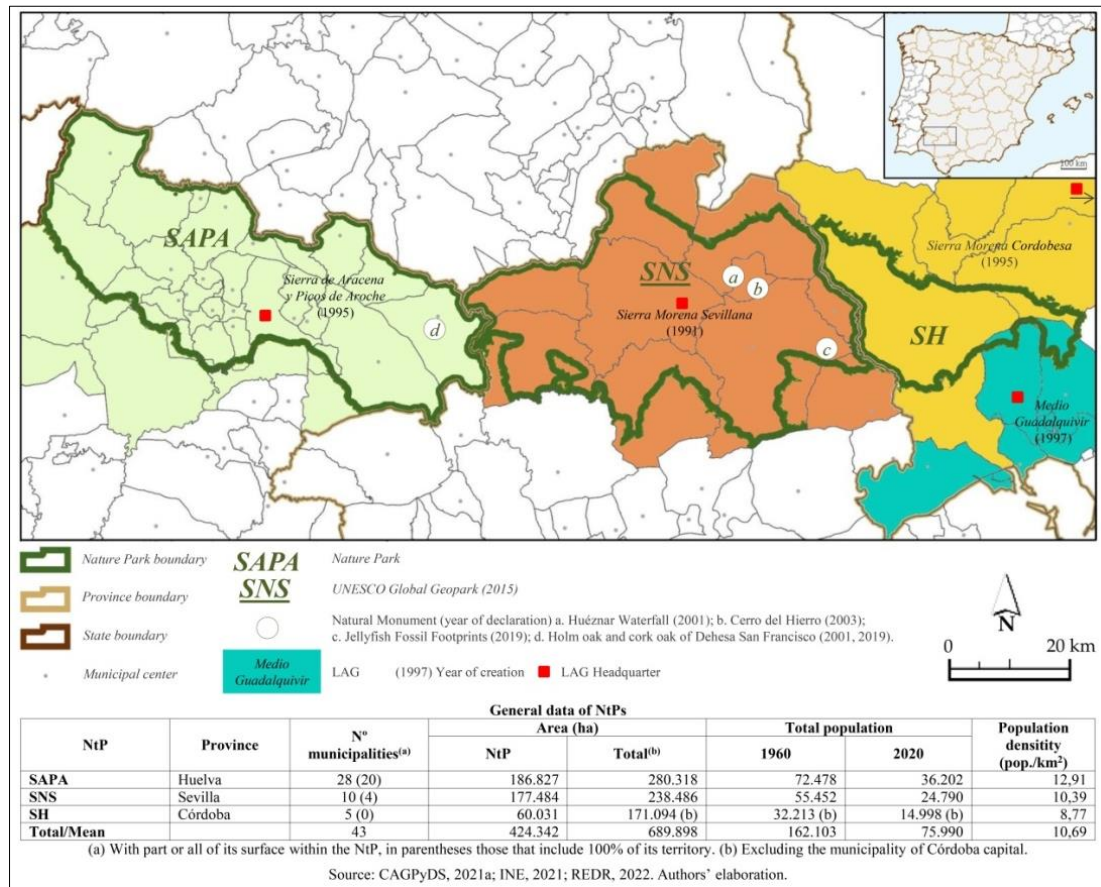


Fig. 1 – Study area.

Overall, there is a significant landscape diversity that increases from SH to SNS-SAPA (Silva-Pérez & Ojeda-Rivera, 2001; Garzón-García & Ramírez-López, 2018) (Figures 2, 3 and 4). Despite this, the dominant landscape is *dehesa*, a cleared Mediterranean forest (Márquez-Domínguez *et al.*, 2001) which has generated an exceptional landscape (Silva-Pérez & Fernández-Salinas, 2015) and subsequent economic activities (Pizarro-Gomez *et al.*, 2020).



Fig. 2 – Cork oak (foreground) and chestnut grove (background) in SAPA



Fig. 3 – Forest-gallery on SNS



Fig. 4 – La dehesa landscape in SH

Authors' elaboration (September 2021).

Most of the area of the three NtPs is private (Mulero-Mendigorry, 2003; Garzón-García & Ramírez-López, 2018). SAPA and SNS are NtPs of great expanse, with numerous municipalities and a network of settlements in their interior, predominantly for livestock and forestry uses (Márquez-Domínguez *et al.*, 2001). While SH has an average-size area, with most of it in a single municipality, it lacks an internal network of settlements where extensive property and a hunting-forestry orientation predominates (Mulero-Mendigorry, 2001; Garzón-García & Ramírez-López, 2018) (Fig. 1). Administratively, the set of three NtPs consists of 43 municipalities¹.

This space has been suffering a demographic crisis since the 1960s as a result of various factors merging together (García-Delgado, 2009), losing 52.55% of its population between 1960 and 2020 (Fig. 1). Today they have an ageing population and a low demographic density of 10.69 inh./km², with 18 municipalities <10 inh./km² (INE, 2021). Of the group, only four municipalities have more than 5,000 inhabitants (2020), and 18 municipalities have fewer than 1,000 inhabitants (INE, 2021).

SAPA and SNS have a regional entity with Local Action Groups (LAGs) that practically identify with their territory, while SH is divided between the two LAGs (Fig. 1). Public and private services are concentrated in the most populated nuclei, which perform urban functions as county seats (García-Delgado, 2009; Mulero-Mendigorry & Silva-Pérez, 2013).

Leisure functions (summer holidays) were already present in these areas in the last quarter of the 19th century (Fernández-Tabales *et al.*, 1993), but itinerant activities (by road) have predominated. In their provincial groups, the three NtPs highlight the importance of urban cultural (Seville and Córdoba) and coastal (Huelva) tourism (García-Delgado, 2008). At the time of the establishment of the NtPs, there was virtually no tourist offer, apart from the Gruta de las Maravillas (Aracena) (Garzón-García & Ramírez-López, 2018). The creation of the Natural Parks has meant an increase in the tourist offer, especially in SAPA, focused on accommodation in rural houses and restaurants, concentrated in the central-eastern municipalities (Fernández-Tabales *et al.*, 1993). The SNS offer is more recent and is also focused in the southern municipalities (Silva-Pérez & Ojeda-Rivera, 2001). In the case of SH, the offer is very scarce and recent, with most of the initiatives located outside the NtP. There has been no joint tourism planning, and each municipality has proposed its own strategies, with relative success in some cases (for example, Aracena, Cazalla de la Sierra, Hornachuelos). Progressively, there has been a shift from passive rural tourism to active rural/nature tourism.

It is a marked peripherality of bordering provinces, autonomous communities and States (Fig. 1), with little accessibility by road to the provincial capitals and very precarious within the regions where only express roads cross the territory.

3. METHODOLOGY

This work is part of a broader investigation (Bahamonde-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022; Bahamonde-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2023) that addresses tourism in NtPs related to three issues: sustainability, governance and local development, the latter being the topic addressed in this article. This research applies a mixed methodology (Sá *et al.*, 2019; García-Delgado *et al.*, 2020). On the one hand, a qualitative method was used, widely applied to tourism studies in rural areas and PNAs (Saxena & Ilbery, 2008; Adamowicz, 2010; Saxena & Ilbery, 2010; Brouder, 2012; Renfors, 2020; Zawilińska, 2020). Forty semi-structured (Int) interviews were conducted between April and July 2021 (Fig. 1). It was a non-probabilistic sampling of the stakeholders based on their importance in cultural, geographic and demographic terms (Saxena *et al.*, 2007; Saxena & Ilbery, 2010), conducting direct interviews with directors of NtPs, managers of LAGs, actors, municipalities and private foundations, while tourism companies and business associations were selected according to the type of services they provide and their local (Dinis

¹ In this study we excluded the municipality of Córdoba capital, with a small protected area (<2%) in SH, which distorts the data.

et al., 2019) or external (Cáceres-Feria & Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2017) character, following the snowball technique (Secor, 2010).

These interviews comprised ten questions (q) (Figs. 5, 6) aimed at finding out the perception, awareness, understanding and commitment, attitudes and practice (Hardy, 2005; Cànoves *et al.*, 2014; Sá *et al.* 2019; Renfors, 2020; Zawilińska, 2020) of those who participate in or influence development processes as well as their evaluation and perception (García-Delgado *et al.*, 2020). This work focuses on q9, “Does tourism contribute to local development?” and the problems derived from tourism (q7, q8) (Hardy, 2005). The interviewees were allowed to refer to the themes they deemed necessary (Brouder, 2012) to obtain information through an inductive analysis (Patton, 2002) and to identify the key themes (Longhurst, 2010), which are coded according to recurring patterns (Renfors, 2020). For this, the interviews were transcribed and coded following the initial structure.

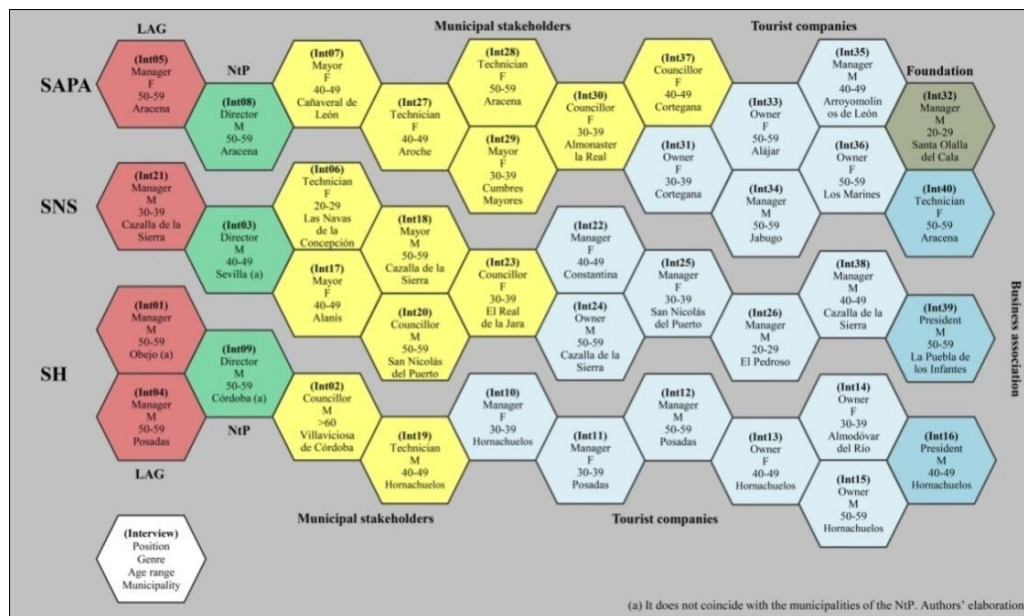


Fig. 5 – Interviews.

Due to the restrictions imposed by the sanitary measures triggered by COVID-19, the interviews were primarily conducted via videoconference, using the Google Meet[®] tool and seeking their territorial balance in relevance within each NtP, as well as centrality or periphery. The impossibility of conducting systematic interviews or questionnaires with the local population led to non-systematised informal interviews. At the same time, territorial recognition was carried out based on the identification and analysis of tourist resources, on the verification of accessibility and connectivity, and on the determination of territorial diversity. On the other hand, the information obtained from the interviews was crossed with municipal quantitative data obtained from statistics and official databases. Finally, a triangulation of the data was carried out (Longhurst, 2010) to maximise the understanding of the phenomenon and the convergence (or lack thereof) of the results (Cope, 2010).

(q1) What function do the Nature Park and Biosphere Reserve have in your destination (and others)?	(q2) What is the value of the landscape in tourism?	(q3) ^(a) How do you perceive sustainable tourism development in your destination?	(q4) ^(b) Does sustainability have a strong effect on the tourism development of your destination? Why?	(q5) ^(a) What kind of conflicts related to sustainability are created between stakeholders?
(q6) ^(a) Could you give a practical example of sustainable tourism development in your destination? What would you improve?	(q7) What happens with your destination in the context of global change?	(q8) Are there difficulties in managing the tourist space?	(q9) ^(b) Does tourism contribute to local development?	(q10) What consequences has COVID-19 had on the destination?

^(a) Questions based on Renfors (2020). ^(b) Questions adapted from Renfors (2020). Authors' elaboration.

Fig. 6 – Interview questions.

4. RESULTS

From the interviews, five main themes were derived around the pairing of tourism and local development, which the informants repeatedly expressed, although with different levels of agreement.

(a) *The establishment of NtPs has repercussions on tourism supply and demand*

The interviewees agree that the tourist activity develops thanks to the establishment of the NtPs in 1989, seeing the difference between the territories within the PNA and those not included (Int08). The regional administration generates public services, infrastructures and equipment (SIEs) linked to the recreational use of NtPs (Fig. 7).

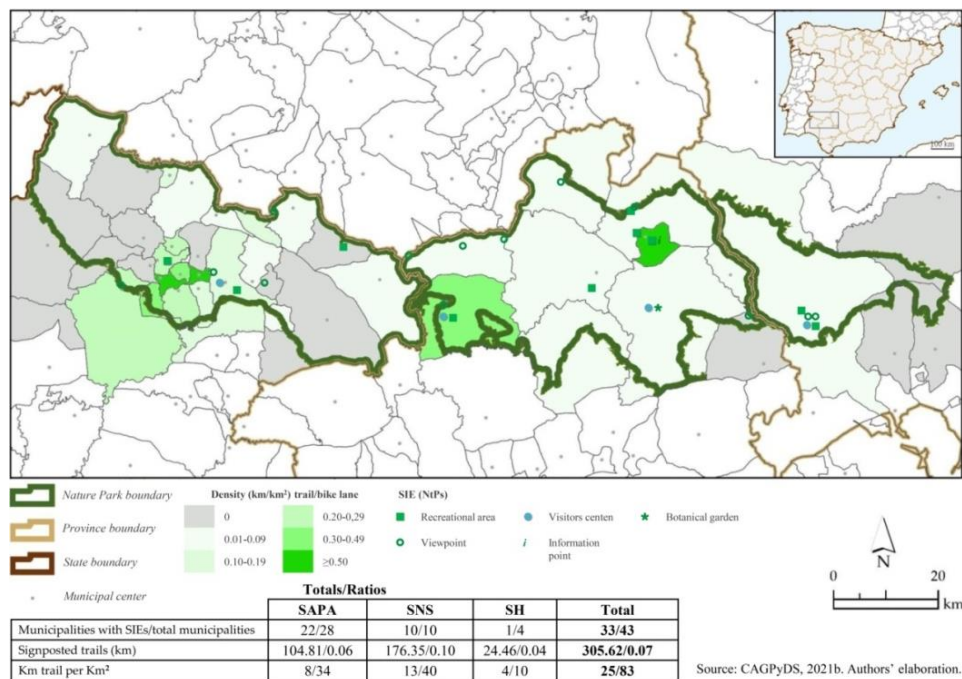


Fig. 7 – Services, infrastructure and public equipment in the NtPs.

Secondary data on the offer of accommodation places (Figs. 8, 9) indicates that before the establishment of the NtPs this was scarce in SAPA, very scarce in SNS and non-existent in SH. The growth of the total offer is greater in SAPA than in SNS and SH, although not in relative numbers (SNS = 9.703%; SAPA = 3.611%; SH: 1.044%). Hiking continues to dominate in many municipalities lacking accommodation. The initial prevalence of camping spaces has disappeared from rural houses and regulated establishments, while tourist apartments (non-business activities) are currently present.

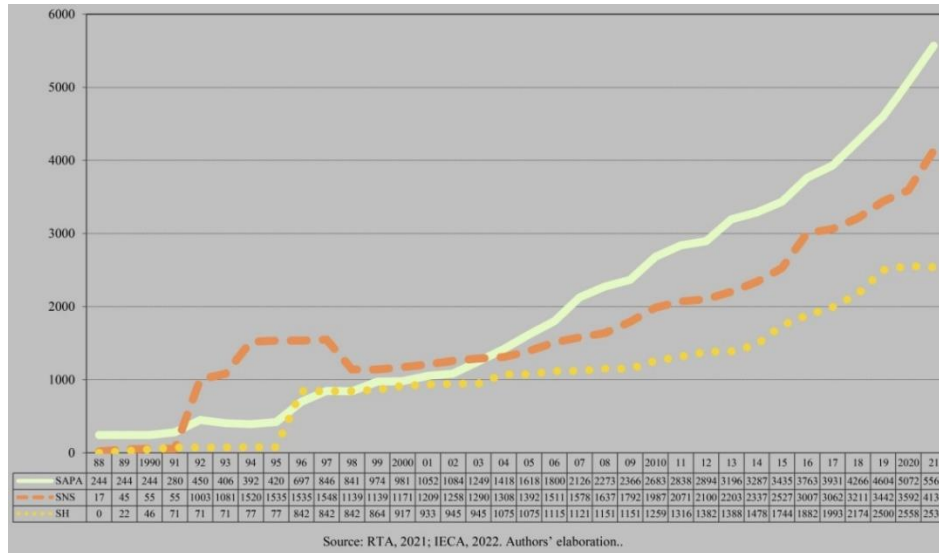


Fig. 8 – The evolution of the number of accommodation places in the study area.

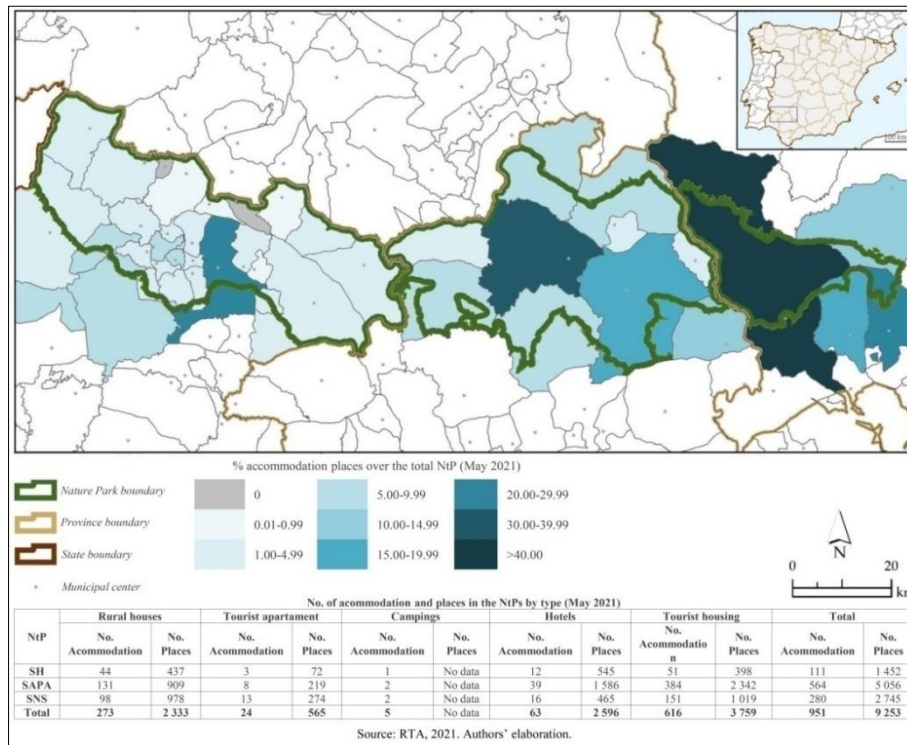


Fig. 9 – Tourist accommodation and places by NtPs (May 2021).

It has progressively gone from leisure tourism to a different, active type of tourism, which has increased the linked supply (Fig. 10). Thus, tourism activity companies have recently cropped up, being generated earlier in SNS.

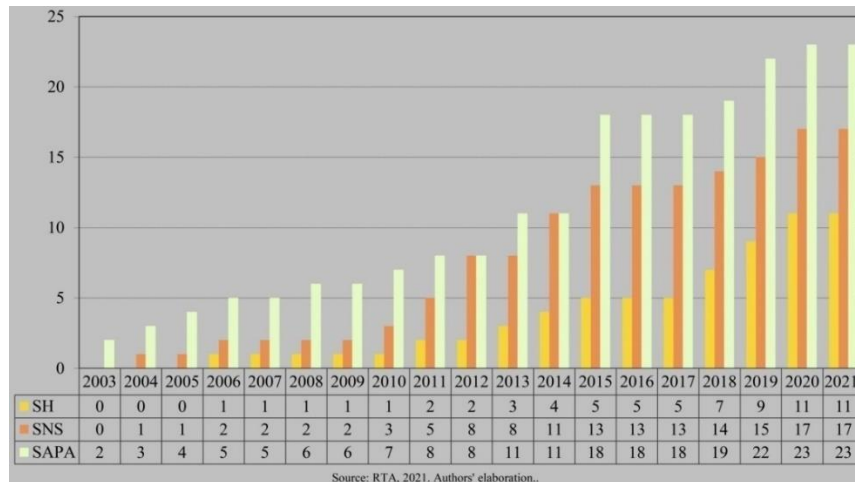


Fig. 10 – The evolution of receptive companies and activities.

(b) The contribution of tourism to the local economy

Most of the municipal stakeholders, business associations and tourism companies highlight that tourism contributes to economic growth, ceasing to be a secondary activity and becoming the main source of income (Int28, Int40) or one of the most important ones (Int19, Int40). Some municipal stakeholders regard the fact that tourism is a secondary activity as negative, while others see tourism as an opportunity (Int30, Int40). It is the tourist companies that believe tourism to have a multiplying effect on the economy, bringing about modern, as opposed to traditional activities (Int13, Int26).

For the directors of the NtPs, the managers of the LAGs, the Foundation, some tourism companies and a business association, tourism is just one more activity (Int01, Int05, Int21, Int39), despite the fact that it produces economic growth and helps to generate an economic movement (Int32), sometimes affecting the maintenance and recovery of farms taking advantage of synergies (Int05, Int08, Int21, Int31, Int32, Int33). However, they highlight that excessive expectations are frequently generated (Int05, Int09), especially among municipal stakeholders who see tourism as “a panacea, disregarding everything that is not tourism” (Int05).

The net income declared by the municipality with respect to the average area between 1989 and 2019 decreased in 26 municipalities, while only 16 increased, and only 2 exceeded the average (Fig. 11).

Taking 2009 (the beginning of the international economic crisis) and 2019 (before the pandemic) as reference points, the main business sector (except agriculture) (Fig. 12) tends to gather companies in retail trade, while a change towards tourist activities with a tendency to a high specialisation is present in only 4 municipalities (SAPA).

Among the municipal stakeholders, there is no perception of a tourism development problem if there is complementarity with other activities (Int02, Int07, Int17, Int18, Int23, Int28). The managers of LAGs and the Foundation do not perceive a risk of specialisation and dependency, considering that the tourist activity is a complementary one (Int05, Int32).

LAGs managers highlight that there are families whose main economic resources come from tourism (Int05), and that this generates employment among young people who work in companies, but also undertake employment or are self-employed (Int04). For some municipal stakeholders, tourism employment is very important, although sometimes it is self-employment (Int30), since tourism companies limit the generation of employment because they are micro-enterprises and create part-time

and temporary jobs (Int15). For their part, some companies point out the precariousness of employment. The directors of the NtPs refer to the need for training in the sector, which is regarded by the managers of LAGs as a challenge (Int21).

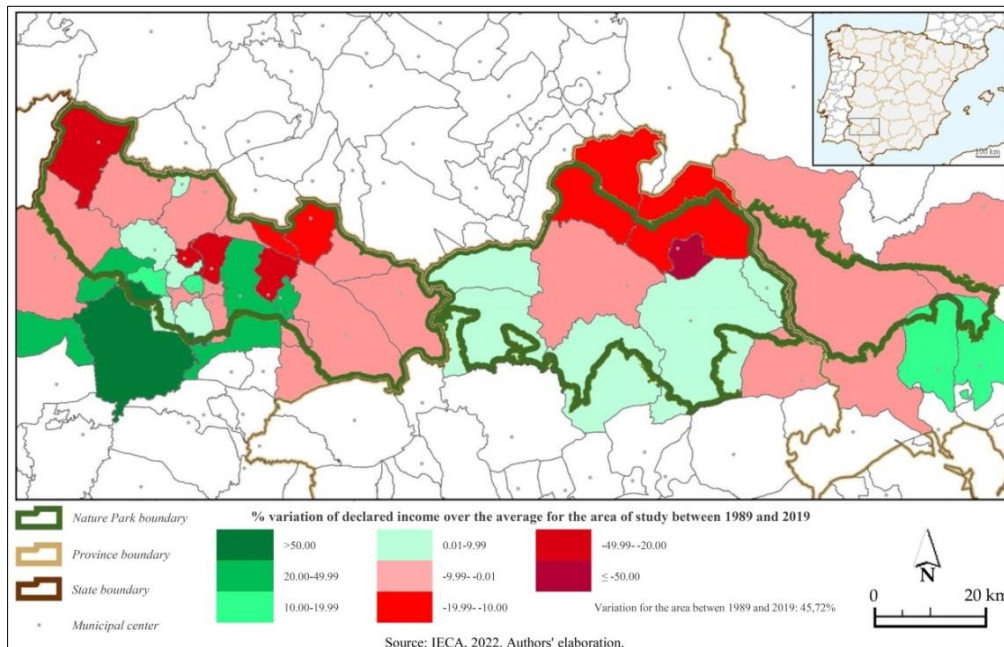


Fig. 11 – The variation of declared net income over the total study area between 1989 and 2019.

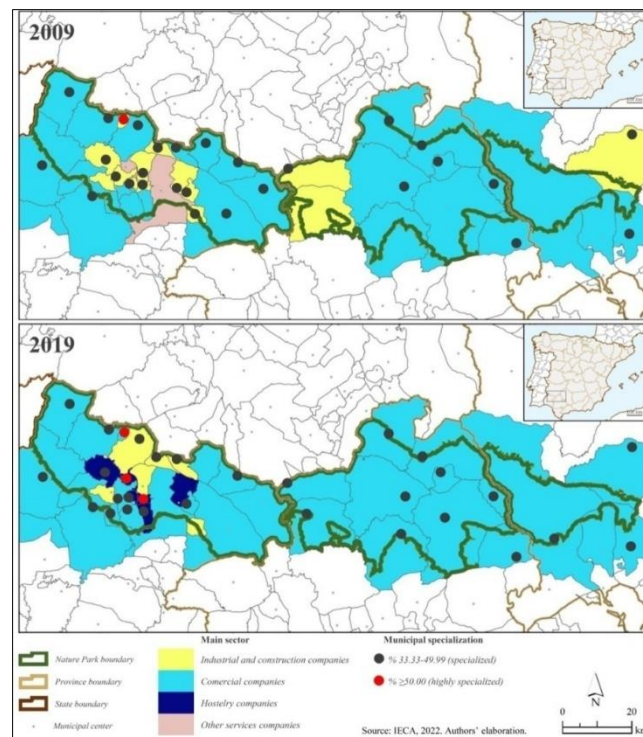


Fig. 12 – Companies by main sector of activity in 2009 and 2019.

The tourism employment data by municipality appear within the services sector. Analysing the main sector of activity by percentage of employment in 2009 and 2019 (Fig. 13) one may note that employment is focused in the primary sector in 13 municipalities in 2009 and in 15 municipalities in 2019 (it increases in SAPA), is more prevalent in SNS and SH, and sees a high specialization in more than half of the municipalities. In another 12 municipalities (SAPA and SNS) it is the (generic) services that employ the majority of the population in both years. Industry is only the main source of employment in 2 municipalities in both annuities (SAPA), while construction declines in 7 municipalities in favour of services.

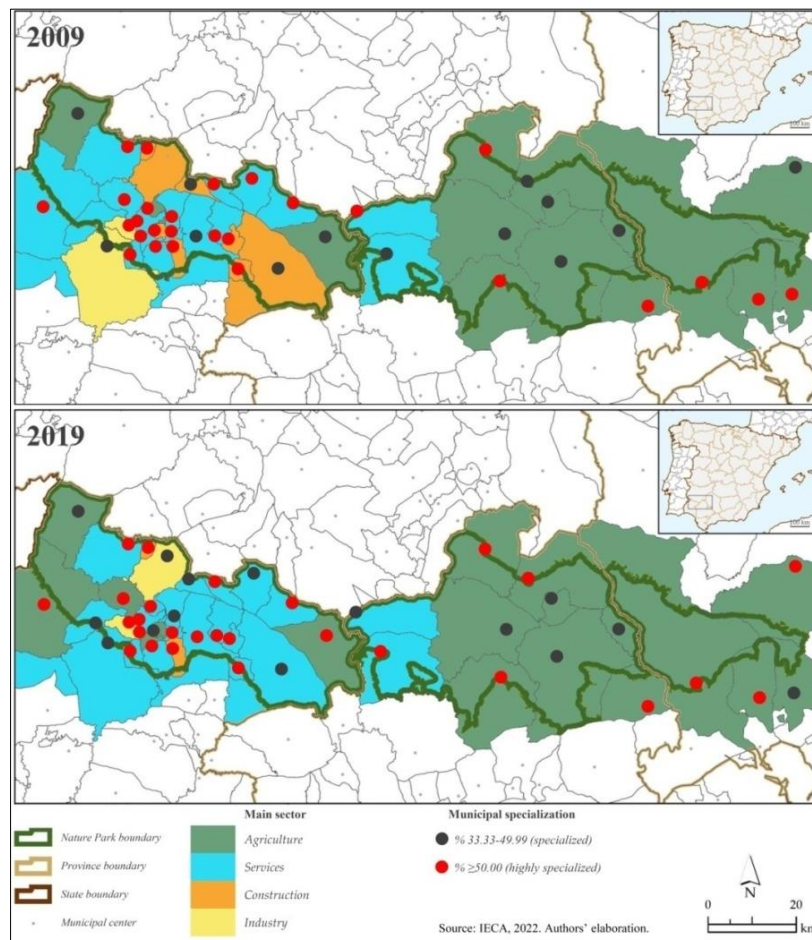


Fig. 13 – Employment by main sector of activity in 2009 and 2019.

On the other hand, unemployment continues to be endemic, and in 2019 only 8 municipalities registered values under the regional average (Fig. 14).

LAGs managers and some tourism companies highlight that significant investments in the tourism sector flow from outside the territory and generate certain dependency relationships, which do not contribute to development (Int05, Int13, Int21, Int22, Int35).

The greatest limitations of tourism in terms of generating economic growth are, according to the various stakeholders: seasonality (Int01, Int08, Int16, Int18, Int34, Int35), short stays (Int01, Int18), the territorial concentration of initiatives (Int08, Int35) and the scarce diversity of the offer (variety, quality and temporality) (Int01, Int08, Int18, Int34), highlighting some where the continuous tourist flow is

necessary, but not greater (Int01, Int24), and customer loyalty (Int18) for the viability of companies, through the creation of innovative products (Int35). The NtPs directors, LAGs managers and tourism entrepreneurs insist on differentiating between tourists who stay, demand services and spend, stimulating other activities/sectors and generating added value (Int24), a multiplier effect (Int22) and promoting the territory (Int25); and visitors, who frequently do not leave any benefit in the territory (Int03, Int09, Int15, Int26), which is extended (from tourist accommodation) to those who go to rural houses on weekends and bring everything from their place of residence (Int35). However, this opinion is in the minority among municipal stakeholders.

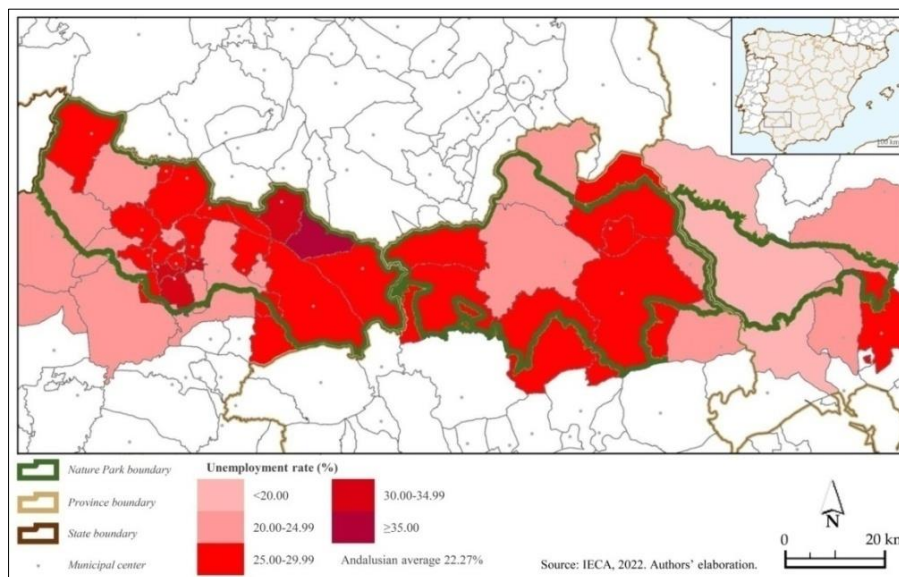


Fig. 14 – Municipal unemployment rate (2019).

(c) The limited social impacts of tourism on the local community

Most informants do not directly address the sociocultural influences, with the demographic variable being mentioned most often.

The NtPs directors do not refer to the contribution of tourism in the fight against depopulation, although they recognize demographic ageing as a problem (Int08).

For the managers of the LAGs, tourism has not contributed to limiting the depopulation process. Although tourism business activities are more in line with young people and generate opportunities (Int04), there is a lack of specific aid to avoid emigration (Int05, Int21) and attract troops (Int01), in a society where the idea of leaving the town is rooted (Int04), reinforced by the deficiency of public and private services and communication infrastructures (Int01, Int21), the arrival of the population being a neo-rural exception (Int21).

Among the municipal stakeholders there is no agreement. For some, tourism contributes to stabilizing the population, slows down depopulation and increases opportunities for young people (Int19). For others, in order to improve the population, it is necessary to have services and technological resources, as seen with the increase in population due to the pandemic (Int18, Int29). There is no shortage of those who claim that tourism does not stop depopulation (Int02) and that emigration is its cause (Int06).

Tourism companies admit that tourism does not mean the end of depopulation (Int33). Still, it is an opportunity (Int39), since it allows the stabilization of the rural population (Int35), highlighting that despite the emigration of young people, many return to set up tourism-related businesses (Int26). On the

other hand, some tourism companies speak of a neo-rural population, which develops projects with different points of view (Int31), which is perceived negatively by a part of the local companies, which indicates that it does not affect the resident population. (Int10). Only one business association suggests that the anti-depopulation effects of tourism are limited (Int39).

According to data from the Continuous Census conducted between 1991 and 2019, a demographic decrease is noted (Fig. 15), affecting 35 municipalities, being $\leq 20.00\%$ in 12 municipalities, while of the seven municipalities that registered an evolution, only one had a growth of $\leq 20.00\%$.

Two tourism companies, LAGs managers and a municipal stakeholder point out the forgetfulness of the local population, and observe the danger of “not denying anything to tourists” (Int10). There is a maladjustment of visitors to the local population (Int21), which affects the relationships between it and the tourist population, limiting the ways of life of the residents (Int01). It is necessary to educate the tourist regarding native customs (Int03, Int10) so that there is a beneficial change in the life of the local population (Int31, int37). Only for one of the tourism companies and for municipal stakeholders does tourism value tangible heritage and traditional, immaterial work (Int22, Int23, Int27, Int29).

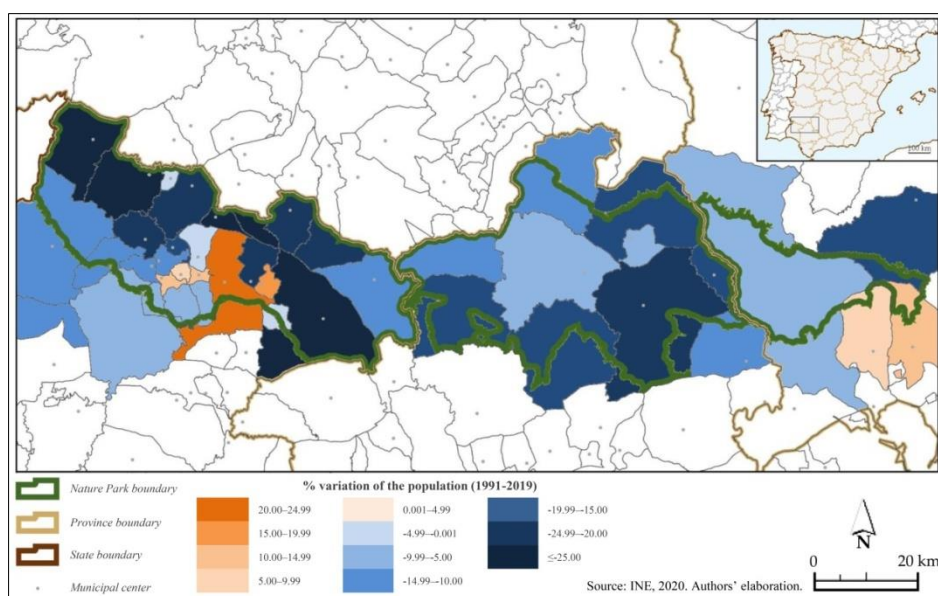


Fig. 15 – Variation of the population between 1991 and 2019.

(d) The limited environmental impacts of tourism activities

From an environmental perspective, the directors of NtPs see a need for tourism based on the environment (how it is respected and used), which is valued and consumed, corresponding to an increase in quality (Int03). For LAGs managers, the sustainability of the environment, particularly regarding land uses and traditional activities, is an attraction for tourism. However, visitors and the resident population must perceive it as such (Int03, Int04). For the Foundation, environmental sustainability is necessary for tourism to contribute to local development (Int32), and sometimes it perceives over-frequency, making it essential to control flows in order to monitor negative impacts.

There is no agreement among municipal stakeholders on the environmental dimension of tourism activities. Some perceive it as a problem, considering it necessary to implement actions for the sustainability of tourist activity in high-traffic municipalities, controlling the flows (Int28, Int37). In contrast, in the more peripheral municipalities, there are intentions to avoid the effects of over-frequency (Int20, Int23), betting on quality (Int20) and employing specific financing measures (Int23). Others

believe that sustainability is quite a foreign concept for the municipalities, rendering it necessary to increase tourist flows so as to then increase the economic benefit (Int07).

Tourism companies highlight that sometimes there is an overexploitation of resources in places (SAPA, SH) where all the tourist activity is focused (Int35), pointing out that tourism must be controlled to “not die of its own success” (Int10) and respect sustainability (Int34, Int35). Some companies attribute unsustainable behaviours to companies that come or are from the outside (Int38), while others see sustainability as an opportunity for segmentation (Int33, Int36, int40).

On the other hand, what stands out is the difficulty in managing waste due to the condition of NtPs (Int21, Int40) and the lack of ad hoc financing (Int39).

Only one of the NtPs directors emphasised *Excessive water consumption* (Int08). At the same time, municipal stakeholders (Int37) and tourism companies (Int10, Int31) highlight that tourists look for rural houses with swimming pools during the summer as a consequence of the pandemic.

(e) Unequal tourism development between municipalities and NtPs

From a territorial perspective of integration and structuring, the unequal distribution of accommodation and the number of beds in the territory is a fact (Fig. 9), with a concentration of accommodation supply in the most central and best-linked areas.

In the provision of SIEs, there are essential differences between the NtPs, with SNS being the best equipped and SH the worst (Fig. 7). There is also an imbalance within NtPs, with a tendency to gather SIEs, which are well distributed only in SNS.

For the directors of the NtPs, there is a centre-periphery relationship in tourist activities (Inst03, Int08, Int09), but they do not indicate the exact cause.

For their part, the managers of the LAGs affirm that tourism is a more or less critical activity depending on the place (Int04), and only one of them does not note geographic concentration (Int01). Those who see the concentration point out that tourism is gradually opening up to peripheral municipalities (Int04, Int21). They highlight that various initiatives were launched to avoid the focusing of activity, including creating routes through the most peripheral areas and developing projects in municipalities with little or no tourism (Int05). They cite the Sierra Morena GR-48 Trail that runs through the three NtPs (and beyond) and the Jabugo Route (SAPA).

There is no agreement among the municipal stakeholders. For some, there is no tourist concentration (Int02, Int28), since each municipality has its dynamics (Int06). For others, there is a concentration of tourism due to the focusing of natural or cultural heritage (Int07), a more significant financial capacity (Int07), or receiving more aid and being favoured (Int30). Some point out that the problem lies in contextual limitations, such as ageing, population size, income and investment (Int20).

Between tourism companies and business associations, there are very different visions. For some, there is a concentration of tourist activities due to the support of the Town Halls (Int39) and a favourable political and institutional context for tourism (Int13, Int26, Int38), which encourages visits to central over peripheral municipalities (Int10, Int35). For others, there is an agglutination of activities in municipalities, but it is unexpected, without planification (Int40), partly explained by the non-existence of demand thresholds (Int10). Some tourism companies and business associations deny the presence of tourism focusing, highlighting that projects are being addressed in other places so that the effect expands in municipalities with little or no initiative (Int36), since this usually results in a diversification of endogenous products and resources that allow residents to go on living there (Int36), trying to create a destination so that people who already go to the most touristic municipalities move throughout the NtP (SAPA).

By NtPs, the concentration is especially appreciated in SAPA, around seven municipalities, while in SNS, it occurs in 5, and in SH in 1 (Table 1).

Table 1

Concentration of activities in the NtPs by municipality, according to the informants

NtP	Municipalities with concentration	Cause
SAPA	Aracena	Proximity to the issuing markets (Int05, Int08, Int27) Accessibility (Int05, Int08) Geographic Centrality (Int35) Historical heritage (Int05, Int07, Int35) Gruta de las Maravillas (Int05, Int07, Int34, Int34, Int35) It has more financial resources (Int07, Int34) Receives more aid and support from LAGs and Business Associations (Int30) Service Concentration (Int35, Int40)
	Alájar, Almonaster la Real, Castaño del Robledo, Fuenteheridos, Galaroza, Linares de la Sierra	Historical heritage (Int05, Int07) Geographic Centrality (Int27, Int35) Proximity to Aracena (Int05, Int07, Int27)
SNS	Almadén de la Plata	Accessibility (Int21) Historical heritage (Int21)
	Cazalla de la Sierra	Proximity to the issuing markets (Int09, Int21) Accessibility (Int21) Historical heritage (Int21) Municipal power/institutional context (Int38, Int39)
	Constantina	Proximity to the issuing markets (Int09, Int21) Accessibility (Int21) Historical heritage (Int21)
	Real de la Jara	Accessibility (Int21) Historical heritage (Int21)
	San Nicolás del Puerto	Natural heritage (Int20)
SH	Hornachuelos	Proximity to the issuing markets (Int03) Closeness to the core of the NtP (Int03, Int11) Direct access to NtP (Int14) Municipal power/institutional context (Int10, Int13)
	Pantano de la Breña (Norte dentro SH)	Natural heritage (Int04) Accessibility (Int04)

Source: Interviews. Authors' elaboration.

5. DISCUSSION

Leisure functions (summer) were already present in these areas in the last quarter of the 19th century, especially in SAPA (Fernández-Tabales *et al.*, 1993). Still, the offer was very scarce (Garzón-García & Ramírez-López, 2018), and itinerant activities predominated (Hardy, 2007). The establishment of NtPs supposes the creation of accommodation, service companies and restaurants, as observed in other NtPs (Araque-Jiménez *et al.*, 2002; Anton-Clavé *et al.*, 2008; Cànoves *et al.*, 2014). At the time, the regional administration (through the NtPs) developed public SIEs, often without feasibility studies (Araque-Jiménez *et al.*, 2002; Anton-Clavé *et al.*, 2008).

However, although the informants do not influence it, the turning point of the accommodation offer will be generated with the favourable institutional framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with the implementation of the LAGs starting in 1991 (SNS) and 1995-1997 (SAPA, SH), by contributing the community initiative LEADER (I, II and +) and national PRODER (I and II) and EAFRD programmes to the revitalisation of tourism (Araque-Jiménez & Crespo- Guerrero, 2010; Belliggiano *et al.*, 2020). In general, there has been an irregular success of the initiatives, depending on the investment, location, presence of protected resources and accessibility for tourist survival (Engelmo-

Moriche *et al.*, 2021), by prioritising opening tourist establishments with less attention to the planning (Pitarch-Garrido & Arnandis-i-Agramunt, 2014; Nieto-Masot & Cárdenas-Alonso, 2017; Garzón-García & Ramírez-López, 2018; Belliggiano *et al.*, 2020), forgetting that not all spaces have tourist potential (García-Delgado *et al.*, 2020) and without taking into account the speculation and illegal component (Garzón-García & Ramírez-López, 2018). On the other hand, the supply of tourism activity companies is very recent and linked to urban demand and experiences, which indicates a change from the demand perspective (Flather & Cordell, 1995; Anton-Clavé *et al.*, 2008).

The economic dimension of tourism in local development prevails in the discourse of the informants (Renfors, 2020). Two visions of the contribution of tourism to the local economy are counterposed: 1) tourism ceases to be a secondary activity and becomes the main one as well as an opportunity to replace traditional activities; 2) tourism produces economic growth despite the fact that it is complementary to traditional activities. This shows that rural communities are affected in different ways by the competition paradigm (Saxena *et al.*, 2007) in a context of structural crisis, where any opportunity for economic diversification is welcome, and tourism is seen as a chance to face economic decline by contributing to diversification (Smith & Krannich, 1998). Thus, poverty in PNAs is a redundant issue in academia and politics (Pulido-Fernández, 2008; Woodhouse *et al.*, 2018) that has been incorporated into the rural development paradigm as part of the LEADER approach (McAreevey & McDonagh, 2011). However, it generates excessive expectations (Araque-Jiménez & Crespo-Guerrero, 2010) and its effects are more limited than perceived and expected in NtPs. Additionally, it is not a solution to all ills (Greffe, 1994; Cànoves *et al.*, 2003; Yubero-Bernabé & García-Hernández, 2019), since resources by themselves do not generate tourist flows (Prats, 2011). On the other hand, tourism does not immediately affect income (Ribeiro & Marques, 2002), which increases in municipalities with a more diversified economy and specialisation in primary activities, regardless of the tourist offer.

The informants do not directly address tourism entrepreneurship as a source of vitality (Dinis *et al.*, 2019; Pato, 2020; Renfors, 2020) and local development (Dinis *et al.*, 2019), nor the scarcity of entrepreneurial culture (only seen by LAGs managers) as a driver of innovation and change (Lordkipanidze *et al.*, 2005), which contrasts with the perception of stakeholders in other areas that attribute an essential role to it (Renfors, 2020; Pato, 2020). Tourism requires a high degree of participation of companies, products and services (Lordkipanidze *et al.*, 2005), and model entrepreneurs tend to innovate (Lordkipanidze *et al.*, 2005; Pato, 2020). There is also no mention of the prominent presence among neo-rural and foreign entrepreneurs, of “immigrant” businessmen who have an initial vision of the territory and then decide to move elsewhere (Giles *et al.*, 2013), with strategies that are more vital than economic (Romagosa *et al.*, 2020). It coincides with local development programs and the process of opening up, mobility and neo-rurality (Kayser, 1990; Rivera & Mormont, 2007; Cáceres-Feria & Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2017), detected by the informants in the three NtPs with a tendency towards concentration (especially SAPA and SNS), which display an integrating perspective of development (proactive), are more innovative and generate more employment than some local companies, observing a growing role of foreigners in rural development and tourism, but also in connection with external markets (Cáceres-Feria & Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2017). On the other hand, tourism companies and LAGs managers place some emphasis on accommodation, speculation and illegality (Garzón-García & Ramírez-López, 2018), on which regional legislation has enshrined recognising housing for tourism purposes and rural housing for tourism purposes, as well as on which of them have increased the most in recent years.

Employment is frequently observed as one of the most significant benefits of tourism in rural areas, but it is not a prominent aspect for the informants. Tourism lacks an immediate effect on job creation (Ribeiro & Marques, 2002), which is scarce, although job opportunities are generated (Pato, 2020). It is due to the low business dimension that little employment is generated (self-employment,

part-time, income supplement, family businesses), seasonal, poorly paid and precarious (Deller, 2010; Renfors, 2020), aggravated (after the international economic crisis) due to the increase in non-business activities (which do not generate employment). While fostering employment faces the problem of lack of training in the sector, which is a challenge, there is also the problem of the demand for low-skilled and short-term employment (Lane, 1994). On the other hand, a perverse effect is generated. The arrival of large external companies also involves hiring qualified personnel outside the field, justified by this lack of training. It invalidates the affirmation of the stakeholders who affirm that tourism is the main economic activity of their municipalities since there is no correlation between the number of tourist companies, accommodation places, or employment in services, justified by public and private services which predominate in municipalities where a micropolitan effect is ongoing (Bjarnason *et al.*, 2021). The increase in employment is linked to the socio-spatial context through entrepreneurship and rural and endogenous innovation (Balfour *et al.*, 2018). It goes through the diversification of the offer, its segmentation, and the associated offer, but seasonality conditions it and hinders the professionalisation of tourism (Cànoves *et al.*, 2014) since the reality continues to be that NtPs suffer from chronic unemployment (Araque-Jiménez & Crespo-Guerrero, 2010).

The informants highlight the multiplier effect of tourism as a positive economic impact (Cànoves *et al.*, 2003). While they recognise the increased demand for services, spending, revitalisation, added value, and promotion of the territory, in reality, they do not appreciate tourism development or do it in a limited way. Tourism enables catering and commercial offers concerning the development of accommodation due to the continuous flow of tourists and visitors, allowing commercial services to be developed in most touristic municipalities. Still, commercial companies (distribution retailers) come from the outside.

The influx of foreign investment is highlighted by some informants who speak of the receipt of subsidies and dependency relationships generated with decision-making outside, the use of economies of scale and the search for short-term profit (Lane, 1994; Bramwell, 1994). It threatens economic stability due to the effect of external forces (Bramwell, 1994) and alliances with external capital (Bianchi, 2004) caused by the presence of investors (and speculators), operators, chains and intermediaries (SAPA and SNS) to which the community and local businesses lose (Bramwell, 1994).

Informants see the biggest obstacles to economic development in supply and demand. On the one hand, there are the difficulties of commercialisation and the lack of coordination as difficulties of the sector (Cànoves & Villarino, 2000; Cànoves *et al.*, 2006; Cànoves *et al.*, 2014), the scarce diversity of the offer (Greffe, 1994) and the inexistence of sufficient packages to attract and retain tourists offering spending conditions (Gannon, 1994). The most prominent issue is the seasonality and limitation of the season of tourist activity (Cànoves & Villarino, 2000; Renfors, 2020), focused around the shoulder seasons of autumn and spring and in summer since COVID-19, which influences the entrepreneurial spirit and the viability of companies (Renfors, 2020). To this would be added the short stay, which means that the activity is focused on weekends and short holidays, with a discontinuous flow that prevents investment in the product, as it is not profitable. It results in tourists' low loyalty to the company's viability, which is necessary to create innovative products (Cànoves & Villarino, 2000). On the other hand, one of the deficiencies is the excursions that do not generate expense or added value at the destination, generalised to those who stay in rural houses, who make the expense at the place of origin. However, it is a fact that the tourist dynamics allows the most central municipalities with public services to reach thresholds of private services, as is the case of commercial ones.

The analysis of the perception of the positive and negative economic impacts of tourism reflects the presence of a preconceived scheme, since the topics addressed in the study of tourism and the forums are repeated. Still, the perception is frequently not linked to the evidence. Still, rather than training, e.g. in Tourism and Economy, it is a discourse repeated among many municipal stakeholders. The critical vision is situated among those who have humanistic, technical and environmental training, namely, the

ones who establish the need for development in NtPs to be socio-economic, related to the owners, local population or social agents (Europarc, 2009).

The informants do not attribute the loss of traditional activities, the changes in uses and the degradation of the landscape to tourism, but rather to the dynamics of the agricultural space itself, i.e. ageing, depopulation, low profitability, among others, forgetting that, in the PNA, the scenery is not mandatory and agricultural activities are what maintain the resources (Cànoves *et al.*, 2005; Anton-Clavé *et al.*, 2008). These visions demonstrate the complex implications linked to the transition from a weak multifunctionality to a strong one (Wilson, 2010), which generates competition between antagonistic activities and is a source of conflict.

It is necessary to study the social, cultural and demographic effects on the local population in sparsely populated, primary and distant areas of urban agglomerations (Grefe, 1994). However, the sociocultural and demographic dimension is addressed in a limited way by the informants, being perceived as weak and contradictory (Renfors, 2020), which contrasts with a PNA where residents highlight sociocultural and institutional dimensions above economic and environmental ones (Trišić *et al.*, 2021).

The scientific literature frequently states that rural tourism stabilizes the population, slows depopulation, and counteracts emigration by offering opportunities for the youngest to remain (Cànoves *et al.*, 2014). A large part of the interviewees expresses themselves in this sense. However, the actual effects are more limited than perceived, since only eight municipalities have gained in population numbers between 1991 and 2020, in two due to the impact of deurbanization in SH, and all the others in SAPA around the county seat. Although the most touristic and best linked municipalities (SAPA) indeed gain population, it is necessary to consider that the micropolitan effects generated by the increment of supra-municipal services in the county capitals are more critical (Bjarnason *et al.*, 2021) than those generated by tourism, as well as the emigration of young people to neighbouring municipalities due to the effects of gentrification and urban speculation. Tourism development sometimes coincides with a slowdown in population decline or stabilization, but we cannot describe a generalised process (Cànoves *et al.*, 2006). At the same time, most peripheral areas suffer more depopulation (Ramsey & Malcolm, 2017) regardless of the tourist offer and the main activity.

Although the informants did not highlight it, throughout the interviews and fieldwork, the importance of women in entrepreneurship and job performance has been verified (Hjalager, 1996). Likewise, the arrival of neo-rural entrepreneurs (Cànoves *et al.*, 2005) and foreigners observed in other rural spaces in tourist activities (Romagosa *et al.*, 2020) occupies a prominent place. Yet, this importance is more qualitative than quantitative, and is due to their philosophy of life (Romagosa *et al.*, 2012) and business model in line with local-based tourism (Cáceres-Feria & Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2017). They would differ from those who come from the outside, appropriate the territory and exclude the local population from traditional activities (Blázquez-i-Salom, 2002) by participating in traditional customs and activities. However, the vision of the other is still present. They look at it with reluctance, i.e., local companies developing poorly understood projects and brandishing slogans such as “they come from the outside” about “the weirdos” who have renounced urban life as a classic dichotomy. The informants perceive adverse effects on local society, pointing to the maladjustment of visitors to it, producing a disempowerment that feels that it has neither participated nor agreed in the implementation of tourism when the priority should be given to their needs and interests and not only to the objectives of tourist activities (Cànoves *et al.*, 2006). The empowerment of the community in political, social, psychological and economic terms is not achieved (Khanom *et al.*, 2019). It even leads to losing local power with the arrival of “mayors from outside”.

Heritage recovery is evidence of and an opportunity to redistribute the benefits of tourism (Cànoves *et al.*, 2005), while heritage protections and rehabilitations are in tune with heritage conservation, with a local government discourse based on heritage (Adamowicz, 2010). However, it is a positive impact barely perceived by the informants. On the other hand, the recovery of heritage

sometimes implies the usurping of its use or loss of functionality (Blázquez-i-Salom, 2002), which prevents the development of a new paradigm based on patrimonialization (García-Delgado *et al.*, 2020).

In the PNAs, the environmental sustainability of tourism activities is not an option but an obligation (Renfors, 2020). However, protecting natural values with tourism and recreational activities continues to be challenging (Anton-Clavé *et al.*, 2008). For the informants, sustainability is indeed present in the development processes (Renfors, 2020). Nonetheless, they ignore the importance of the environmental dimension and the impacts produced by tourism are considered unimportant or specific. For some, sustainability is a business opportunity that involves a confusion between responsibility and sustainability (Saarinen, 2021), facing the need for low-intensity tourism, proximity, ornitourism, astrotourism and the segmentation of activities and product creation based on experience (Flather & Cordell, 1995; Anton-Clavé *et al.*, 2008).

The different actors identify specific problems of over-frequency and overload in places (central municipalities, urban areas, main attractions) and specific moments (due to the seasonality of the activity), as has been seen during the pandemic due to the lack of a limit and a control instrument (Cànoves *et al.*, 2006) as well as to unawareness (on the part of the local population, visitors and companies). This over-frequency generates other problems related to fragility (Bramwell, 1994), such as generating waste that has high treatment costs in the NtPs, which the community must deal with (economic impact). On the other hand, there are unsustainable practices related to outdoor activities, such as entering places with restricted access without permission, unauthorised activities, and water waste, demonstrating the lack of adaptation to the Mediterranean climate and the changing climate of tourist activities.

From the different political scales, they continue to “promote the idea that tourism can effectively reduce regional disparities” (Bohlin *et al.*, 2016: 1802), as tourism is seen as a panacea (Grefe, 1994; Cànoves *et al.*, 2003; Shmallagger & Carson, 2010; Yubero-Bernabé & García-Hernández, 2019; García-Delgado *et al.*, 2020). With regards to this aspect, the favourable framework for the development of tourist activities has been, in theory, the same for all municipalities (Yubero-Bernabé & García-Hernández, 2019) and has allowed a more balanced development of marginal areas (Cànoves & Villarino, 2000), appearing the LAGs as promoters. However, there are marked territorial imbalances in tourism development that are evident in the focusing of initiatives in the three NtPs in the most central places (Andraz *et al.*, 2015; Nieto-Masot & Ríos-Rodríguez, 2021), and which make clear the trend of focusing hosts in a limited number of sites (Bohlin *et al.*, 2016). The informants point to different causes.

Firstly, there is talk of proximity to the issuing markets and accessibility, together with geographical centrality. As can be seen, leisure functions are carried out in the best-linked areas (Mulero-Mendigorry, 2001; Engelman-Moriche *et al.*, 2021), both in private initiatives and in public SIEs (Araque-Jiménez *et al.*, 2002). Good accessibility to the city of Seville in the eastern part of SAPA (Mercado-Alonso *et al.*, 2012) and the southern part of SNS (Silva-Pérez & Ojeda-Rivera, 2001) generates destinations near densely populated areas (Bohlin *et al.*, 2016) and access to car travellers (Hardy, 2007). Therefore, as isolation increases, the scale of attraction, uniqueness and resource conservation must rise to attract and generate other forms of tourism (Priedaux, 2002; Mastronardi *et al.*, 2017). The improvement in accessibility reduces peripherality and territorial differences and provides market opportunities (Cànoves & Villarino-Pérez, 2000).

Secondly, there is the focusing of heritage, resources, natural and cultural products and the potential of the place (Cànoves *et al.*, 2005; Ramsey & Malcolm, 2017; Garzón-García & Ramírez-López, 2018; García-Delgado *et al.*, 2020; Engelman-Moriche *et al.*, 2021). The diversity of landscapes (SAPA, SNS) and the protected area (SH) (Garzón-García & Ramírez-López, 2018) entail the concentration of activities since there are dull or average places which are not exotic or attractive enough for tourism (Roberts & Hall, 2001; Ramsey & Malcolm, 2017). For this reason, it is necessary to create tourist environmental units with a minimum of complementary resources (Pearce, 1988) and the conformation of the destination (García-Delgado & Felicidades-García, 2014).

Thirdly, the limited financial and investment capacity is emphasised. Context constraints, such as primary specialisation, ageing, population size and income (Koster & Baccar, 2016), hinder investment (Engelmo-Moriche *et al.*, 2021). It is the municipalities with the largest population and economic diversification that receive the most significant investment, as can be seen in the regional capitals (Márquez-Fernández *et al.*, 2006) and the appearance of municipalities as facilitators of tourist activity that provide direct financial support in the support infrastructures (Renfors, 2020), while also launching tourism initiatives (information points/tourism offices, accommodation).

Fourthly, there is the reception by certain municipalities of more aid and the fact that they enjoy a favourable political/institutional context. Some municipalities receive, for instance, more final assistance and institutional support from LAGs, provincial, regional, or the state (Cànoves *et al.*, 2005) as demonstrated by the concentration of activities within the LAGs in SAPA and SNS (Márquez-Fernández *et al.*, 2006) as well as the concentration of services (which increase attractiveness). Among the causes is the generation of municipal lobbies in the LAGs (Esparcia-Pérez *et al.*, 2000).

Overall, centre-periphery relations continue to prevail, and most peripheral areas do not have better results even if they receive more funds (Bohlin *et al.*, 2016), with policies incapable of counteracting this concentration (Andraz *et al.*, 2015). These centre-periphery relationships are very marked in SAPA (Garzón-García, 2016), partly related to the development of infrastructures (Cànoves *et al.*, 2005). On the other hand, the products created in the most peripheral areas have had limited effects and, in some cases, have benefited more central areas such as the Ruta del Jabugo (Pérez-Mora *et al.*, 2019; Pizarro-Gómez *et al.*, 2020; Bahamonde-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022b) and GR-48, which in its design responds only in part to peripheral areas (this is not the case in SNS), indicating gravitation (Saxena *et al.*, 2007). Thus, more has been contributed to the most central rural areas (Figueiredo, 2008), deepening the abyss between affluent and marginal rural areas (Bock, 2016).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The tourism effects on local development processes in the study area are limited, although there are differences between NtPs and municipalities. The PNA establishment and the implementation of European policies have been vital in developing tourism in the NtPs.

The constructed reality of the actors conditions their responses and depends on their characteristics, such as performance, age, and gender, but also on external factors, such as their place of residence, relationships with others, and the level of tourism development, with the view of tourism being more favourable among those who are more closely linked to the activity. There is agreement among the informants that there is a correlation between tourism and development. Yet, there are levels of agreement and disagreement on the dimensions of local development, which appear dissociated in the discourses.

The economic dimension of local development is emphasised, but it does not meet the expectations generated and has negative impacts. In addition, tourism activities have been opted for as a development strategy, sometimes the only one, generating an unrealistic idea of the tourist space from supply and demand, which suffers from specialisation and abandonment of traditional activities. Although specific environmental impacts are perceived, sustainability is compromised due to specialisation and abandonment. Identity spaces converge to musealization and cease to be so, and the NtPs achieve neither patrimonialisation nor conservation, while the debate between conservation and commodification appears. Within the social dimension, the demographic challenge is perceived as the biggest problem, but tourism shows little positive impact on demographic dynamics, while social and cultural impacts are ignored. It is a fact that NtPs are created to protect, but they are inhabited spaces, and the inhabitants do not take part in development processes. In the end, territoriality and the effects of the political-

institutional framework make rural spaces evolve according to qualitative and quantitative parameters, i.e. economic, social, political and cultural guidelines, manifested in terms of reinforcing inequality and reinforced centrality, which limits development in the most remote municipalities claiming to be the periphery of the periphery. Thus, the most central and networked actor can influence its structure or growth potential or remain static.

The qualitative analysis has limitations when considering how far to trust the opinions of the interviewees and their hidden discourses, or the fact that impacts are not perceived does not mean that they do not exist since they can also be latent or have delayed effects. In addition, it is necessary to study the attitudes of the local population towards NtPs and the determinants of leisure and recreation activities. On the other hand, the lack of quantitative data at a local scale reduces the contrast of qualitative-quantitative information.

Concerning the above, future lines of research will address (1) the perception of the local population through a quantitative analysis to establish the degree of compliance with the aspirations of the local community, (2) the governance structure, incorporating other actors into the analysis, and the social relationships and leadership issues that structure cooperative or competitive relationships, and (3) the entrepreneurial propensity of different groups, e.g. women, the young, neo-rurals, and foreigners.

Our study shows that the problems of rural tourism in ENPs are common because although they differ contextually, the results are similar. Achievements, failures, outcomes and impacts can be extrapolated to other rural spaces to establish if the objectives of local development based on tourism are met through the application of mixed methodologies.

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