

Designing a Framework for Rural Community-Based Collaborative Cultural Mapping: The Fontoura Project

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Abstract: The tourism sector has faced many challenges in recent years, and technology, more specifically through digital approaches, is becoming a valuable ally. This paper aims to understand how the use of digital tools in rural territories may empower local communities in activities such as cultural mapping with the aid of open-access platforms and in close connection with current trends in e-tourism. The research conducted and presented debates the challenge of drawing a collaborative and participative framework to engage and promote the tourism supply and demand ecosystem in these rural territories. Fontoura, situated in the Minho region of the Northwest of Portugal, is studied to understand how its historical, traditional, and cultural patrimony may promote the territory as a tourist destination. The research presented, which is still underway, resorts to a participative and collaborative design approach involving the rural community and is further supported by an extensive literature review. This comparative study includes the analysis of a small sample of similar projects conducted with rural communities, quantitative and qualitative data collection, and the development of participative and collaborative activities with the local community. Results achieved so far indicate that enabling the community members to participate in the process – through surveys (for tourists, visitors, and residents), interviews and focus groups (with the senior segment) – contributed to the building of a sense of community, unity, and a sense of belonging. These feelings drive the community members to provide the project with content for Fontoura’s cultural mapping and the other project’s expected results, such as the proposal of a framework for promoting collaborative design with a concern with InfoVis approaches when dealing with georeferenced tangible and intangible heritage and other tourism-related resources. Results also suggest that the proposed framework may contribute to similar actions in other rural territories seeking to discover and fuel their potential as tourism destinations. The work presented is in tune with current debates regarding the design of guidelines and recommendations suitable for rural communities in their quest for sustainability, digital transformation, and cultural and natural mapping.

Keywords: e-Tourism, Cultural mapping, Rural communities, Digital transformation, Participatory and collaborative design

1. Introduction

The differences between rural and urban areas have long been the subject of reflection and specific realities when looking at the territory as a spatial planning and conditioning tool.

The proposed theme arises with the analysis of rural communities to promote tourism supply and demand as an added value for inland territories. Given sustainability principles, smart and digital transformation through collective and collaborative communication. Residents and tourists, for diversification, competitiveness, and equal opportunities for and for all. Normally associated with leisure and tourism, rural areas are increasingly seen as places of consumption and not as productive places, mainly associated with leisure and tourism (Eusébio, Carneiro, Kastenholz, Figueiredo & Silva, 2017).

The research will be conducted in a rural community in Alto Minho, Portugal, with low literacy and a need for digital skills. Through collaborative and participatory strategies, the purpose is to understand how info-communication can promote the territory as a tourist destination, plan for tomorrow, and envisage inclusive and sustainable strategies. More than ever, it makes sense to be more than tourism and the basis of the community. Where the culture of the place appropriates the territory with the best that the community has to offer, this research is conceived to empower communities with what they have best, people and stories; to create an identity of the past so we can be projected in the future, to programme, plan and foresee the best for communities that are dispersed in the territory.

The community-based tourism context has as its principle to prepare territories to be inclusive for a better confluence of interests of the groups that cohabit there. Community development through tourism is a growing tourism modality, with case studies associated with low-density territories. In these destinations, equality is developed not only by gender but by recreating more cohesive and interdependent territories from each other in a bottom-up system (Jenkins, 2006; Neves, 2011; Baldi & Oliveira, 2013).

Considering the concepts of community, it is also necessary to understand how the culture of collaboration and sharing is achieved among the target audience, tourists and residents, especially older ones. Considering concepts such as sustainability, inclusion, media convergence, collective and integrated participation, and

collective intelligence, these should be terms to be implemented as public policies. In this sense, ODS Rural Labs have emerged more recently, guided by sustainability principles and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. They have been working on social innovation for rural and peri-urban contexts since 2019, with the mission of promoting the implementation of the SDGs through participatory, collaborative, and educational processes for different age groups towards communities. There are currently five laboratories under development, most in Spain and one in Colombia. During the confinement period, they were forced to adapt to digital technology, using community platforms that allowed contact for the implementation of the different action plans (ODS Rural Labs, 2021).

The concept of e-tourism associated with this article emerges through community maps, cartographic construction, and creation where the application of Information and Communication Technologies is applied to the tourism process so that the available service offer is broad, diverse and interactive (Buhalis, 2003; Buhalis & Jun, 2011; Banerjee & Chua, 2016; Kazandzhieva & Santana, 2019; Kontogianni & Alepis, 2020).

Communication is multidisciplinary as it intersects with various fields of knowledge. The concept from various viewpoints and areas of knowledge defines the concept of information. It is assumed that communication is seen as an exercise of cooperation and negotiation, joint construction of meaning for the one who is listening to the actors who made the product/service (Mette & Majken, 2006; Wolton, 2009; Passareli, Silva & Ramos, 2014; Tölkes, 2018).

Access to new information and communication content through technology solution projects for personal, environmental and government services (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010; Buhalis, 2019). The transformation of tourism allows all communication to be kept up to date, currently at a rapid pace, as users' digital skills demand it.

The creation of community and digital cultural maps are increasingly available offerings at regional and local levels. Several entities recreate, for example, library park spaces to bring the population together and "everyone is part of it" or toolkits that help smaller communities to configure the space for the tourism offer (Creative City, Network of Canada). The first ones serve as aggregating elements between the landscape and the residents, mainly in areas with several social problems, such as the example of Medellín in Colombia. They are assumed to be urbanistic developed areas with positive effects on the community's identity and culture. This leads to the design of territorial planning achieved by structuring the revitalisation of geographical areas that aim to combat various social problems, violence, and poverty (Polit-Duenas, 2013). Not only for its architectural innovation but also its principles of community collaboration and participation, Medellín is now part of the Global Network of Learning Cities. They are meant to promote public policies oriented towards know-how and good practices (UNESCO, Global Network of Learning Cities, n.d). Participation is crucial to foster common understanding and acceptance of deeper interventions in the territory. Integrated and participatory communication are two vital processes for success (Volkman, 2018), where the population initiates the ideation process to be later designed by the competent entities.

The narratives between partners and services allow the creation of synergies for the projection of collective memory regarding identity, place destination and the history of the place. Tourism is fundamental to creating a brand image (Naef, 2018). Thus, toolkits emerge as tools that target the mapping process, from creating the database to elaborating the final product.

The Creative City Network of Canada develops several toolkits for various municipal areas - culture, arts and equity, public art, inclusion, and justice. For this article, we will focus on the cultural toolkit that aims at the cultural mapping of a given community. It assumes itself as a guide to the process of ideation, planning and creation of the map, with an adaptable template. It has as its vision the involvement of local leaders, services and people for the development, preservation, and maintenance of the cultural offer, with a view to the near future. With checklists of the different stages of the realisation process and an accompanying website, the kit is designed for everyone. Cultural, heritage and historical offers do justice to a community's sense of belonging, i.e., "understanding culture and cultural activity as resources for human and community development (...) unlocks possibilities of inestimable value" (Legacies Now, 2010).

The production of cultural cartography is associated with interaction with residents, consumers, and tourists in small-scale communities. They are characterised by empowering and enabling them and increasing literacy levels (Aliyah, I, Setioko, B. & Pradoto, W., 2017; Duxbury, 2019). Cartography is developed by different societal sectors: health, human resources and education, community development at economic, social, cultural, and environmental levels, and security.

Cultural mapping takes on top-down approaches, with mapping developed for policy purposes and economic growth. As well as also by the bottom-up for community development, with collaborative and human integration approaches (Ortega-Nuere & Bayón, 2015; Freitas, 2016).

Given the technological developments of the last decades, engaging, and analysing different types of cultural cartography is now possible. The use of open data, with partnerships with government entities and associations, with the resident population of the communities, enables human mobility empowerment ecosystems (McNaughton, 2016; Young & Verhulst, 2017; McNaughton, Rao & Verma, 2020). Considering the empowerment of the resident population and according to the principles of sustainability, cohesion, and competitiveness regarding proximity territories, some projects have recently emerged focused on cultural mapping concerned with communities, such as the European case of Mappa Malta and the international case of Jamaica's Interactive Community Mapping. Community mapping with interactive proposals allows the creation of new products, gives skills to the community, and inspires other initiatives in the region (Mohanty, Mishra & Mohanty, 2019; Pinto, Inácio, Bogdzevič, Kalinauskas, Gomes & Pereira, 2023; Torre, Wallet & Huang, 2023).

The mapping of outcomes and local development is the cognitive basis of recovering memories and stories told to make communities and places unique and with identity.

2. Methodology

The focus is to understand how, through info-communication tools, one can turn rural communities with low info-communication literacy and lacking digital competencies into empowered communities by creating a collaborative model and creating cultural and natural, community and interactive maps.

The aim is to transform rural communities into a lever so that the local offer becomes singular and unique. All resources, endogenous and human, can be capitalised and become competitive with other nearby territories, both in the creation of new opportunities and in keeping people in the territory, as well as increasing the transformation index and allowing this collaborative model to be replicable for other inland territories in the reality of cross-border and proximity to Spain.

The research problem focuses on understanding how infocommunication tools can empower rural communities with low infocommunication literacy and a need for digital competencies.

The methodological process adopted for this paper focused on the complementarity of quantitative and qualitative methods through the Design-based Research method, in the sense that theory and applied practice are translated into the research process. Design Thinking, through the Double Diamond, is the model associated with the applied method. The Design Thinking model provides a convenient mental mode of decision-making. It breaks the innovation process into simple steps and helps teams know where and when to focus.

Since this research is still in development, we will present results collected from the first phase (December 2022). The participants who will be a constituent of the research will be the tourists who pass as pilgrims, of the Camino de Santiago, in the parish of Fontoura, who stay overnight in hostels in the parish, and tourists who stay overnight in Accommodation in Rural Space. Surveys are being applied as instruments. Regarding the causal research, the scenario is occurring in situ, with external and internal validity degrees and with the realisation of pre-tests (May 2022), available in Portuguese, Spanish, French and English. At the level of instruments, the moment of the story will be applied, which aims at the use of tools such as storytelling, with cause-effect, immediate, under the moment in which the encounter takes place. Since the research aims to develop through the rural community, even with low literacy, we also propose interviews with the seniors. A 3D model presenting the different cultural and natural heritage types has also been prepared. It accompanies us in applying the tools so that it is easier to associate missing heritage with a physical model.

3. Results

According to the results obtained in the first phase of collection and those presented in this article, the sample is characterised by 50 answers to tourists and pilgrims and 37 answers from residents, 33 online and four on paper. As for the interview material, we will present data from three, carried out with two seniors of the parish and one with a journalist who writes about heritage in Alto Minho. Since it is an ongoing research work, the application of instruments is still under development, so the story time, through the focus group, still needs to be accomplished. The questionnaires for tourists and pilgrims are available in 4 languages: Portuguese, Spanish, French and English. We obtained more answers in Portuguese (30 people), English (10 people) and French (8 people), according to the following table. Regarding the surveys in Spanish, we obtained only two answers since

domestic tourism in Spain is very strong, as well as the pilgrimage that starts in Spanish territory. However, at the level of the French language respondents, most are emigrants from the parish who find themselves outside the country in search of better living conditions. See Table 1.

Table 1: Usual Residence

Language of the survey	Nr. answers	Where do you usually live?
Portuguese	30	North of Portugal: Porto and Braga
Spanish	2	Spain
French	8	France
English	10	USA / United Kingdom / Germany / Finland / Ukraine

Most respondents have higher education as their educational qualification and consider cultural holidays highly important when travelling. See Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2: Level of Education

Indicator	PT	SP	FR	EN
Nr. Answers	30	2	8	10
University	24	1	4	9
<i>PT - Portuguese SP - Spanish FR - French EN - English</i>				

Table 3: Level of Importance of Cultural and Nature Holidays, Considering Health & Wellness

Indicator	PT	SP	FR	EN
Nr. Answers	30	2	8	10
Cultural Holidays	83,3%	100,0%	87,5%	30,0%
Nature Tourism/Ecotourism	83,3%	100,0%	87,5%	60,0%
Rural Tourism	76,0%	100,0%	87,5%	50,0%
Adventure Tourism	56,0%	50,0%	62,5%	30,0%
Educational Holidays	60,0%	100,0%	37,5%	10,0%
Beach & Sun	56,6%	100,0%	37,5%	20,0%
Health & Wellness	76,7%	100,0%	87,5%	40,0%
<i>PT - Portuguese SP - Spanish FR - French EN - English</i>				

One of the questions in the questionnaire was about the possible existence of a collaborative and participative open-access tourism platform, i.e., tourists can add information and share it. In this sense, more than 80% of the respondents consider touristic, open access, participative and collaborative platforms to be an asset for the rural community of Fontoura and mobile application.

Since our purpose is the development of cultural maps, it is essential to understand what people who come to Fontoura are looking for. In this sense, we present some possible attractions that can be visited in Fontoura. Most Portuguese respond to religious heritage and natural space level with parks and viewpoints. As for the other nationalities, the trend and representativeness also focus on religious heritage and events. See Table 4.

Table 4: Attractions to Visit in Fontoura

Indicator	PT	SP	FR	EN
Nr. Answers	30	2	8	10
Chapels and Churches	73,4%	50,0%	87,5%	30,0%
Parks and Belvederes	73,3%	100,0%	75,0%	30,0%
Fairs	46,7%	0,0%	75,0%	50,0%
Manor houses/Wine Tourism	36,7%	100,0%	50,0%	40,0%
Traditional events	50,0%	100,0%	87,5%	60,0%

Regarding the use of technologies, especially open access platforms such as Google Maps, the majority (over 50%) assume they would use them, especially for providing tourist and georeferenced information. See Table 5.

Table 5: If Available, Information About Fontoura, With Open-Access and Georeferenced

Indicator	PT	SP	FR	EN
Nr. Answers	30	2	8	10
Guided tours	33,0%	0,0%	37,5%	40,0%
Sharing Forum	30,0%	0,0%	37,5%	50,0%
Open-access Platform (Google Maps)	60,0%	100,0%	75,0%	50,0%
Open-access Tourism Platform	53,3%	100,0%	87,5%	60,0%
Blog/Vlog	16,7%	50,0%	37,5%	40,0%
Mobile App	43,3%	50,0%	75,0%	50,0%

Fontoura has a unique offer: the Central Portuguese Way crosses the rural community towards Santiago de Compostela. Many pilgrims find themselves on the side of the road, especially when the hot weather begins to set in, and the rains are occasional, around mid-April. Therefore, the survey was also designed considering this type of visitor who considers that the chapel should be open and the hostels should operate with flexible opening hours, with access to meals and laundry facilities. They consider that a supermarket would also be a condition for staying overnight in Fontoura. So much so that the residents think there should be a supermarket to support the parish. As for the residents, most of them are seniors and have low digital literacy and skills. Therefore, most surveys are being carried out in paper format; the younger layers (19 to 51 years old) fill in the surveys through the link available in social networks and WhatsApp groups.

Unlike most tourists, the residents (70,3%) have only completed secondary education, which aligns with data from the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics that there is a very high percentage of school dropouts in Alto Minho.

When searching for information, the main research sources when travelling are websites, social networks, mobile apps, and family opinions. See table 6.

Table 6: Main Sources of Research When Travelling

Indicator	Residents
Nr. Answers	37
Websites	69,7%
Social Networking	54,6%
Travel Agencies	12,1%

Indicator	Residents
Tourism Office	0,0%
Travel Guides	3,0%
Mobile App	63,6%
Family	36,4%
Friends	33,3%
Influencers	24,2%
Blog/Vlog	9,1%

As with tourists and pilgrims, residents also consider the existence of a collaborative and participative open-access tourism platform an added value, where also more than 80% of respondents are interested in participating with content for it.

As for the level of importance of cultural and natural tourism, it is highly representative, as are traditional activities. See Table 7.

Table 7: Importance of Cultural and Natural Tourism and Traditional Events

Indicator	Residents
<i>Nr. Answers</i>	37
Cultural Tourism	87,9%
Natural Tourism	96,9%
Religious Tourism	33,3%
Wine Tourism	39,4%
Beach & Sun	72,7%
Local Shopping	54,4%
Cultural & Traditional Event	81,8%
Sport Event	48,5%

More than 85% of the residents believe that there should be more events and activities in the parish, especially regarding reviving old memories, the existing jobs, and the practice of agriculture. They consider that the parish council should consider the Camino de Santiago and especially the cleaning and maintenance of the same for its promotion and dissemination. More than 55% of the respondents consider tourism as a tool of evolution for Fontoura and the empowerment of the community as a rural territory.

As for the interviews, the acquired data meet the questionnaires concerning the need for more activities and events that communicate the parish and the partnership between adjacent parishes. In the interview moments, it is mostly referred by the respondents to the existence of two water lines that support mills. With visits to the places, we have already managed to detect 34 examples, some rehabilitated, others in extremely bad condition, and that the Junta de Freguesia (parish council) intends, in the medium and long term, to develop Tourist Routes for them. In the investigation, forms of representation of the different types of existing patrimony in the parish will be presented, whenever possible georeferenced and with open access to the public.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study show the urgency of ICT's use for community-based to ensure participation and collaboration, as McNaughton (2018) defends. The study reflects the municipal entities' importance in getting

the main approach to the resident population and showing how it is important to know their opinion to achieve better and do more.

A collaborative and participative setting is fundamental to developing a community through tourism. To provide the possibility to define common goals between more parishes and project new empowerment policies using a framework for the rural areas as touristic destinations.

Therefore, we present the rural community-based collaborative cultural mapping framework, with the double diamond model as its structural basis. See Figure 1.

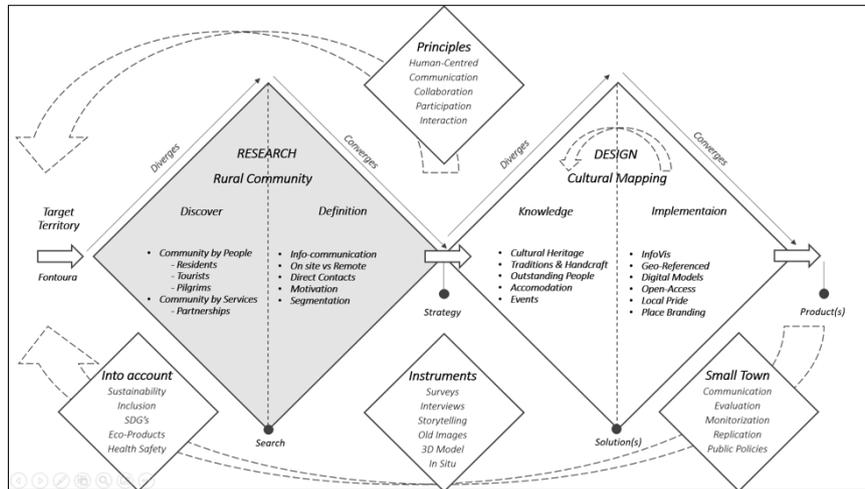


Figure 1: Proposal of a Framework for Rural Community-Based Collaborative Cultural Mapping

Being a study that targets more than tourists and visitors and extends to pilgrims of the Camino de Santiago that travel the Portuguese Central Way, cross-platform dissemination becomes essential. Li, Bao, Song and Duh (2016) advocate enforcing the digitalisation of tourism. There still needs to be more research about low-density territories and rural characteristics regarding digital cultural mapping associated with creating visualisation information - InfoVis.

5. Conclusions

This research aims to implement a proposal of a guideline model for other similar territories, whether at the level of information, communication, collaborative strategies, e-tourism, communities, and people.

Technological mediation through information and communication is increasingly seen, by partners in social sectors, as an added value for developing the uniqueness of new products. The destinations have the dynamisation and collaboration strategies with neighbouring regions as their main objective. In this sense, the need for interaction between people arises. The opportunity to turn residents into consumers as participative and collaborative agents of the exploration process effectively creates cultural cartography.

Community cartography is a collection of many communities; however, the interactivity factor is still being determined. According to current parameters, such as sustainability and inclusion for all, cultural cartography empowers communities and their assets. Communities become a product of identity and authenticity, according to place, residents, and visitors, as well as the synergies created between public and private partners.

Residents become the main actors of the community in the sense that they enable to connect with the tourist through the content that is created and acquired. Through development tools, collaboration, participation, and interaction, with its people and the territory, the interaction happens between technology and human beings, specifically in community-centred design. The cultural cartography in Fontoura, supported by a good story, arouses interest and promotes a cognitive sense of belonging and memories. It fosters the visitor's will to become a protagonist and actor as a consumer and producer of content. It allows us to connect, understand, use, and recreate the communities' places and to identify resources and attractions of the different aggregated scenarios of the territory. Though regarding heritage and cultural resources to build community, cultural cartography allows future preservation and maintenance to be leveraged through mobile platforms and applications. They allow the creation of a collaborative design with multidimensional and interactive maps, articulating cultural assets with meaning, assuming plurality and participatory approaches.

The work presented in this paper expects to contribute to transforming rural communities into a lever for transforming local offers into singular and unique experiences. In this transformation, all its resources, endogenous and human, are capitalisable and become competitive assets, both in creating new opportunities and in settling people in the territory. The results mostly aggregated into the collaborative model, can be considered highly replicable in other inland territories in Portugal and nearby Spain towns.

Despite the valuable insights already provided in this paper, there are several paths for future research. For instance, a small study can be taken in another low-density and rural territory, purposing the residents' collaborative and participative engagement. The aim is to determine the relevance of the place branding as a singular destination.

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