

# Tourism Destinations: A Methodological Discussion on Commons and Anti-commons. The 'Ammaia' Project's Locale Impact

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**Abstract** – In this work, a methodological study is made to analyze the specificities resulting from analyzing tourism destinations through commons and anti-commons frameworks. Some studies have been made recently in the area of tourism considering these frameworks. Although interesting results have emerged, there is yet much work ahead. Some studies have considerable results, but the fundamentals in tourism literature require yet much work in order to develop additional models to provide new combinations of tools to the decision makers to enhance welfare standards for communities and high levels of sustainable development in tourism structures. A project is studied on this context which the consequent analysis of the regional implications.

**Keywords** – Tourism, Tourism Destination, Commons, Anti-commons, Coordination Ammaia Project.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism became one of the most important activities for countries' economies. Tourism problems are classically discussed with authors around the world bringing to the discussion eclectic aspects of tourism phenomena. Many improvements have brought new tourism models to the actual debate.

The case of the commons and anti-commons theories applied to tourism can be included in these new developments emerged in literature. In Tourism Economics the discussion around commons and anti-commons in tourism can be found recently for authors as Andergassen, Candela and Figini (2013), Candela, Figini and Scorcu (2006) or Álvarez-Albelo and Hernández-Martín (2009), for example. In fact, in some conditions, it is possible to find out the two problems faced, which have conflicting properties: the commons and the anti-commons, conducting the tourism for over-production and under-production,

respectively.

In this paper, commons and anti-commons are presented and a discussion over the tourism problems involving these theories is made, having Ammaia Golf Course - a project in Alto Alentejo (Portugal) - as a backdrop to analyze the implications in the involving area management.

## 2. Commons and Anti-commons

The discussion around the definition of property rights is classical. The types of property rights require that the limits of these concepts are consistently investigated. As stated in Coelho, Filipe and Ferreira (2009), ambiguous concepts blur analytical and policy prescription clarity. For the analysis of this subject and clarification of the conceptualization on this matter see Coelho, Filipe and Ferreira (2009).

In property rights field, it is possible to define the actions that individuals can take in relation to other individuals regarding one object: if one individual has a right, someone else has the corresponding duty to match that right.

In common pool resources, there is an evident relationship between the separation in the property rights and the economic incentives, which has been studied in order to highlight the resulting implications and externalities.

Coase (1960) stated that well-defined property rights could contribute to well understand and overcome the problems of externalities, particularly those related to the common pool resources (open and shared resources).

The commons problems are discussed since the

middle of last century, involving the idea that commons problems reflect usually the overexploitation of resources. The “lack of property rights” implies that no one may exclude others to access to a given resource. The existence of many agents to use a given resource, in these conditions, causes an inefficient level for the resource use and causes a special motivation for agents over-using the resource. The real level of use for the resource will take place at a higher level compared with the optimal level for the society as a whole. A problem on the commons arises when the property rights are not clearly assigned and therefore private costs underestimate social costs, which results in over-production.

There are very diverse implications in the way that commons are managed. For instance, formal and informal cooperation between local government agencies in a region may lead to interesting solutions in terms of economic and ecological effects. Ostrom (1990) wrote that there is not a trap in the inflexible tragedies of the commons nor that people is free of moral responsibilities through the creation and support of incentives that facilitate the occurrence of results. There are rules and principles, community institutions and sometimes even partial property rights which may serve as engines of social effective arrangements to share common pool resources. Yet high transaction costs may imply that completely defining extensive property rights over common pool resources might probably be impossible.

By its turn, anti-commons theory has appeared representing the idea of an excessive partition of property rights. This theory has appeared in the 80's of last century, introduced by Michelman (1982). In the last years of the 20th Century several ideas about this new problem around property rights have emerged in which too many rights of exclusion and a reduced level of utilization of the resource are present. Many examples have been given in the areas of pharmaceuticals, intellectual property, or natural resources, for example.

When Michelman (1982) presented the notion of “anti-commons”, he defined it as “a type of property in which everyone always has rights respecting the objects in the regime, and no one, consequently, is ever privileged to use any of them except as particularly authorized by others”.

Considering the anti-commons conceptualizing, Buchanan and Yoon (2000) wrote that the anti-commons concept helps to explain how and why potential economic value may disappear into the “black hole” of resources underutilization.

The description of the “anti-commons” settings makes evidence of the lack of efficiency in several situations in which each one of several owners with property rights over a given resource has no effective rights to simply use the resource (and also, each one has the right to exclude other agents from its utilization) or to use it properly.

If property rights are too dispersed and complementary factors owners are unable to come up with efficient agreements, a “tragedy of the anti-commons” may happen (Heller, 1998 and Bergstrom, 2010).

Anti-commons tragedies conceptualization allow to join, in a unifying framework, a construction that reflects a set of coordination failures in very distinct areas, such as patents, telecommunications, eminent domain, tourism or bureaucracy, just to add some more cases to the supra mentioned anti-commons cases. Overcoming these failures may be difficult, often brutal, but solutions can be got, by understanding the problems and finding the solutions on the available set of strategies for agents, sometimes considering administrative solutions to overcome the problem. The ability for one person to veto a solution drastically increases the obstacles to get a solution.

It is interesting to observe Vanneste *et al* (2006) opinion that anti-commons dilemmas seem to elicit more individualistic behavior than commons dilemmas and are more prone to underuse than commons dilemmas are to overuse. These authors suggest that “if commons leads to ‘tragedy’, anti-commons may well lead to ‘disaster’” (see the case of aquaculture projects in Portugal in Filipe, Ferreira, and Coelho, 2011).

### 3. Tourism Destination

In general, the theoretical developments in Tourism Economics are based on the systemic nature of tourism and on the big heterogeneity of the tourism activities. Tourism presupposes a strong net of relationships among the economic agents in a complex system of interactions among local, regional and national levels of governmental

agencies, firms, tourists and residents. In this sense, tourist products necessarily include a set of heterogeneous and complementary goods and services, supplied by firms belonging to different industries which are mainly, but not exclusively, located in the tourist destination.

Considering that the tourist destination is, in essence, a travel destination that gets the attention of a large numbers of tourists, visitors may come to visit these destinations to see historical sites, natural wonders, national buildings, etc. Some tourist attractions also include many activities and souvenirs that are often got on these destinations.

As Leiper (1990) refers, cited in Andergassen, Candela and Figini (2013), from de researcher's perspective the tourism destination embodies all the specific and problematic features of tourism, such as its systemic nature, in which, the "space" plays a fundamental role.

In Leiper (2004), tourist destinations are defined as "places where travelers choose to stay awhile for leisure experiences, related to one or more features or characteristics of the place – a perceived attraction of some sort". Derived from the concept of tourist destination, also the tourist destination region may be considered for analysis as a geographic concept.

Considering that often the perspective of the definition may be depending on the scientific area of study, the tourism destination may, in fact, be understood, for example, as a product or a territory where visitors arrive to, or - as Cooper *et al* (2008) defend - a territorial system supplying tourism products to satisfy the complex demand needs of tourists.

For this definition, Cooper *et al* (2008) have identified the following common features of the destination:

- The destination is a "product" in itself, with an economic value;
- Such economic good is perishable: seasonality, the overload of tourists over its carrying capacity, the unsustainable use of natural resources etc. can reduce its economic value, thus leading the destination out of the market.
- In the destination, tourists and residents compete for a limited amount of available resources;
- The variety of goods and services which compose the tourism product must be of the same quality to guarantee the economic success of the destination.

Andergassen, Candela and Figini (2013) have pointed that:

- tourism supply meets demand in the destination;
- environmental and cultural resources, attractions and the hospitality industry are all located in the destination;
- the demand for tourism is revealed in the destination;
- tourism destination is the conceptual link between the complexity of the sector, the complementarity and substitutability of the many goods and services of which the tourism product consists, and the supply of available local resources.

#### 4. Commons and Anti-commons in Tourism

To discuss the problem of commons and anti-commons in tourism area it is necessary to bring to the debate several additional essential considerations about this issue.

It is important to state firstly that – as mentioned before - the boundaries of these concepts have been largely discussed last decades and much work is needed to enhance new developments considering the large implications of the property rights discussion in so many different studying areas, as it is the case of natural resources or tourism, for instance (see Filipe, 2006; Filipe, Coelho and Ferreira, 2006a,b; Filipe, Coelho and Ferreira, 2007, analyzing this subject in the area of natural resources, or Álvarez-Albelo and Hernández-Martín (2009) for tourism, for example).

Considering the specificities of the common pool resources and their particular inherent features of subtractability and nonexcludability, they appear as usually indivisible local or global resources whose boundaries are difficult to delineate (Berkes 1998).

Many resources that are used by tourists are freely available (the landscape and the territorial spaces in general). In consequence, they can be considered as common resources, as proposed by Hardin (1968); other resources can be developed by the destination country or region, as it is the case of sports events, cultural events, etc.

For the tourism activities, it is possible to say that the resources are used in common by tourists, locals, and others. Usually it is difficult, even socially unacceptable, or physically impossible, to exclude any of these groups from using a given resource. In addition, consumption by one user may reduce the quantity of resources (of the same quality) available to others. This includes even those resources relatively abundant in supply, such as air, water, and scenery. The abandoned or the decaying structures, for example, are blots that spoil the area's landscape. Also the congested and overcrowded streets and other facilities, especially in highly heterogeneous tourist places, diminish variously the value of the tourist experience. This discussion suggests that the tourism resources possess the two distinguishing characteristics of common pool resources (nonexcludability and subtractability / rivalry) in addition to being indivisible and with "fluid" boundaries (see Briassoulis, 2002).

A central issue emerges to the debate related to the way how to manage the natural, built, and socio-cultural resources of visited communities in order to meet the fundamental conditions of promoting the economic well-being, of preserving the natural and socio-cultural capital, of achieving intra-generational and intergenerational equity in the distribution of costs and benefits, of securing their self-sufficiency, and of satisfying the needs of tourists (Briassoulis, 2002; Butler, 1991; Eber, 1992; Farrell, 1992; Hunter, 1997; Ko, 2001).

As referred in Briassoulis (2002), focusing on the central feature of the problem, the supra mentioned resources are used, on the one hand, by tourists in common with other tourists and, on the other, by tourists and locals. As "common pool resources" their exploitation by one user reduces the amount (or quality) available for others, being the exclusion of additional users difficult or impossible (Bromley, 1991; Ostrom, 1990). As a result, tourism resources experience the characteristic problems of common pool resources: overuse and lack of incentive for individuals to invest in maintaining or improving

them (Healy, 1994). Once they are overexploited, however, the sustainability is difficult to meet; thus, sustainable tourism development may be severely threatened.

Cerina (2007) considers also the existing relationship involving growth dynamics and environmental sustainability in a model in which tourism resources are considered common goods. A theoretical basis for the concept of sustainable tourism is also given.

In what anti-commons concerns, Candela, Figini and Scorcu (2006, 2008) were the first in using the concept of anti-commons to analyze tourism markets. On their paper, the authors concluded that tourist product is composed by a bundle of different goods and services, complementing to each other in the tourist destination and, hence, the local tourist systems might solve a problem of production coordination. However, such a combination might not automatically develop, since tourist production presents an anti-common problem, the policy maker intervention is required, although a private intervention (i.e., tour operator) could solve the problem too, even if a profit distribution conflict arises.

Within the destination, the tourism product is successful if the many firms offering single parts of the holiday are coordinated (Candela and Figini, 2010). This statement results from the existing complementarity between the single items which compose the holiday<sup>1</sup>.

Considering that each firm owns the right to accept or to refuse the tourist in the destination, a problem of rights management is involved here<sup>2</sup>.

The assumption of a good on which many agents share the same property right defines the anti-common.

According to Candela and Figini (2010), a tragedy of anti-commons may be present in tourism, once three dimensions of the coordination problem may be taken into account on this area: the coordination in

<sup>1</sup>Lodging in a hotel is a complement good of the meal offered in the restaurant and, in general, of all the other goods offered by local firms.

<sup>2</sup>For example, if the hotel refuses the accommodation, it would produce a negative externality on the restaurant, since tourists would not travel to the destination. See Candela and Figini (2010).

quantities, the coordination in quality and the coordination in prices:

- Coordination in quantity: it simply means that the carrying capacity of one firm has to match with the carrying capacity of its complements, otherwise tourists would not gain the physical access to the destination. This involves, for the destination management, the right to plan the (sustainable) development of the territory in the long run, and the possibility to use pricing and booking strategies in the short run to counteract phenomena such as seasonality, overbooking etc.
- Coordination in quality: if there is a luxury hotel in the destination its guests would probably ask for a luxury restaurant. If, instead, there is only a pizzeria, or a take-away, tourists would probably not come to the destination at all. A complication arises when, at the same time, the destination hosts different types of tourism. In such case, the destination has to offer a range of different qualities (and varieties) in order to match the specific demands.
- Coordination in prices: without coordination among firms, the final price paid by the tourist may be too high, the number of overnight stays too low and, as a consequence, profits of the firms are not maximized. So, without coordination, there will be a market failure stemming from the anti-common property.

As referred in Álvarez-Albelo and Hernández-Martín (2009), Candela, Figini and Scorcu (2006, 2008) – when studying the local tourist systems - showed that when the complementary goods in tourism are produced under imperfect competition, the anti-commons problem may emerge. This problem appears when there is no coordination among the firms in making their decisions. As a consequence, each industry charges its own mark-up, which leads to a higher package price and a smaller tourism production than if a unique mark-up were charged on the package price.

Álvarez-Albelo and Hernández-Martín (2009) have studied countries with a high level of specialization in tourism, and basing their study on a set of premises

they analyzed the effects of the commons and anti-commons problems on the aggregate equilibrium of a tourism economy. They studied these market failures with consequences on factor allocation and welfare as much as the appropriate governmental measures to reach a suitable policy. In the case of the commons the authors consider a congestion problem (not a tragedy – not an exhaustion of the common resource due to overuse). It is interesting to note that several cases are analyzed, considering several working hypotheses (for the specific contextualization, see Álvarez-Albelo and Hernández-Martín, 2009). The first situation deals with direct selling wherein the local and the foreign firms make their decisions independently. In this case, it would become optimal to tax the local tourism price whenever the commons problem overcome the anti-commons problem. When the opposite applies, subsidizing would become optimal. With the emergence of tour-operators, according to the authors, based on the industrial organization literature, the joint maximization of profits would be a solution for the anti-commons problem, provided that a unique mark-up is charged (see Álvarez-Albelo and Hernández-Martín, 2009, considering Andreiychenko, Girnius and Saha, 2006 analysis).

In the tourism markets, tour-operators choose the package prices and productions that maximize the total surplus, and then the surplus is shared out between the tour-operators and the local firms through negotiation processes. According to Álvarez-Albelo and Hernández-Martín (2009) from the firms' point of view the joint maximisation of profits would be a solution for the anti-commons problem, but not from the perspective of the tourism economy because the maximization of the total surplus does not imply the maximization of profits earned by the tourism country. It is relevant to note that foreign tour-operators and tourism destination do not have the same objectives, and consequently their views on the problems' solution for commons and anti-commons necessarily differs considerably.

In that situation, in the particular case of an economy specialized in tourism the commons problem may remain unsolved (congestion problem), and therefore, a public intervention is needed to reduce the tourism production.

In this study, the authors conclude that:

- since the foreign transport services and the local tourism goods are complementary, they can be combined as a package, and hence the direct selling and the presence of foreign tour-operators emerge as possibilities;
- in the direct selling situation the optimal policy depends on the relative importance of the problems;
- the presence of either one or several tour-operators does not solve the anti-commons problem provided, and it always leads to tourism over-production;
- the existence of a unique tour-operator does not solve the congestion problem;
- under sensible assumptions, the switch from several tour-operators to a single one turns to be welfare reducing;
- the tour-operators seek to maximize profits and not welfare of the tourism destination;
- the government at the destination should not leave the solution of these problems in the tour-operators' hands;
- the study is somehow limited once there are restrictive hypotheses in their theoretical framework (although they believe the main conclusions may prevail).

Andergassen, Candela and Figini (2013), by their turn, model the optimal development strategy of a tourism destination<sup>3</sup> by identifying and analyzing two key economic features:

i) the long-term choice of whether to invest in the enhancing of natural and/or cultural resources (which act as common goods in the destination) or to increase the degree of sophistication of the tourism product (intended as the variety of complementary services to accommodation that are demanded by tourists);

ii) the short-term choice of whether or not to implement price coordination among local firms, a

problem stemming from the anti-common nature of the tourism product.

Their economic model for the tourism destination focuses on these specific aspects of the economics of tourism which have not been properly addressed by existing literature, i.e.

i) the issue of coordination between local firms and

ii) the degree of sophistication of the tourism product.

The works of Andergassen and Candela (2012) on the issue of sophistication were extended and integrated in the Andergassen, Candela and Figini (2013) study, including the supply of a variety of different local goods and services that are also demanded and purchased by tourists during their stay, and also the works of Candela, Figini and Scorcu (2006, 2008) and Candela and Figini (2010), who addressed the issue of price coordination.

Andergassen, Candela and Figini (2013) approach also follows Papatheodorou (2003), who was the first to formally analyze the issue of the complementarity and variety of services within the tourism product, and Wachsman (2006), the first to formally analyze the problem of price coordination within the destination (see also Alvarez-Albelo and Hernandez-Martin, 2009).

In Andergassen, Candela and Figini (2013), the authors generalized the problem of coordination, tackling the main limitations in the results of Wachsman (2006) and Candela, Figini and Scorcu (2006/2008) and jointly considered sophistication and coordination, thus building a unique economic model to describe the development and the organizational pattern for the tourism destination.

This approach allows important implications for the economics of the destination, by highlighting important policy outcomes for destination management and local stakeholders.

By comparing the solution of no coordination with those in the case of exogenous coordination through the destination management and endogenous coordination through the tour operator, the authors present the following:

Theorem 1 (The Coordination Theorem). Given the anti-common property of the tourism product,

<sup>3</sup> These authors make a classification of destinations based on the type of coordination and on whether the primary resource is natural, cultural or organizational.

coordination among firms in the destination, which can either be provided by the destination management or by a tour operator, increases profits from tourism.

Then, can be seen that price coordination enables the tourism activity in the destination to be more efficient. It can be noted that this is an example of the prisoner dilemma where (price) coordination yields a Pareto superior solution to non-coordination.

Besides, a “Love for Variety Theorem” for the destination is presented by the authors, allowing tourism to “take-off” in the long run. Variety in the tourism product can then be a strategic asset:

Theorem 2 (Love for Variety Theorem). As long as the negative externalities on tourism quality are small, reorganization of the tourism destination toward increasing the variety of available goods and services raises tourists’ welfare and their willingness to spend on tourism at the expense of non-tourism consumption, thereby stimulating the economic development of the destination.

As a conclusion, the authors show that there are two key issues that have been identified in order to understand the rise, specialization, development and institutional arrangement of tourism destinations:

i) the choice between investing in the variety of the tourism product (its sophistication) or enhancing local resources;

ii) the coordination of local firms, stemming from the anti-common property of the tourism product.

As can be noted, important developments have emerged to analyze the tourism destinations as a significant part of the tourism literature. This kind of approach to this theme is an important contribution to provide a manageable tool to the decision makers in order to solve several kind of tourism dilemma when facing tourism management problems. The framework of commons and anti-commons allows to methodically organize possible solutions for a set of problems arising in the tourism area.

## **5. The “Ammaia” Project in Marvão/Sintra, Alentejo Region, Portugal**

### **5.1 Geographical and Historical Contextualization**

Northern Alentejo – Portalegre District – is a very preserved region. There are vast plains, mountains, thermal waters, dolmens and menhirs stones, manor houses, ancient convents, wineries, ... There are also festival and fairs, popular music and dancing, local art. The region is intended to maintain tradition and, in general, it has been kept offside of all tourists paths and from tourism mass.

Since prehistoric times this region has been sought by mankind. Over half a hundred dolmens and menhirs - of which that Meada (Castelo de Vide) is the biggest of the Iberian Peninsula - bear witness to the exuberance of the megalithic culture. The Romans were to surprise the natives in their fortifications. They built on the best lands of the valley and plains. The Roman town of Ammaia (Marvão) and the Roman villa of Torre de Palma (Monforte), with their beautiful mosaics retell a little of the splendours of the Empire. Following the Barbarians, the Moors left their indelible imprint on the language, the agriculture, the military architecture (Elvas, Marvão) that the Christians from the North were able to assimilate and transform into anchors of Portuguese nationality. The castles and town walls of the Northern Alentejo - which form the country's most important group of fortifications - as well as the headquarters of the powerful military religious orders (Crato, Avis) constitute the eternal documentation of those disturbed times of the fight for independence. They now form a countless nucleus of historic centres unmatched in Portugal: Marvão - World Heritage candidate, Castelo de Vide, Portalegre, Crato, Alter do Chão, Campo Maior, Elvas. Touches of Manueline, Renaissance and Baroque erudition's were added to their vernacular purity, in places, churches and convents, permitted by the centuries of the Discoveries.

### **5.2 The Geographic Triangle: Portalegre - Castelo de Vide - Marvão**

Natural Park of Serra de S. Mamede is a very beautiful natural region.

Portalegre lies on one of the sides of Serra de São Mamede, a mountainous range with a variety of fauna and flora, part of which has been designated a natural park. Portalegre itself is of roman origin though it is filled with fine Renaissance and Baroque mansions. Castelo de Vide, on another green slope of Serra de São Mamede, is known for its curative waters since roman times and its castle, that gave the

town its name. From the castle in Marvão, spectacularly set on an escarpment facing Serra de São Mamede and Spain, the splendid views can be enjoyed over the fertile plains. This small and tranquil medieval town is completely enclosed by walls, with whitewashed houses blending into the granite of the mountains.



### 5.3 The Project

On this scenario, some projects have been developed, some of them with considerable investments. "Ammaia"<sup>4</sup> was the first golf course emerging in Alentejo countryside away from coastal areas. It was a handsome space fully integrated in the landscape of the Natural Park of Serra de S. Mamede.

It was inaugurated in April 1997, being the first golf course in Eastern Portugal and the first one in Alentejo, located 5 Km from the historical village of Marvão (UNESCO world patrimony candidate) and 6 Km from Castelo de Vide, also known as "Sintra of Alentejo".

When it opened in 1997 offered varied infrastructure: areas to train, bunker and chipping areas, putting green, a clubhouse offering restaurant and bar services, manual and automatic trolleys, among other services.

Landscape is fabulous in the area, allowing magnificent sightseeing over Marvão and S. Mamede's mountain.

<sup>4</sup> Ammaia is the name of a 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman city, located at 2 Km from the golf course, and that gave the name to the golf project. The Ammaia-Clube de Golfe de Marvão, S.A. was the owner of the project.

This golf course has been ranked by the magazine "European Golf" in 1999 as the 7th most beautiful of Portugal (with respect to the surrounding landscape and insertion of the field in the landscape) and was distinguished as the "Golf Course of the year" by the Portuguese Federation of Golf, in 2000.

As published in the website <http://www.portugalgolfcourses.com/portugal/golf/alentejo/marvao.html>, covering 137 hectares of the São Mamede Natural Park and strategically placed in the Marvão – Portalegre - Castelo de Vide triangle, the Ammaia Club de Golf of Marvão was a pioneer in the Alto Alentejo. As referred before, the name comes from an ancient Roman town that was once there, and which historic remains can still be seen scattered about the course. The welcoming clubhouse was inspired by the design of a typical Alentejo house, perfectly blending with the local landscape.

The course<sup>5</sup>, designed by the Architect Jorge Santana da Silva (also responsible for the Amarante and Quinta da Barca courses), has undulating greens, several bunkers and four lakes. Three of these lakes are in the early part of the course (14 holes in flat terrain), and one in the challenging final sequence of four holes set in elevated countryside.

### 5.4 The Project Failure

Despite all the potentialities, Marvão golf course is closed since 2007 after having entered into insolvency proceedings, in 2006, when it belonged to Carlos Melancia, former Governor of Macau.

In April 2007, through the Solévor, the Fernando Barata Hotel Group acquired the property of "Ammaia Clube de Golfe de Marvão, SA", after the insolvency of the company, requested by the Administration and decreed by court, due to debts to suppliers and employees.

The same group, which had previously purchased the tourist village associated with the golf course, the "Aldeia d'Azenha", was one of the four partners of

<sup>5</sup> Running to 6,170 metres, the emphasis of this course is on holes number 4, 12 and 17. Hole number 4, is a Par 4, requiring a precise drive because of water running along the right side of the fairway. Hole number 12, a Par 5, rises sharply to finish with a green made up of a double platform. Hole number 17, a Par 3, has a teeing-off point set on high ground, while its green is placed in a peninsula surrounded by water on three sides and exposed to the wind.



Ammaia, also integrated by Bevide, a company of Carlos Melancia (Ranhola, 2007).

The company of Fernando Barata has left the project for breach of deadlines for payment to the Commission of insolvency, and lost a deposit of about 400 thousand euros.

In 2009, The Edge Group, real estate fund of Miguel Pais do Amaral and José Luís Pinto Basto, tried to buy the project by 750 thousand euros. However, they did not reach an agreement to get the project. The *Turismo de Portugal*, for saving the golf course, bought it at public auction in February 2010 by 565 thousand euros. In 2011 a group of private investors offered about 640 thousand euros to acquire the venture (Conceição, 2011).

A new golf course is being studied for Abrunheira, Portalegre, when in the region of Portalegre already exists the above mentioned example of failure: the Ammaia golf course, Marvão, which current abandonment of land and associated buildings are clearly visible. Nowadays, sheep can be seen grazing in these areas.

This example claims for reflection and collective responsibility when promoting this kind of investments; public institutions may better ponder the approval of large projects of this nature.

### 5.5 The Methodological Discussion

Taking into consideration the frameworks considered for the present discussion - commons and anti-commons theories – some preliminary comments are appropriate:

- There is an enormous natural scenery and historical heritage, claiming for being enjoyed and being potentially very significant for tourism exploitation in a sustainable basis, guaranteeing the space and legacy preservation;
- the existing structures, the cultural features and the communities' organization also reflect a under exploited region but with great potential for developing a sustainable tourism offer;
- preserving all this region for sustainable tourism development is a central issue for managing the natural, built, and socio-cultural resources of the host communities of the region;
- there is no enough coordination among local agents themselves and with local and national authorities to develop integrated strategies of development of tourism products for the region;
- There are no joint strategies, including integrated and diversified offers for tourism products, combined with price coordination and a net of joint actions to find chain added value for economic agents in the region.
- There are not tour-operators concerned with a high value product for the region, integrating a set of activities and facilities.
- Such a “space” needs the appropriate promotion to become a demanded tourism region.

In short, there has not been any agents coordination in order to make the correct (and higher level) exploitation of the project, considering the existing tourism products in the region.

Additionally, some other notes need to be presented, specifically considering the supra mentioned broken project. What are the reasons for the bankruptcy of the project "Ammaia"? Equating the various possible hypotheses, may it have been due to:

- errors and incompetence of management? Independently for this project or considering other developed projects, having anyhow some joint focal points associated, particularly on management and investment?
- connections among politics and businesses that subsequently did not have developments in conformity?
- problems of economies of scale in the regional economy?
- a market failure as a result of the lack of coordination of agents to allow the success of the venture?
- a wider surrounding of inabilities to get an association of infrastructures and other structures to be made available for supporting the local tourism projects?

- a strict question of communication and marketing that failed?

Considering all the above statements and evidences, it is clear that “Ammaia” was a big investment in a region with no much facilities and with no tradition in big tourism demanding. Anyway, some facilities were created to support the project and a well known and famous hotel (in Castelo de Vide) was in the neighborhood supporting the project. Additionally new related facilities were being created. Yet, new investors keep interested in the project, as it is the case of Dr. Pais do Amaral.

As recognized by Candela and Figini (2010) there are several fundamental economic problems of a destination, including that:

- in the destination, it is necessary to coordinate the different production activities provided by independent firms;
- in the destination, it is necessary to supply a variety of goods and services in order to meet tourists' needs and improve their satisfaction;
- the destination needs to “complete” the tourism product through the supply of public goods (structures and infrastructures) and services (information) which cannot efficiently be offered by the private sector.

In a region as the one approached in this study, it is relevant to understand that many goods and services are lacked in the area and much is necessary to be done to have attractive tourism products.

It seems also clear that the President of Marvão Municipality has been – and continues to be - very committed with the project's success. However, the financial resources and his power of influence is not enough by himself alone to open a new perspective for the future of the project.

However, it seems that, considering the promoters and all the involved agents, the commitment was not significant. The coordination among municipalities' authorities and among the economic agents of the different municipalities who were interested in the development of the project has not worked. Also the venture's direct promoters did not develop or search for new solutions.

Now, a profound analysis is requires for the future.

While such kind of a project brings considerable chemical pollution to the water courses, significant in golf area and some other kinds of risks, which amount would be depending on the dimensions of the tourism arrivals, it is also true that a possible increase of investments would come and new improvements would be made considering the facilities in the region.

At the same time, some other activities could be implemented in the region in order to develop traditional arts, to contribute for promoting the preservation of historical mankind resources in the region and the natural and other tourism landscapes. In practice, several activities, although constituting activities used by tourists, (natural, socio-cultural, built attractions, ...), could have their maintenance supported and financed by tourism, providing their preservation and improvements. In that extent, the same is applicable, for example, specifically to the facilities serving the needs of tourists (for example, accommodation or specialized facilities), to other facilities serving both, tourists and locals, to the broader landscape, to the natural environmental elements (water, air, land, ...), infrastructures, etc.

In such kind of space, the carrying capacity of this area in Alentejo, in general, is far away from being reached and until then, many improvements for the region as a whole and for local population may be got. However, the ways to minimize the negative externalities may be considered, mainly the ones occurred in consequence of the watering and fertilizing system of the golf course with direct environmental impacts on habitats, species, soils and hydric resources.

To solve the anti-commons problem as a result from the agents' lack of coordination<sup>6</sup>, more coordination and more commitment among the agents are required.

## 6. Some Conclusions and Recommendations

In several countries in which tourism is a fundamental activity, the framework of commons and

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<sup>6</sup> Other kind of problems that may have contributed for the bankruptcy of the supra mentioned project is not considered in the analysis, once it is out of the purposes of the current study.

anti-commons is a possible tool to methodologically deal with tourism problems.

The tourism products and destinations may request the modelling of optimal development strategies, combining the measures provided by national and local authorities with the ones of economic agents. The exploitation of the tourism products may deserve an analysis strong enough to allow that the tourism activities in a region are sustainable; that the tourism resources be kept preserved; that the suitable rates of firms profitability and the benefits from the tourism for communities are got; and the governmental aims, of all kinds, be kept consistent with long term exploitation of tourism resources.

According to the previously exposed, governments have to be a part in the decision process and shall create the sustainable conditions for the tourism exploitation in the long term. When needed, they may be representative as a part in the solutions' findings. Not always the interests of the economic agents are compatible. Usually being the products offered complementary, often there are also conflicting ones once they are competitive. In both circumstances, as much as possible, the agents may look for coordination in order to find acceptable results. Often cooperation appears as a solution and agents have to study the specific conditions in which they benefit from cooperation.

In this study, Alto Alentejo was used to show that one region with important geographical, historical, and socio-cultural resources and an enormous natural beauty can develop tourism products, improving the welfare of the locals and providing an excellent route for tourists. The development of tourism can provide an important improvement in the region commons.

However, the Ammaia Golf Course (Ammaia Club de Golf of Marvão) was a project developed in the region but, considering a set of reasons, fell into the liquidation.

The framework of anti-commons may explain that a better agents coordination in the region would contribute to reduce the risks of collapse of such a kind of project. This outcome frustrated what would be a socially desirable outcome, considering all the agents involved in the project, since the entrepreneurs and the beneficiaries of the service, until the region authorities and the community.

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