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Integration of local residents and tourists through sustainable public spaces

Case Study Analysis and Policy Recommendations

Abstract

Peniche, situated in the center-west part of Portugal, is a worldwide known destination for surfers and other tourists. Baleal Beach is one of the famous beaches in the region attracting hundreds of thousands of tourists every year. Despite high tourism potential, Baleal Beach and the settlement nearby have different problems including over-tourism during peak seasons, transportation infrastructure problems, lack of diversity of facilities for tourism activities. One of the biggest issues in the Baleal Beach is the lack of public spaces, especially where tourists and locals interact with each other. The main focus of this report is to propose sustainable solutions to integrate the local community and attract tourists to the study area. The aim is then to preserve the authenticity of the territory and enhance the natural characteristics of Baleal Beach, while providing public spaces for the use of tourists and locals. We propose diversification of public spaces addressing specific groups of tourists by focusing on integrating the local people and increasing the involvement of the local community by considering sustainable development with the preservation of natural heritage.

The report includes spatial analysis of the study area in order to determine problem areas. It also contains stakeholders mapping that incorporates all actors having impact on the proposed project. The report also contains SWOT analysis of the study area presented from the perspective of the Municipality of Peniche.

Keywords: Baleal Beach, Sustainability, Quality, Public Spaces, Tourists, Locals.

Theoretical and methodological framework

Aim of the report

The aim of the report is to present solutions related to public spaces for the Baleal Beach area. This project deals with the implementation of solutions related to the integration of the local community with tourists, but also focuses on sustainability. The proposed solutions are related both to the creation of new green spaces, green corridors, multi-functional public spaces, and connecting spaces through designated pedestrian routes.

Methods

Before examining the study, we got acquainted with the subject literature. Initially, we read scientific articles and reports explaining the concept of public spaces. According to Mensch (2007) public space is the "space where individuals see and are seen by others as they engage in public affairs". We also got acquainted with the reports on the characteristics of the studied area and its development in the light of climate change. Our aim was to show the problem and its solutions in the light of sustainable development. Therefore, we reviewed numerous articles that dealt with this issue, especially in terms of shaping public spaces.

One of the basic methods used in the work is a literature review. A literature review can broadly be described as a more or less systematic way of collecting and synthesising previous research (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Tranfield, Denyer & Smart, 2003). An effective and well-conducted review as a research method creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge and facilitating theory development (Webster & Watson, 2002).

The second method used in the work is the case study analysis. We identified key issues and formulated thesis statement. After that we managed to gather background information, relevant facts, and the most important issues. In this case study we researched problematic aspects with an observation tool, gathering photos and plans of study area. Finally we formulated solutions and recommendations for the studied area.

Next method used in this work is an unstructured interview. It helps to define the problem and organise the main threads of the research. It is a free conversation between the respondent and the interviewer on a given topic, while the role of the person conducting the interview consists only in interfering with a question from time to time, a request for a more detailed explanation of the argument (Konecki, 2005). In this case we conducted meeting with local community, we also interviewed some local business workers.

SWOT analysis was also used in this paper. According to Teoli, Sanvictores and An (2021), SWOT Analysis (short for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) is a business strategy tool to assess how an organisation compares to its competition. The strategy is historically credited to Albert Humphrey in the 1960s, but this attribution remains debatable. There is no universally-accepted creator. Also known as the SWOT matrix, it has achieved recognition as useful in differentiating and establishing a niche within the broader market. This project uses SWOT analysis for evaluate the study area.

The other method used in this scenario is stakeholders mapping. In this case we identified the main actors who could influence the project, then, thanks to the mapping tool, we created a graph. Finally we formulated recommendations base on the solution that we managed to create. We divided suggested recommendations

into three groups. First deals with transforming into eco-friendly destination, second focuses on integration of local people with tourists and the last one enhancing connectivity and accessibility.

Case study analysis

Case study area

Our case study area is Baleal Beach in Portugal, which is located in the Atlantic Ocean and is among the important tourism countries of Europe. This country, which has established the closest relationship with Spain, stands out in tourism, especially because it is a coastal country.

Portugal's territory on the mainland is divided by its largest river, the Tejo River. The northern part is a mountainous region that contains plains inside and is divided in four subregions, creating areas suitable for agriculture. The southern part, between the Tejo River and the Algarve, consists of plains with a warmer and drier climate than the northern region, with generally cool and rainy climate. The Algarve region, separated from Alentejo by mountains, has a Mediterranean climate similar to Morocco and Southern Spain.

Focusing on the study area, we see that our area is connected to the Municipality of Peniche. but physical relationships and intimacy are more important to us than administrative commitment. Our field of work establishes its most important ties with Peniche, Lisbon and Leiria. Economically, the study area has close and strong relations with Peniche. This relationship is mainly based on fishing.

Peniche has a population of 27,321 (Jorge et al., 2022). The city centre of Peniche, as the biggest parish in the municipality, has approximately 15.600 inhabitants and the rest are in other three parishes – namely Atouguia da Baleia, Ferrel and Serra d'El-Rei. The daily population of the study area increase enormously during peak tourist seasons, and one hundred thousand or more people use the Baleal Beach in the summer season. Gross density of Peniche is as average number of individuals per km² is 343.1 (Jorge et al., 2022).

Located in the Parish of Ferrel, Baleal has become a major vacation spot with a potential for water sports almost unmatched in Europe. The coastal shape, namely the bay and northern strip of coast associated with Baleal create unique conditions in Europe for practising surfing and bodyboarding. According to what we talked to the local people here, it is very difficult to go to the neighbourhood centre during summer months. They said that there are not enough transportation facilities and that the public bus service is conducted only 2 times a day, one in the morning and the other in afternoon between Ferrel and Peniche. The distance of the neighbourhood centre to the beach and the inability to establish a connection between them stands out as a negative aspect that we considered as a result of our observations.



Figure 1: Av. da Pradia.

Source: own elaboration.

One of the main transportation axes of Baleal crossing nearby the settlement in the north-south direction and connecting Peniche to Baleal is Av. da Pradia (Figure 5). Although this road is very important for Baleal, it creates parcels that bring together the inner parts of the beach and provide the opportunity to work in parallel, but as far as we have seen, there is no such relationship. In Balela, where a significant population increase is experienced in the summer months, Av. da Pradia comes to a complete standstill.



Figure 2: Av. do Mar.

Source: own elaboration.

The other important transportation axis is Av. do Mar crossing within the settlement in the east-west direction. This is the most fundamental link between Ferrel and Balela. It also provides the connection between Obidos and Balela. The cultural and historical heritages in Obidos are very important for Leira and of course for the study area as attracting domestic and foreign tourists throughout the year. This link should be strengthened in order to create a tourism destination between Obidos and Baleal. Morning and evening public transportation service is provided only two times a day and service is received from this road.

Baleal Beach is the most attractive and unique element of the study area with its natural beauties and perfect conditions for surfing. It is the visual focal point of the study area, as well as an edge that ends the space. This area, which is heavily used and the first choice of tourists, hosts almost a hundred thousand visitors with a tremendous increase in summer months.

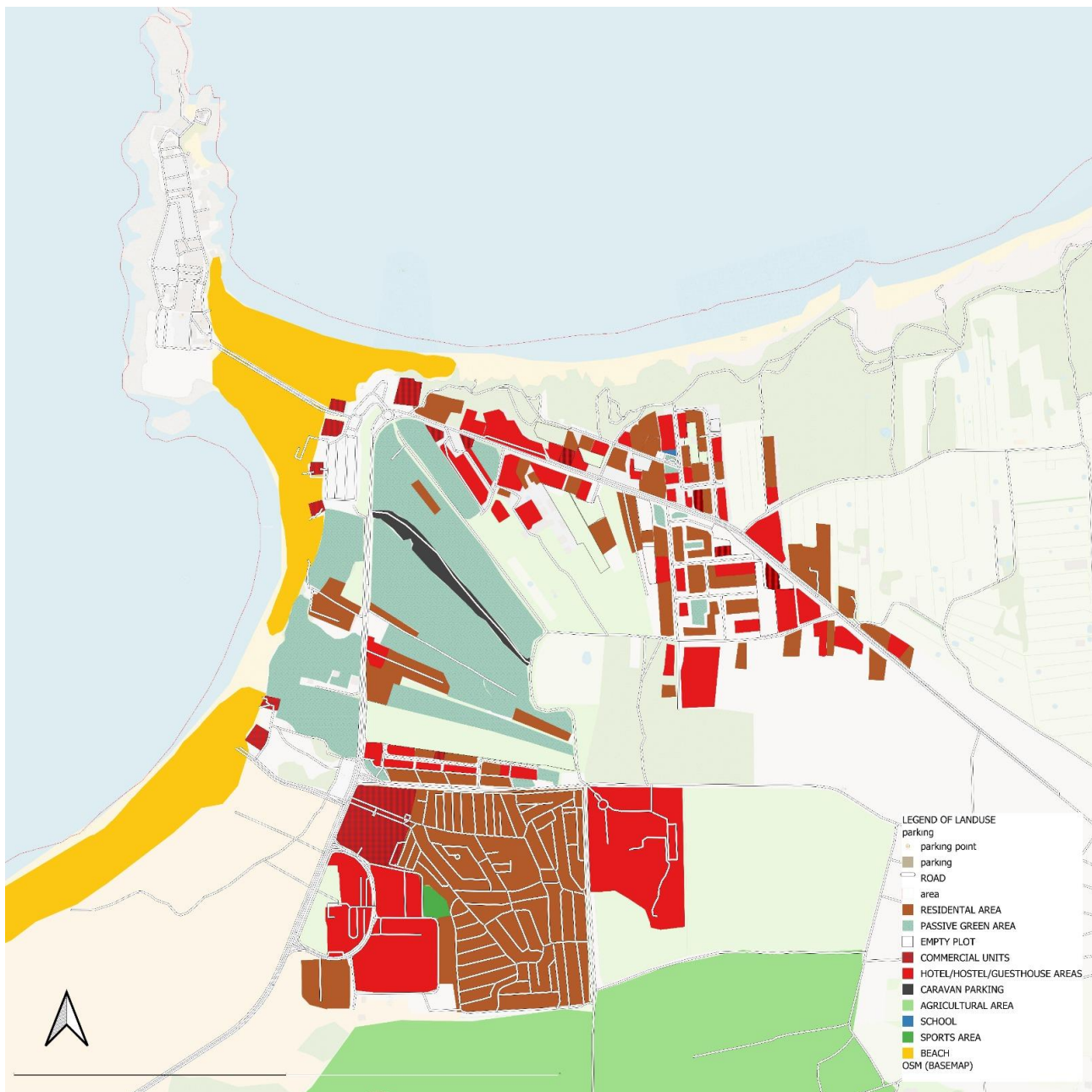


Figure 3: Land use of Baleal Beach.

Source: unknown.

It is also the training ground of surf clubs. The island can be accessed via a road from the sand hill to the north of the beach. At the same time, many restaurants are located on the west of this beach, architecturally facing the landscape.



Figure 4: Baleal Beach.

Source: own elaboration.

Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder analysis provides conceptualization in the light of policy science and helps analyse the interests and influence of a particular focus on active stakeholders. It focuses on the interrelationships between groups and organisations and their impact on policies in a broader political, economic and cultural context (Brugha & Varvasovszky, 2000). The main method used for stakeholder analysis in this paper is mapping the main actors using a matrix of stakeholders.

Table 1: Stakeholder analysis of Baleal Beach.

Keep Satisfied:	Manage Closely
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipality of Peniche Institute of Conservation of Nature and Forest General directory of territory Turismo de Portugal Land owners Accommodation providers Local businesses Travel agency Summer house owners
Monitor	Keep informed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission International tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic tourists Event planners Real estate agents Institute of Conservation of Nature and Forest

Source: own elaboration.

The first group consists of public authorities and mainly private investors. Public authorities consist of the Municipality of Peniche, Institute of Conservation of Nature and Forest, General Directory of Territory and Turismo de Portugal. Private investors include landowners, accommodation providers, local businesses and

travel agencies. This group is highly influential and has a lot of power and interest as well. Yet, public authorities could be considered as the key stakeholders in the study area, especially the municipality as being the local authority that determines spatial development decisions and is responsible for preparing master plans. The second group includes the University. Despite its low power, it retains a high interest by doing public research and supporting local authorities. The third group is represented by the European Commission and International tourists. This party doesn't have power or a lot of interest. The European Commission is mainly focused on larger scale projects, whereas the international tourists have a wide range of destinations to choose from. The last group is the least powerful group, but their interest is really high. It involves domestic tourists, event planners, real estate agents and also includes public bodies such as the Institute of Conservation of Nature and Forest.

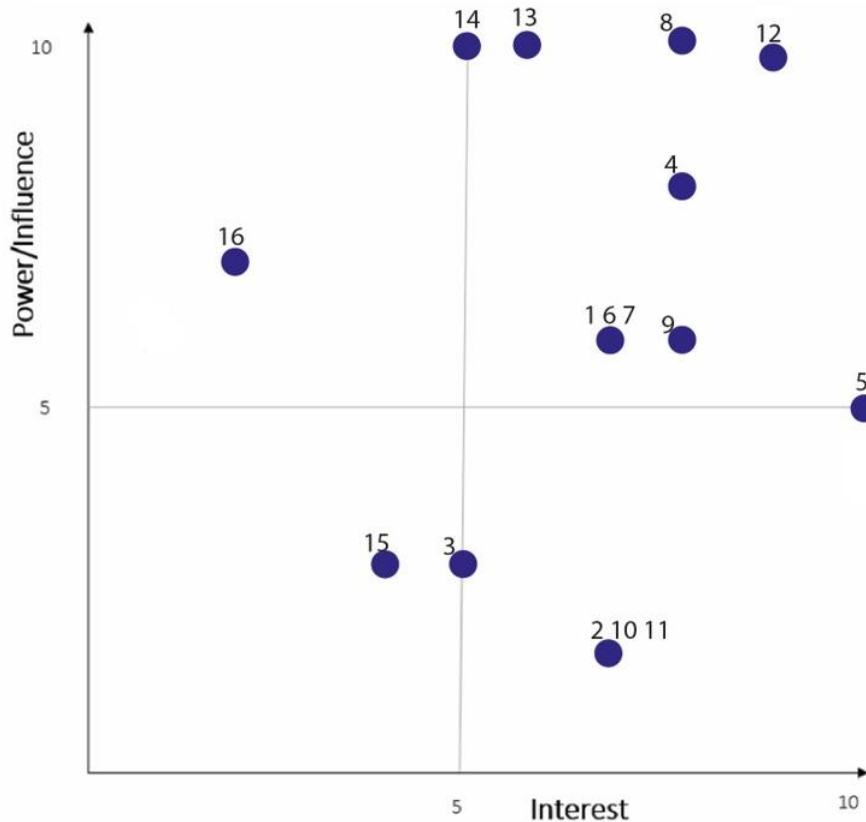


Figure 5: Power versus interest of stakeholders in Baleal Beach.

Source: own elaboration.

SWOT analysis

Table 2: SWOT analysis of Baleal Beach.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favourable tourist location • Lots of empty spaces • Unique natural environment • Good weather conditions • Popular tourist destination for surfers • Massive tourism during summer period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of green spaces • Lack of public areas • Lack of connections between city and Baleal Beach • Lack of pedestrian roads • Very limited range of facilities provided for locals and tourists • Weak involvement of local communities • Lack of neighbourhood activities • Dissatisfaction of local residents about tourism increase • Overcrowded spaces
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local residents integration • Strong potential for natural heritage conservation • Increasing of tourism income • Potential to be multifunctional area • Potential to be eco-friendly destination • Strong potential for tourism development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict between tourists and local people • Displacement of local residents • Destruction of natural heritage • Climate change • Traffic congestions • Economic crisis

Source: own elaboration.

Policy recommendations

Some policy recommendations were provided in order to facilitate the resolution of the problem identified. In this regard, two main categories of policies were identified: Integration of local people with tourists and enhancing connectivity and accessibility. Each of them were then subdivided into more specific solutions.

Transforming into eco-friendly destination

- Green areas and green connections – Creation of green areas, both passive and active, funded by the municipality and the department of urbanism and environment scattered throughout the city of Peniche. In specific, some green areas will be localised around all the city and next to Baleal Beach and they will be as sustainable and integrated with the territory as possible but with many services for the people (benches, picnic areas, fountains, playground areas, recycle bins). The final aim is to create a link between the parks through green streets with trees in order to support wildlife and create a pleasant environment. Residents but also the tourists will benefit from this requalification of the area. In fact, this will lead to the enrichment of the biodiversity of the area of interest, it will

provide some natural shadow, a meeting place for local people and tourists and a recreational place for all the seasons. Consequently, the city can become more attractive and in particular the traders located near those areas will be able to benefit because of the concentration of the possible customers. In order to do so, it is important to have financial support and help in the work management activities from the municipality. The municipality will also provide human resources and technical support. For what concerns the execution of the policy, the idea is to develop a staging term policy, that means that it will be finished in the long term but it will be possible to see some results also in a shorter period of time.

Integration of local people with tourists

In fact it emerged that there is a big gap between locals and tourists, which may lead to conflict of interests. It was then underlined the lack of public areas for locals and tourists to meet together. In particular, the project will concentrate on the following:

- Creation of a multifunctional area for city fairs and festivals – This proposal foresees the creation of a multifunctional area in front of Baleal Beach. It must be built in such a way as to be able to host a city fair and musical festivals but also be usable by people when no specific event is present. Thanks to the realisation of a city fair local producers will have the possibility to sell local and regional products and the festival will help Peniche and Baleal Beach to be more visible. So, this event will let many actors benefit from it: locals, tourists, local producers, companies, workers in the event's field. Since this multifunctional area will supposedly attract many people, it is important to increase the public transportation and some green parking lots. The events will be held especially in the summer (but not only) from the late evening in order to receive the users after the usual hours for going to the beach. The area will respect the nature and authenticity of the place as much as possible and it will be equipped with benches. Moreover, it will be partially covered by a sustainable canopy in order to have a space protected from the sun and rain. This action will be conducted by the municipality, that will provide the financial, human and technical resources needed. Then, this area could attract some investors that could also help to have financial support. It will be a short term policy.
- Determining socio-cultural nodes by providing facilities according to the needs of specific social groups – The purpose of this action is to create some areas that could comprehend the needs of different types of users each. For example, some picnic areas could be localised along the coastal area in order to let families have their lunch in a comfortable place, while in another part of the beach can be localised an outside gym, that supposedly will attract surfers. This disposition could also favour a natural concentration of a specific type of user (different type of tourists/locals) in each part so that it will also be easier for them to not bother each other while on the beach, since their needs are usually different (especially surfers-families). The responsible will be the municipality that will provide, together with some enterprises on multiple levels (international, national, regional) the financial, human and technical support. a staging policy will be needed for this action.

Enhancing connectivity and accessibility

- Provide an efficient shuttle service – Although the studied area is a very popular tourist destination worldwide, a really poor connection in terms of public transport between the centre of Peniche and Baleal was noted. Moreover, another problem is the total lack of a public transport connection

between Baleal and the nearest airport. In this sense, it is important to provide tourists with the possibility of arriving comfortably at their destination by means of a public transport service and it is for this reason that the present proposal foresees the use of some shuttles. This will also contribute to the reduction of traffic and pollution caused by private cars. The objective is also to connect Baleal and consequently Peniche with other cities in order to provide a better service to the users of the area and keep them satisfied. In fact, another connection that this action aims to provide is the one between Óbidos and Baleal. This linkage will favour tourism in both the cities. The primary actor will be the municipality, in particular the transportation sector, in cooperation with a local transport company. For what concerns the resources, a good transportation management plan should be released and first financial support from the municipality also in order to provide some bus poles to put during the path, then the service will be financed by the municipality, EU funds, ministry of transport and turismo de Portugal. It will be a short term policy. It is preferable to also guarantee the service in the winter season in order to favour travel to and from the city centre and encourage tourism outside the high season.

- Enhance soft mobility – The increase in soft mobility will bring multiple benefits to the city, such as: reduction of pollution and harmful emissions caused by machine exhausts, traffic reduction, well-being. In particular the aim of this policy is to enhance the bike lane and the pedestrian streets present in the area and add new ones within the city. Moreover, the streets would be preferable as much green as possible. This action will be conducted firstly from the municipality and some soft mobility enterprises involved; not only locals will benefit from it but also tourists. The financial and human resources will be provided by the municipality and from the ministry of transport; since the topic is linked to the SDGs it could be also possible to receive some funds from the European Union. It will be a staging term policy.



Figure 6: Spatial conceptualisation of recommendations to be applied in Baleal Beach.

Source: own elaboration.

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