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Towards a Sustainable and Resilient Future: Enhancement of Community Involvement and Cooperation in Baleal Beach (Peniche, Portugal)

Case Study Analysis and Policy Recommendations

Abstract

Community involvement in coastal cities like Peniche is crucial to motivate local stakeholders to use time and resources on the destination management. Also, it is needed so local residents can have a platform on which they can speak about their ideas about the place in which they live. If there's no cooperation and proper management to keep the destination's sustainability, tourists will lose interest, which will affect the local economy. On the other hand, climate change, especially sea-level rise, will also have a big impact on tourism and life in general in Peniche. In order to achieve a sustainable and resilient future and manage this issue, attention needs to be given to the preservation and conservation of the natural structure of the area. This report assesses the lack of destination management and local participation as a problem statement identified after the analysis of the case study and a discussion session with local stakeholders in Peniche. Therefore, we present a Destination Management Organization as the appropriate solution that will prioritize the maintenance of the environmental value as well as enhance sustainable tourism, all based on community participation and cooperation.

Keywords: Baleal Beach, Stakeholders, Tourism Destination, Sustainable Spatial Planning, Policy Recommendations, Community Involvement, Coordination, Destination Management Organization.

Theoretical and methodological framework

Aim of the report

The following report is the result of a one-week case study workshop in Peniche, Portugal. Baleal beach case study is a part of the project 'SPOT. Sustainable Spatial Planning for Tourism Destinations' granted under the Erasmus+ program. Our report is a complex analysis and the respective solutions and suggestions for two main problems that can be in some ways resolved by using similar fixes. The aim of the report is to showcase different approaches that local authorities can take to help them with the sustainable development of the area. The key issues that need to be addressed are: how can local residents have more of an influence on plan-making decisions and what actions should be taken to remain in the natural state of Baleal beach. This report will address both of the aforementioned issues and will propose the best solutions and recommendations that can be used to improve the situation regarding tourism and environmental protection in Peniche, from the role of spatial planning and policy-making working towards sustainable development in the Baleal beach area.

Literature review

Several studies have shown that Destination management organizations, that manage the network of businesses and interests in a destination, are essential for developing sustainable tourism destinations (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014). DMOs capable of actively fostering collaboration between destination stakeholders are also key to ensuring a destination's competitiveness (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014). Yet, empirical investigations concerning the role of DMO success in establishing the competitiveness of destinations are rare. Enhanced power and acceptance of the DMO within the destination network can foster decision-making and its effectiveness (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014).

By identifying and conveying the needs and interests of all participants – including decision makers – community engagement in decision-making supports sustainable decisions. As local knowledge from multiple groups develops and generates inclusive, effective solutions, this enhances acceptance of decisions and community commitment to outcomes. Moreover, increasing community leadership capability and inviting community leaders to the decision-making table strengthens their voice, contacts, and abilities. Community involvement builds strong and healthy relationships between individuals who rarely sit at the same decision-making table: people with community power and those with financial power. Quiroz-Niño & Blanco-Encomienda (2019) say that: "When you take the leap and bring community members in as equal partners, you create opportunities for deep personal relationships, dynamic collaborations, and greater impact."

Methods

This article is primarily based on a case study of Baleal beach, in Peniche, Portugal. A case study design is about studying and making an intensive analysis of a single case (Clark et al., 2021). In our case study, the location was of utmost interest, as well as the tourism industry. Case studies are performed when the case in itself is of interest, and the aim is to research and go in-depth on that specific case (Clark et al., 2021). As a part of the case study, several different expert lectures and seminars have been participated in, with output like stakeholder analysis, SWOT, maps, and policy suggestions. To sample information about local tourism,

we have also talked to and interviewed local stakeholders, like the owner of hotels, and restaurants, the president of Ferrel Parish, and the owner of a local surfing camp. They shared a lot of interesting and relevant information about what is important to the local tourism community.

A stakeholder analysis is a process used to identify who are the actors that are going to be taking part in a project before it starts in order to take into account the role they will hold in the decision-making process regarding the interest and how they will impact (positively or negatively) the final result. It also helps to categorize a stakeholder by what type of actions should be taken when working with them. Its relevance relies on clarifying what measures should be taken with each stakeholder group in order to open an organized discussion where all points of view are taken into account and are expressed in the final result as the outcome of fair negotiation. The division into categories regarding the scale of action is useful for determining the key actors for each scale and role categorization.

A SWOT analysis is a helpful tool to organize the collected information in the diagnostic stage in order to analyse, discuss, prioritize and agree on the main issues that the project faces. It is an analytical methodology used to identify and categorize the main internal (Strength and Weaknesses) and external (Opportunities and Threats) factors recognized in a particular scenario like an organization or territory.

Case study analysis

Case study area

Peniche is a Portuguese municipality located in the Oeste intermunicipality and Centro Region. It is part of the historical province of Estremadura. Geographically it is situated in the Peniche Peninsula surrounded by the Atlantic ocean. Peniche, which has 1 urban and 3 rural parishes, has a total of 77.7 square kilometers and the population of Peniche is 26,487 in 2020 (Camara Municipal de Peniche,). Regarding its history, Peniche has been one of the biggest traditional fishing ports and an important Atlantic center of maritime-touristic activities. Surfing tourism starting after 2009, which has increased especially in the Baleal region, has become an international destination. At the same time, many trade and service sectors have developed within this framework (Springwald, 2018).



Figure 1: Structuring elements of Peniche, Portugal.

Source: authors' elaboration.



Figure 2: Photos of the case study area.

Source: authors' elaboration.

This analysis of land cover changes was made for 2 different years of the Copernicus Land Cover Data which are the 2000 and 2018 (Figures 3-6). The analyses were made within the boundary containing the Peniche, Ferrel, and Atougua da Baleia regions. Solutions say that the artificial surfaces, industrial and commercial

units, port areas, permanently irrigated lands, and coniferous forests were visually increased. Discontinuous urban fabrics, non-irrigated arable lands, and transitional woodland shrubs were decreased.

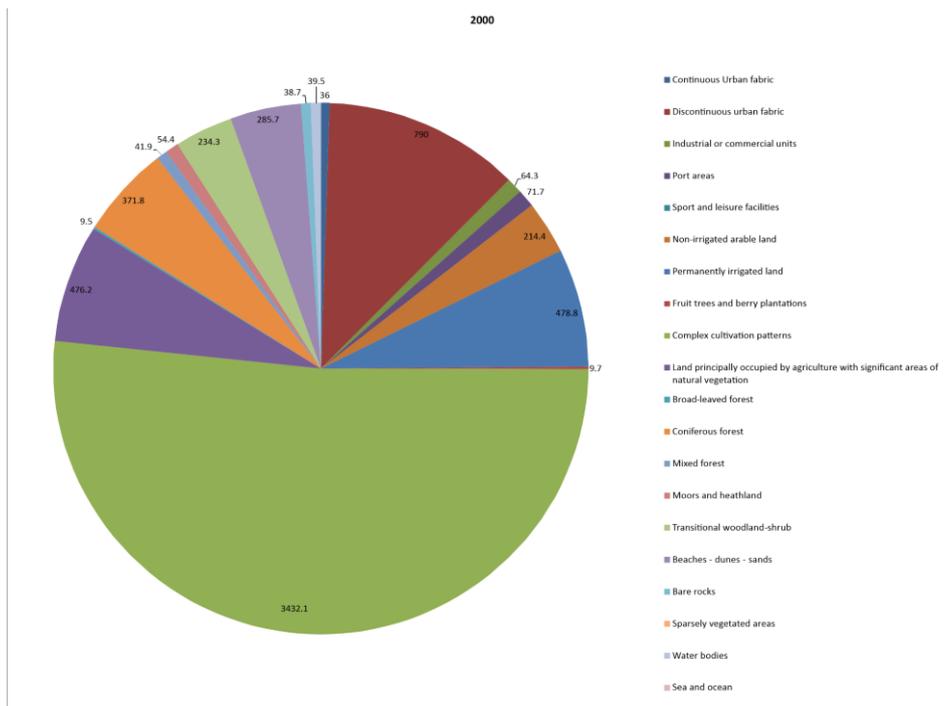


Figure 3: Percentages of land cover changes in 2000.

Source: Corine Land Cover.

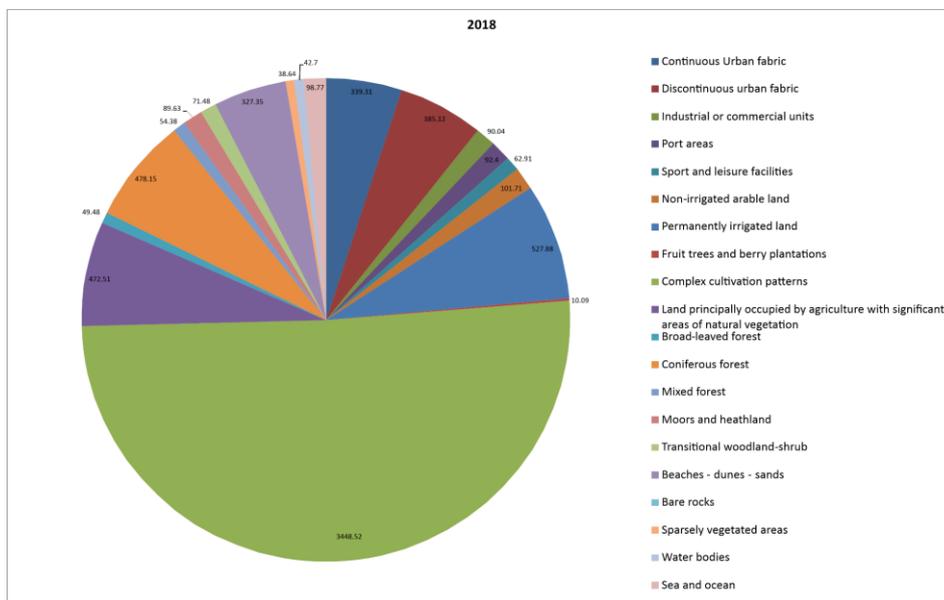


Figure 4: Percentages of land cover changes in 2018.

Source: Corine Land Cover.

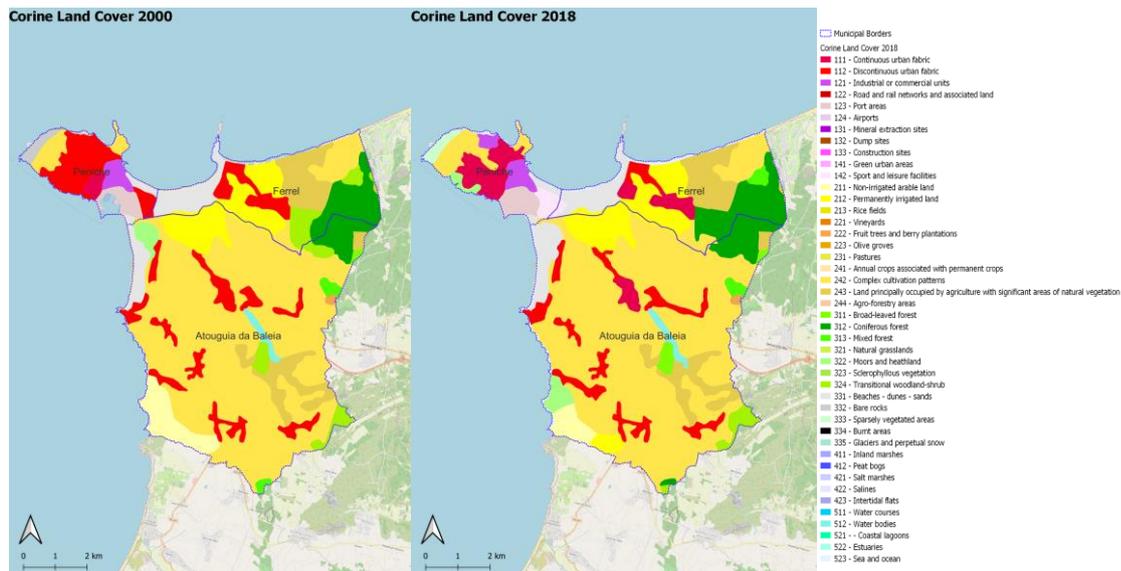


Figure 5: Land cover changes in the years 2000-2018.

Source: Corine Land Cover.

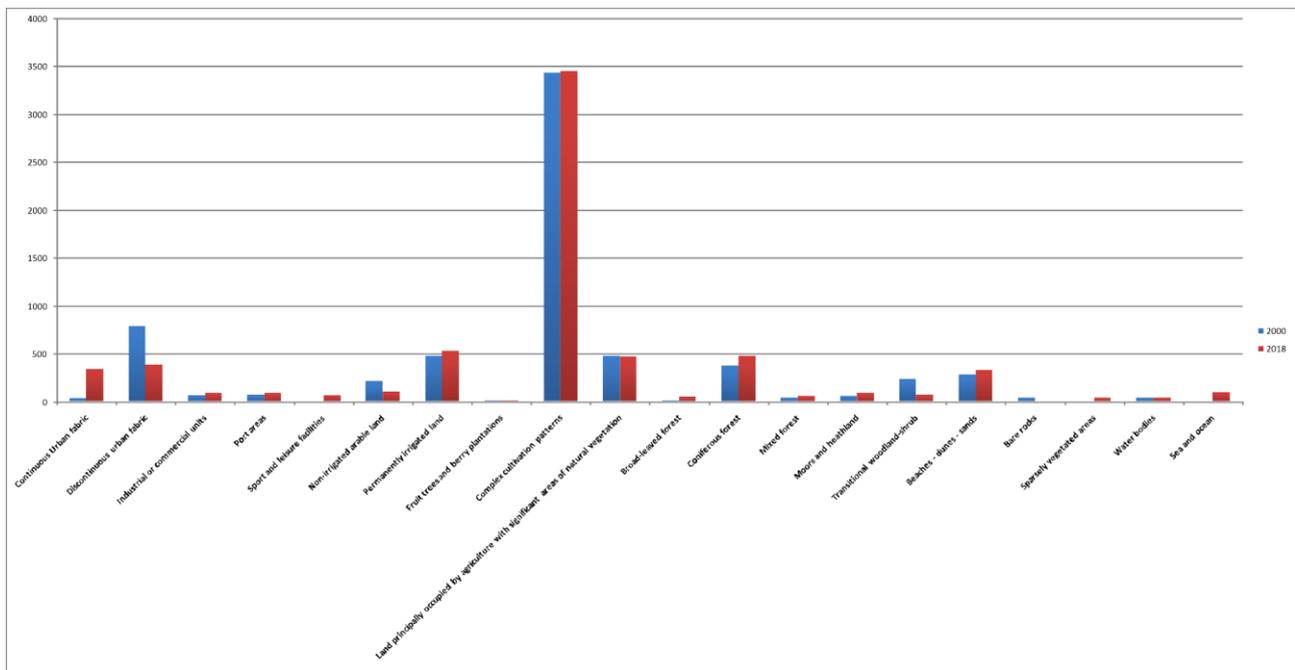


Figure 6: Land cover changes in the years 2000-2018.

Source: Corine Land Cover.

Locals talking

In a session held on May 10th at the Politécnico de Leiria, some local stakeholders were present in order to share their ideas and opinions about Baleal Beach regarding the tourism development of the zone and its future planning.

The Municipal Master Plan was discussed in order to understand their position towards it. They expressed their discomfort with this tool as it has suffered many delays since its launch in 2012. They also took the opportunity to talk about how the municipality has not made any efforts to think about the locals' opinions as a main first step in the planning process. Emphasis was made on the difficulty of making everyone participate and agree on ideas proposed by local leaders or the municipality and in the same way, it is difficult to attract the local authorities with the local actor's ideas.



Figure 7: “Locals talking” session.

Source: authors.

On the other hand, they stressed their worry regarding the degradation of the urban seafront mentioning the interest in minimizing car traffic, relocating the parking areas, and renaturalizing the beach as well as

requelifying the sandy beach and creating a qualified pedestrian seafront. The quality of experience for tourists Furthermore, it has also been very important for the locals by enhancing the quality of the experience of tourists by providing a “virgin beach” landscape at the same time that they provide all the necessary infrastructure for their comfort.

Moreover, the significant changes that the beach has experienced in the last 12 years with the World Surfing Championship enhanced tourism activities allowing to extend the high season from 2 months up to 8 months, improving the local economy, and establishing surf tourism as the “future of Peniche”.

This discussion was of crucial importance as it allows local residents and stakeholders to actively participate in the planning and improvement of the territory through discussions and public debates.

Problem statement

The meeting with stakeholders showed, that the main issue while addressing local problems is the lack of the participation and involvement of interested parties, especially tourism actors and residents. There’s a Difficulty of making everyone participate and agree on ideas proposed by authorities. Moreover, the meeting delineated the difficulty to address local authorities with the local actor’s ideas. Local residents need a platform on which they can speak about their ideas about the place in which they live. If there’s no cooperation and proper management to keep the destination’s sustainability, tourists will lose interest, which will affect local businesses.

Another issue is Climate change, especially sea-level rise, which will have a big impact on tourism in Peniche. In order to be resilient and manage this issue, there’s a need to preserve the natural part of the destination. Problem regarding the degradation of the urban seafront can be also expressed, as well as the local’s interest in minimizing car traffic and relocating parking areas.

Stakeholder analysis

The stakeholders chosen for the project are characterized by actor groups from different administrative and representative levels. The local level mainly corresponds to tourist actors, local residents, and local surfers. Representation on a local level is of vital importance for our project as they represent the main actors who are going to be more interested in this project being the direct users and visitors of the Beach. The second level is a municipal one which is represented by the municipality of Peniche. The level of involvement from this group can be crucial for this project since they have the decision-making power on a local scale and represent the medium point in the horizontal coordination and discussion between the different actors. The last level is a national government which mainly corresponds to the most important ministries that would be involved in our plans, the Ministry of the Economy and Maritime Affairs Turismo de Portugal and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Action - Environmental department. The stakeholders are:

- Tourism actors: The stakeholder group that contains owners of local businesses directly related to tourism like hotels, restaurants, shops, and museums, among others; is one that needs to be informed about all the changes that are planned to happen because of the project since they are a group characterized by the highest interest level. The only problem is their lack of power to execute actions that hold them down from being key stakeholders

- Tourist surfers: Are a group that is affected by the experience of the beach. Need to be monitored and notified about the changes
- Local residents: These are important social actors with high interest. Our proposals need to be appealing and convenient for them since they are the group which is going to be most affected by all the changes. They are not a key stakeholder only because of a lack of plan and decision-making power.
- Local surfers: Similar to the role of local residents it is a significant group but with the same issues. The only difference is in how important they are for this region which is why they have more power than residents
- CiTUR Politécnico de Leiria: An association from the University of Leiria with knowledge and guidance capacity with high interest for the project.
- Environmental activists: Highest interest level makes this group relevant regarding the support to the Destination Management Organization for the fulfilment of different nature-based strategies and local environmental campaigns to work towards the protection of the beach and environmental structure of Baleal Beach and Peniche.
- Municipality of Peniche: One of the key stakeholders for our project. Their high-interest level and a high power mean that they are able to push the idea of our proposal and make them into reality
- Ministries: Other key stakeholders in our project are going to be the Ministry of the Economy and Maritime Affairs Turismo de Portugal and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Action - Environmental department Since they have the decision-making power in terms of tourism and climate actions, they can be the biggest allies to the project. The challenge relies on the level of activity as they correspond to National-level bodies.
- Alliance of SDGs Portugal: Non-governmental group of experts which can help our case with technical knowledge and expertise regarding the fulfilment of the Agenda 2030. Their lack of decision-making power makes them a group that only is able to help to some extent. Since they are also a national-level group their participation will be limited when working with projects on such a small scale as Peniche.

The following table is a list of the stakeholders organized by scale, as well as the designation of a number considering their amount of power and interest from a range from 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest.

Table 1: Stakeholders analysis.

	Name of stakeholder	Power (1-10)	Interest (1-10)
	Local-level		
1	Tourism actors	3	10
2	Tourists surfers	2	5
3	Local residents	1	8
4	Local surfers	3	9
5	CiTUR Politecnico de Leiria	3	7
6	Environmental activists	2	10
	Municipal level		
7	Municipality of Peniche	7	10

	Name of stakeholder	Power (1-10)	Interest (1-10)
	National government		
8	Ministry of the Economy and Maritime Affairs, Turismo de Portugal	10	7
9	The Ministry of Environment and Climate Action - Environmental department	10	7
10	Alliance of SDGs Portugal	5	5

Source: authors' elaboration.

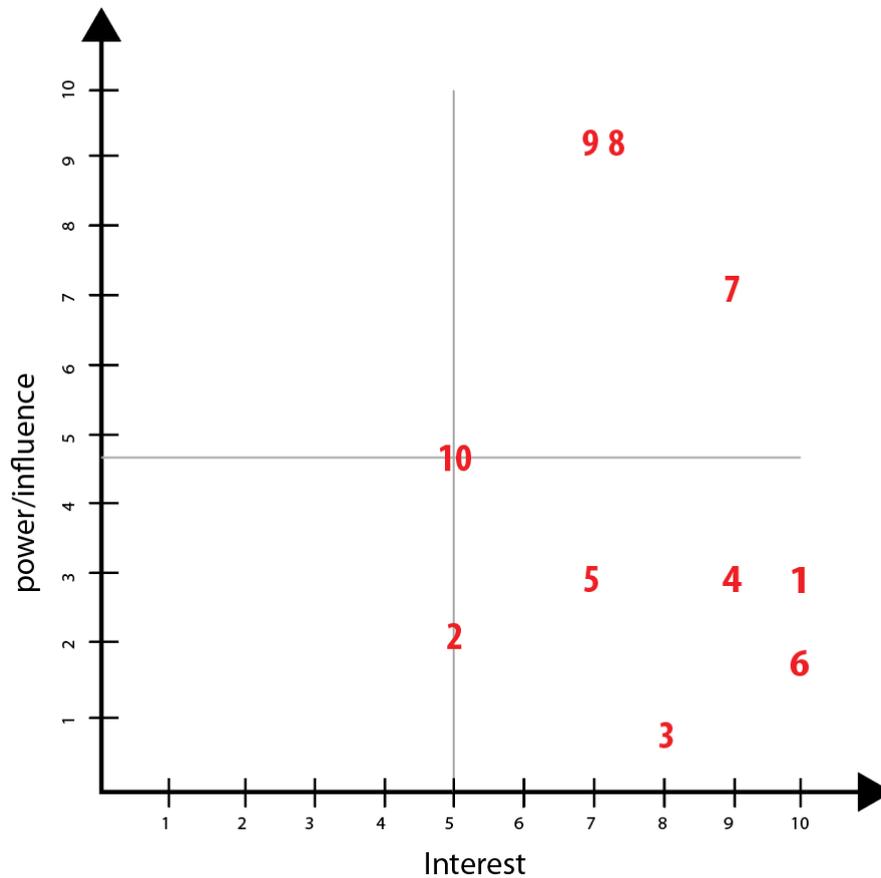


Figure 8: Stakeholders analysis matrix.

Source: authors.

SWOT analysis

The following SWOT analysis was made for the case study of Baleal Beach in Peniche, with the objective to validate the proposed solution and that way evaluate its viability and convenience to the resolution of the problem established. The group’s proposal focuses on the enhancement of community involvement and cooperation through the implementation of a Destination Management Organization (DMO) that works towards the implementation of sustainable tourism strategies and assesses fundamental issues like climate change that will determine the sustainable and resilient future of Baleal Beach and Peniche.

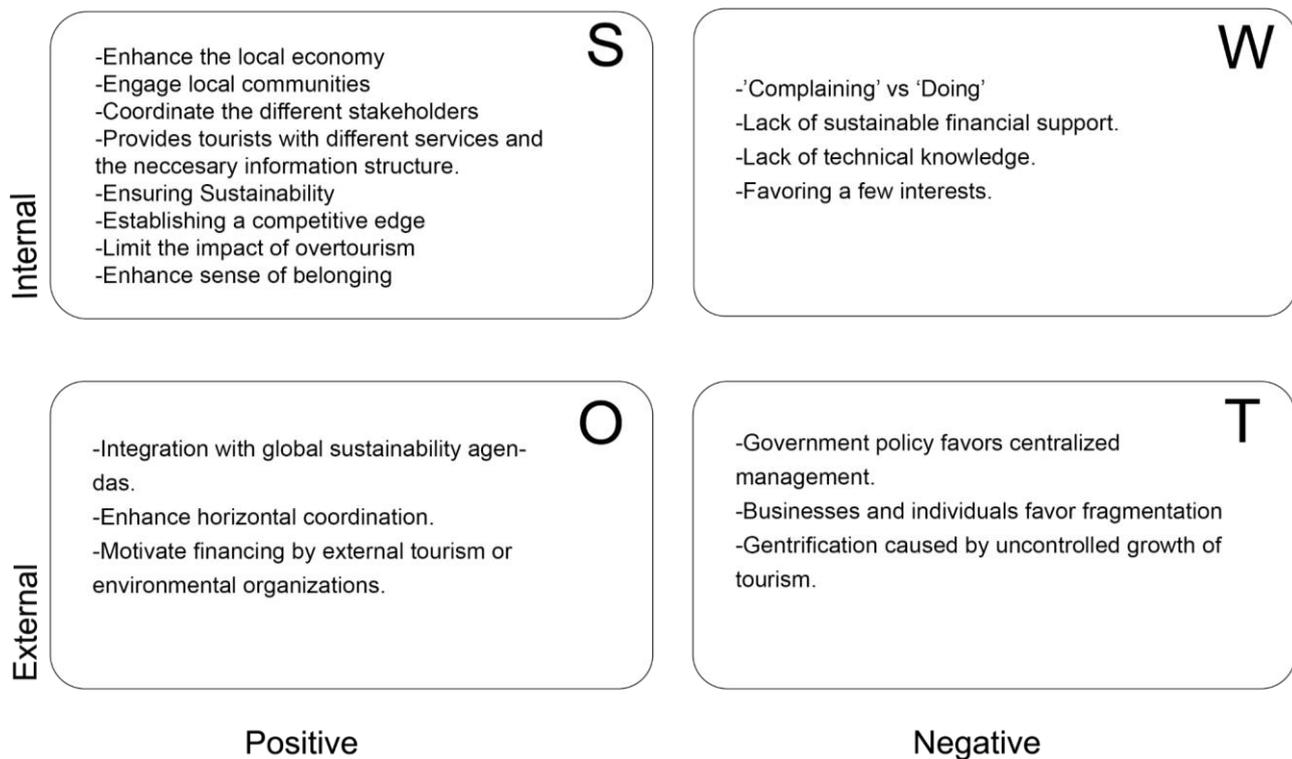


Figure 9: SWOT analysis.

Source: authors.

The SWOT analysis helped us to validate the Destination Management Organization as a strong strategy to motivate the participation of the local community and coordinate the different stakeholders while at the same time enhancing the local economy and ensuring sustainability through tourism activities through an institutionalized community thinking on seeking long-term sustainability and resilience for the territory.

Policy recommendations

What exactly should be done?

Recommended policies are addressed to three territorial and spatial planning scales:

1. Regional level
 - a. specialized economic zones
 - i. managing the sustainable economy and tourism;
2. Inter-municipal level
 - a. inter-municipal clean transport infrastructure plan
 - i. implement more environmental-friendly transport infrastructure;
 - ii. create alternative pedestrian paths across the coast;
 - iii. make additional bike rental spots;
 - iv. sufficient public transport link between small settlements;
 - v. increasing cooperation between local government units;

3. Local level

- a. conditions of land use
 - i. controlling the future development's density and construction parameters (regulate the minimum unsealed area for each land plot, regulate the maximum footprint for the building construction);
 - ii. set a buffer zone on the coastal area and protect it from construction activities;
 - iii. increase the coverage of recreational zones;
- b. future resilience plan & policy tools for Peniche
 - i. implementing nature-based solutions;
 - ii. assessment of an environmental vulnerability;
- c. SDG 17 → Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Where should it happen?

The project will be implemented on several scales:

1. The first scale refers to the regional scale, under which the central government defines the special/strategic economic areas across the region.
2. SDGs' tasks will be carried out by the EU Commission's departments, at its headquarters, in the EU delegations, or through EU executive agencies;
3. Under the inter-municipal level, in collaboration with local governments, several municipalities will be gathered to collectively address infrastructure issues.
4. The local level refers to the city mayors and respective community services.

Who should conduct the action?

Responsible bodies for conducting actions:

1. The Minister for Infrastructure and Housing;
 - a. Secretary of State for Infrastructure;
2. The Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy;
 - a. Secretary of State of Spatial Planning And Nature Conservation
 - b. Secretary of State for Mobility;
3. Alliance of SDGs Portugal;
4. Municipality of Peniche;
 - a. Department of architecture and planning.

Which groups of people, businesses or organizations should benefit?

1. The list of beneficiaries who will benefit from the actionable policies:
2. Local residents living in Peniche and connected municipalities;
3. Tourism actors – people who own local businesses;
4. Tourist surfers – who are seeking a quality experience;

5. Environmental activists and Surfer organizations – who aim to maintain a sustainable environment and offer the high-quality service;
6. Municipality of Peniche – aimed at developing the municipality;
7. Ministry of the Economy and Maritime Affairs, Turismo de Portugal – who aim to attract more tourists;
8. Ministry of Environment Spatial Planning and Energy – benefitting from the developed and sustainable coastal area.

What resources will be needed?

In order to manage the organizational topics and implement projects in the real term, the following resources are needed:

1. Financial resources to implement initiated infrastructure projects;
2. Qualified employees in the spatial planning field;
3. A specialized workforce to attract EU funds;
4. Community funds to organize events.

Where will these resources come from?

Resources can be attracted from the following organizations:

1. European Union funds – to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development;
 - a. financial leverage – multiplying scarce budgetary resources by attracting private and public funds to support EU policy objectives;
 - b. policy leverage – incentivizing entrusted entities and financial intermediaries to pursue EU policy objectives through alignment of interest;
 - c. institutional leverage - benefiting from the expertise of the actors involved in the implementation chain;
2. The central government budget;
3. Community Funds – Portugal [undos Comunitários – Portugal 2020];
4. Portugal’s recovery and resilience plan – reforms and investments to make Portugal more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges of the green transitions. [They will be supported by €13.9 billion in grants and €2.7 billion in loans. 38% of the plan will support climate objectives].

When should the policy be executed and what’s the deadline for completion?

Our policy recommendations are mostly linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “Transforming our world”, which aims to achieve associated goals and targets and utilize them to the full to transform the world for the better by 2030.

Therefore, the minimum time framework defined for the policy is 8 years onwards. Initiated interventions will be launched into several phases, depending on the scale of the project. Therefore, funds will be launched in accordance with the project phases.

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