

# The Intangible Heritage as Cultural Tourism Product: Attractiveness and (Re) Construction of the Territories - The Case of Cante Alentejano

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## Abstract:

The use of cultural heritage is closely linked to an effort of conservation and valorisation, for its symbolism and importance in strengthening the sense of identity and collective memory. The recognition of the historical and cultural importance of intangible heritage and its legal protection through the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage of UNESCO (2003), reinforces its classification and safeguarding. There is long since culture is one of the most important reasons for the visit of tourists to Portugal where the intangible cultural heritage is greatly appreciated, by the approach of “experiencing sensations and emotions” which provides the opportunity for authentic cultural exchange between visitors and the communities. In this framework, we intend to give as an example the Cante Alentejano (CA), distinguished on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (ICH). The activation of the intangible cultural heritage of Cante Alentejano, is part of a Regional Entity’s Strategy of Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo (ERTAR)) and the operationalisation of the CA as a tourist product, results from the Diagnostic Study of the Strategic Plan for the Development of Cultural and Scenic Touring of Alentejo and Ribatejo (DTCPAR). In order to present some measures which enrich the valorization of the Cante Alentejano as a cultural tourism product, the methodology which was used included the direct observation of the phenomenon in different contexts and interviews with several relevant intervenients related with the CA. The results obtained on the CA, point to a favourable recognition to the safeguard of this intangible cultural heritage as a tourist product, improving local sustainable development and enhance the (re)construction of the territory.

**Keywords:** Cante Alentejano; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Safeguard; Attractiveness; Tourist Experiences

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**Resumo:**

O recurso à “patrimonialização da cultura” está intimamente ligado a um esforço de conservação e de valorização, pela sua simbologia e importância atribuída no reforço do sentimento de identidade e da memória coletiva. O reconhecimento da importância histórica e cultural do património imaterial e a sua proteção legal através da Convenção para a Salvaguarda do Património Cultural Imaterial da UNESCO (2003) veio reforçar a sua classificação e salvaguarda. Há muito que a cultura é um dos mais importantes motivos de visita de turistas a Portugal, onde o património cultural imaterial é grandemente apreciado, pela aproximação de “vivências sensações e emoções” que permite entre os turistas e as comunidades. Neste enquadramento, pretende-se dar como exemplo o Cante Alentejano (CA) distinguido no dia 27 de Novembro de 2014 pela UNESCO, como Património Cultural Imaterial da Humanidade. A ativação do património cultural imaterial Cante Alentejano insere-se numa estratégia da Entidade Regional de Turismo do Alentejo e Ribatejo (ERTAR) e a operacionalização do CA como produto turístico, resulta do estudo Diagnóstico do Plano Estratégico para o Desenvolvimento do *Touring* Cultural e Paisagístico do Alentejo e Ribatejo (DTCPAR). Com o objetivo de se apresentar algumas medidas que (re)concentrem a valorização do Cante Alentejano como produto de Turismo Cultural, utilizou-se uma metodologia que incluiu a observação direta do fenómeno em diferentes contextos e também entrevistas com diversos atores relacionados com o CA. Os resultados obtidos sobre o CA apontam para um reconhecimento favorável à salvaguarda deste património cultural imaterial, enquanto produto turístico, contribuindo para o desenvolvimento local sustentado e (re)construção do território.

**Palavras-chave:** Cante Alentejano; Património Cultural Imaterial; Salvaguarda; Atratividade; Experiência Turística

**Resumen:**

La Convención para la salvaguardia del patrimonio cultural inmaterial de la UNESCO (2003) valoriza el reconocimiento de la importancia histórica y cultural que ha de tener el patrimonio inmaterial, además de constituir una herramienta de referencia para su protección legal. El uso del patrimonio cultural está estrechamente ligado a un esfuerzo de conservación y de recuperación, principalmente por su simbolismo e importancia al fortalecimiento del sentido de la identidad y la memoria colectiva. Existen muchos estudios que demuestran que la cultura es una de las principales motivaciones para los desplazamientos de turistas a Portugal, donde el patrimonio cultural inmaterial es muy apreciado por el enfoque de “experiencias de sensaciones

y emociones” que permite una inmersión entre turistas y comunidades. En este contexto, se ha pretendido dar como ejemplo el Cante Alentejo (CA), expedido el 27 de noviembre de 2014 por la UNESCO como patrimonio cultural inmaterial de la humanidad. La activación del patrimonio cultural inmaterial Cante Alentejo, es parte de una estrategia de la Autoridad Regional de la Turismo de Alentejo y Ribatejo (ERTAR) y la operación de la CA como producto turístico, resulta del estudio Diagnóstico del Plan Estratégico para el Desarrollo del Turismo Cultural y del Paisaje del Alentejo y Ribatejo (DTCPAR). Con el fin de introducir algunas medidas para centrar y revisar la apreciación del Cante Alentejo como producto de turismo cultural, se utilizó una metodología que incluye la observación directa del fenómeno en diferentes contextos y también entrevistas con diversos actores relacionados con la CA. Los resultados del punto de CA son un reconocimiento favorable para proteger este patrimonio cultural inmaterial como producto turístico, contribuyendo al desarrollo sostenible local y la nueva construcción del territorio.

**Palabras Clave:** Cante Alentejo; Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial; Salvaguardia; Atractivo; Experiencia Turística

## 1. Introduction

On the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the Cante Alentejano was recognized by UNESCO as a Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. As an aim of safeguarding and transmitting the Cante, it is also important to “start wondering about this cultural asset as an economic asset, to help evolving the sustainability of the Cante and the development of its region” (Mayor of Serpa, Tomás Pires, *in* Observador newspaper, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014). It is essential to reflect and substantiate the best operational framework of this intangible cultural heritage as a tourism product of excellence, promoting the commercial aspect without compromising its safeguarding, maintaining its authenticity, genuineness, enhance and expanding new segments through the tourism industry. The recent distinction by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the increasing in “touristification” sparked greater attention to the importance of this tourist resource in the relationship between Cultural Tourism and the enhancement of the CA. This article aims to highlight the safeguarding of this intangible cultural heritage as a tourist product and its contribution to the sustainable local development and the evolving of the territory. The starting point was to reflect and develop possible policies and actions for operationalizing this heritage as a tourism product, embracing

its principles of safeguards and international guidelines on the management of the intangible cultural heritage.

## **2. Methodology**

For the realization of this article, a qualitative approach was made to highlight the performances of the individuals which have been considerate relevant to this study, describing the context where the object of study unfolds, relating the CA and Tourism. Primary information-gathering techniques were given precedence, such as direct observation of the phenomenon in different contexts. Likewise the use of interviews with several individuals, most of whom using public statements disclosed by the media. According to this, an adjustable structure was viable to maintain in which the research work was developed, adjusted and adapted according to the needs and research opportunities that have emerged. The base of this research was the study of the CA heritage, and its characterization in the technical, cultural, social and territorial context. The safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage and tourism management were also addressed as well as tourism management with patrimonial significance on the basis of the guidelines of UNESCO. As a product of Cultural Tourism, sought to frame the CA in the Nacional Tourism Strategic Plan and the Strategic Plan for the Development of Cultural and Scenic Touring in the Alentejo and Ribatejo promoted by the Regional Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo. There was a reflection on some impacts that the CA "turisfication" could have on communities and on strategic analysis of the CA product, its potential weakness, strengths, opportunities and threats. Finally, it refers to the main strategies defined by it for the operationalization of the CA, Cante Homes and Routing in order to provide quality tourist experiences. From November 2014, when CA has been distinguished as intangible cultural heritage of humanity, a number of newspapers and magazines were compiled related to CA and Tourism. CA houses, taverns and restaurants with CA were visited, there were conversations with its owners and customers, religious festivals and weddings where CA was held, in events, exhibitions, festivals and parties dedicated to the CA and a dinner that was organized with the presence of a CA group.

## **3. Socio-Cultural Context**

The CA traditionally was a spontaneous and informal melody that took place in the Alentejo fields and marked the rhythm of the daily work of the traditional agricultural activities such as

mowing, weeding, the olive harvest, cork, etc. With the mechanization of agriculture, the aging of the population and migratory waves that led to a sharp depopulation of Alentejo in recent decades, the practice of CA associated to the work in the fields has disappeared. Fortunately there are still places with traditional practises of CA like the traditional festivities in the streets or in churches, and the taverns (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Festival of Vine and Wine**

Source: Mendonça, 2014

The taverns are the places where this cultural heritage has retained its authenticity and where it is still possible to enjoy it with genuine encouragement and incentive for CA performances which can be seen today, driven by the CA into ICH and the growing in tourist demand. According to Rodrigues (2012), the taverns has always been meeting places and conviviality of the men, after a day of work. Among the traditional cuisine prepared with products of the season in a local base, accompanied with glasses of wine or brandy produced in the region, popular cultural performances were seen spontaneously and not premeditated. The CA, the songs sang at the challenge, popular poetry, traditional games, among others, always enjoyed the evenings in the taverns. In the more isolated places, the taverns use to sell grocery or were the site of communication with the outside world, either through the presence of a public phone or mail delivery and reception. The innkeeper was a prominente figure in the community and often assumed a mediating role in everyday problems. The taverns have always had importance as an economic activity and as key elements in preserving the cultural legacy and identity of a region. Although in the recent past years taverns were seen as decadent locations which were frequented by marginalized people with alcoholic habits, nowadays currently business owners and Town Halls look to typical taverns as places of great opportunities for businesses and tourism attraction, thanks to the role that they take as great popularizers of

delightful cuisine and local wines, as convivial spaces for people, and as a local of authentic and genuine cultural expression. The example of the “Route of Taverns” in Grândola, already in its 20<sup>th</sup> edition, demonstrates the growing importance of these places as tourist attractions and as important promoters of the products and the culture of the regions, contributing to local development and strengthening of the identity of the territories.

#### **4. Safeguarding of the Cante Alentejano**

Safeguarding` are the measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage (according to the norms of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH – UNESCO, art. 3, 2003). According to this document, it is up to each State Party to identify, define and update regularly, the existing ICH in their territory, with the involvement and participation of communities and other organizations concerned, in order to implement appropriate safeguard measures. Basic challenges that the current globalization process poses to cultural heritage in the face of a demand for tourist destinations, where the presence of testimonials and own heritage of local communities to encourage their ‘authentic ownership’ (Lopes, 2015), make qualitative changes, responding to the imperatives of global integration that enables them to articulate the heritage with cultural tourism. Also in this order of ideas UNESCO highlights the role of individuals and local communities, in the preparation, safeguarding, maintenance and recreation of the ICH, the General Conference held in Paris on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2003. UNESCO recognised the importance of ICH as mainspring of cultural diversity and for harnessing its potential for sustainable development.

The Convention for the safeguarding of the ICH refers to some measures to be followed and adapted by different States signatories of the UNESCO, which should be incorporated in the legal, technical, administrative and financial system of the different countries, according to their specific needs, aspirations, limitations and public policy organization structures. This measures range from the adoption of policy measures of appreciation of the ICH, the creation of institutions responsible for the protection and monitoring of the ICH in their territory, encouragement of research and studies, in the various áreas related to the safeguarding of the ICH and the promotion of educational programmes to raise awareness, promotion and conservation of the ICH, directed to young people and communities and groups involved. The

involvement of communities, groups and individuals are highlighted in safeguarding of the ICH and should be involved whenever possible in all decision making, strategies and methodologies related to its management and protection. UNESCO conceived, in order to perpetuate, transmit, document and disseminate the ICH, the figure of a human living treasures.

According to this organization, the figure of the Living Human Treasure is defined as the recognition and the listing of individual or groups of people who have knowledge and have ancestral techniques, which allow them to interpret and recreate certain elements of ICH. These individuals, authentic depositories of authenticity and tradition, would be identified by teams of experts and encouraged to teach younger generations for the perpetuation of this heritage, being involved in various policies, methodologies and strategies related to the safeguarding and valorization of this heritage of ancestral knowledge. Portugal signed the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (on the 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2008), pledging to integrate the guidelines of UNESCO, in its national legislation. It is recognized the importance of the ICH in the internationalization of the portuguese culture, in coordination with other sectorial policies, in the strengthening of local and national identity. The importance of the participation of the communities is highlighted as well as groups and individuals in the defence and enhancement of ICH. The framework and the role of local authorities also also emphasized in this decree-law, which helps to identify, support and promote the manifestations of the ICH of the communities. It also establishes an independent organization called the Commission for Intangible Cultural Heritage, with powers of decision on the registration of manifestations of the national inventory system of ICH. The scope of this decree-law shall cover the following areas (see table 1).

Traditions and oral expressions, including the language as an Intangible Cultural Heritage.
Artistic expressions and performance manifestations.
Social practises, rituals and festive events
Knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe.
Competences and traditional techniques

**Table 1. Manifestations domains of the ICH**

Source: Mendonça and Lopes, 2015

The safeguarding of the CA, Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, is part of this regulation, to include oral traditions and expressions of the Alentejo, comes from social practices, rituals, manifests itself in many festive events of the region and reveals ancestral

knowledge of practices of man's relationship with nature. The CA was classified as UNESCO ICH (27<sup>th</sup> of November, 2014) and in the application process were included generic guidelines on the Safeguard Plan. "It was the Portuguese State who applied for the CA and who will have the responsibility, within three years, to answer to the UNESCO, for the Safeguard Plan which provides a series of measures, actions and practices contributing to the safeguarding of the CA. It emphasises the importance of this plan, however without letting this "patrimonializes" a lot the cultural manifestation because it removes its authenticity" (Regional Director of Culture, Ana Paula Amendoeira *in* Rádio Voz da Planície, April 2015).

It was signed between the Regional Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo and the municipality of Serpa in the (5<sup>th</sup> of June, 2015), a protocol for the implementation and management of the Safeguard Plan, with a strategy that will seek to involve all stakeholders and local and national entities, aiming at the development of safeguard projects, enhance, promote and transmit to future generations the CA.

## 5. Cante Alentejano Houses

António Ceia da Silva, Regional Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo President, in an interview to the newspaper "Público" on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2015, states that "the Alentejo will have Cante Alentejano houses" the CA Houses will be prime locations, according to its president, where tourists can enjoy this heritage, a bit like the existing "Fado Houses" in Lisbon. They will be places where the tourist can enjoy the delicious food and, at the same time, watch shows from CA (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Cante Alentejano

Source: Mendonça, 2015



The Community funds will be crucial to support entrepreneurs interested in Open Houses of CA. This is one of the strategies to turn the CA into a Tourist product. Another strategy goes through the creation of singing routes. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2015, in an interview to the newspaper "Diário do Sul", the President of Regional Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo is more specific when saying that the restaurants that want to integrate "the gastronomic route from the sound of the chant" will be more valued with the Association. He also refers that the Intangible Heritage is addressed exclusively to the private sector, not to the public sector. In one hand is the "House of Chant" of Serpa and Viana of Alentejo, who value the chant from the cultural point of view, on the other hand will be the "Houses of Chant" in restaurants as gastronomic spaces where the tourist will be also enjoying music it is referred in the same newspaper. The operating system is defined, like the one in the Fado Houses in Lisbon, being necessary for the groups who want to have dinner or lunch with the singing groups, make previous reservations in future restaurants that will open doors within the project. The Regional Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo will promote, publicize and create the route of CA. In April 2015, António Ceia da Silva, in an interview to the radio "Voz da Planície" stated that the CA will be like restaurant units where it will be also possible to hear the chanting in different forms, as in group, duets or solo, structured as tourist demand, being equally necessary to create circuits associated with heritage. In the same interview it is considered that this will be a greater project valued in future, because it will allow the cultural and economic dynamism, from a tourist dynamic perspective, attracting more visitors to the Alentejo (Figure 3).



**Figure 3. Cante Alentejano in the castle**

Source: Mendonça, 2015

## 6. A strategic review of Cante Alentejo as Tourist Product

The start of the CA as an Intangible Cultural Heritage is included in the Regional Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo strategy, framed in the current community framework programme for research and innovation, known as Horizon 2020. The CA appears as one of the differentiating elements that will permit to qualify this region as one of the destinations of excellence for Cultural Tourism. The Regional Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo has an immense concern in territory identity and has invested on a set of applications of imaterial assets, such as the rattles of Alcáçovas, the festivities of Campo Maior, Arraiolos Tapestry, avieiras culture from Ribatejo or the artisanal fishery in São Torpes, which make part from a biggest project, called "Imaterial Heritage Activation" which pretends to make from this region one of the destinations with more assets classified by UNESCO, which is expected to increase the attractiveness of this territory and make it a world reference in the field of Cultural Tourism.

The operationalization of the CA as a tourist product, fits into the strategies defined by DTCPAR as previously mentioned, namely in terms of the role of creativity in creating unique and attractive products and in the importance of networks or clusters, in the integration of CA as a main or secondary product on value creation of tourist experiences. In table 2 it is systematized the SWOT analysis information presenting systematically the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and the threats that, in a market perspective, fall into the CA. This analysis is the result of the observations and conclusions taken from the observation of CA in practice in different contexts discussed in the methodology of this study.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cultural authenticity;</li> <li>-Framework with the territory;</li> <li>-Several places where it is possible to express itself like taverns, monuments, streets, churches, fields, festivities;</li> <li>-Singers spontaneity;</li> <li>-Easily framed with other products such as gastronomy and wines, Events, Religious Tourism, Industrial Tourism, Nature Tourism, Nautical Tourism, Health and Well-Being, among others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ageing of the population and groups;</li> <li>-Few records and availability in CD and DVD format compared to other products as such Fado;</li> <li>-Lack of tourism professionals to mediate CA as a touristic product;</li> <li>-Difficulty in professionalizing elements of CA groups and make elements of these groups be part of Cante House or making exterior performances.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Great attractiveness for cultural heritage distinguished by UNESCO;</li> <li>-Market with great purchasing power;</li> <li>-Not dependable on seasoning factors;</li> <li>-Allow the promotion of other local products;</li> <li>-Local proximity with good accessibilities from two touristic places; Algarve and Lisbon.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lost of authenticity if the Safeguard Plan is not fulfilled.</li> <li>-Competitiveness between municipalities and lack of strategies;</li> <li>-Proximity with two ICH best known: Fado and Flamenco;</li> <li>-Risk at commodification of communities and their culture;</li> <li>-Dependency of economic and political situations of the tourism source markets.</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Swot analysis summary**

Fonte: Mendonça, 2015

The new trends in “cultural tourism consumption” point to a more motivated tourism for experimentation and emotions, feelings and “valorisation of authenticity” (Lopes, 2012). The operationalization of the CA as a tourism product should always be framed in strategies that enhance their value and mitigate the negative consequences that their commercial exploitation may have upon communities and the safeguarding of the heritage itself, to become an asset for the sustainable development of the region.

## 7. Conclusion

The heritage assets of a territory give it authenticity and uniqueness. In Cultural Tourism market this could signify a bigger advantage over other destinations. The Cante Alentejano contributes to the attractiveness of the destination of Alentejo which will be enhanced if the activation of this tourist heritage, are associated with identical singularities that will distinguish Alentejo from other regions. These resources need to be integrated into sustainable development strategies for tourism. Any tourism strategy of activation of the Cante Alentejo should involve the choirs groups and the whole community, organizations, institutions and entrepreneurs, through the establishment of joint networks and partnerships. The basis of management and decision will have to be local, supported by national and international policies. This project was initiated a year ago, precisely in the context when the Alentejo was living the great joy for the elevation of this heritage to a cultural universal asset. The ones who were

interested in this project hoped several valued scenarios for this cultural asset, mainly its activation as a tourist product in order to contribute to the economic development of the Alentejo through Tourism. There are currently some strategies to promote and value the Cante Alentejano as a Cultural Tourism Product. The opening of Cante Alentejano Houses and the Chant Route are strategies which have been developed. In our opinion, and as a way to ensure the future sustainability of this cultural resource, it should only be implemented after the completion of the safeguard plan, which is still in the process of elaboration. The cultural dimension of Cante Alentejano needs to be well framed in the strategies of economic recovery, so that tourists can enjoy authentic experiences that match their expectations. Specific vocational training is required of tourism technicians, in the interpretation and understanding of the Cante Alentejano, to qualify on mediation between the Cante Alentejano and the Tourist, in a way to add more value to the product. The association of the Cante Alentejano to other tourism products, such as gastronomy and wines, can add more value to the set, than just the individual operation of each one of them, allowing it to create unique, authentic experiences and more attractiveness. The main aim of this article is to reflect on the framing of the CA in the context of its implementation into the tourist practise of it. This implementation cannot be seen just considering the immediate economic value. Any strategy of operationalization of the CA, as a tourist product, will have to be framed in terms of safeguarding this heritage and in the prevention and mitigation of the negative aspects that tourism can have to the communities where this practise is expressed. In the future, it would be importante to develop methodologies to measure the impacto f tourism on communities where this heritage is expressed, as well as develop strategies for monitoring, evaluation and improvement of practices developed to enhance CA as a tourist product in territories where the Cante Alentejano is of commom practice.

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