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Return Migration and Tourism Sustainability in Portugal: Extracting Opportunities for Sustainable Common Planning in Southern Europe

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Abstract: This study contributes to the knowledge of decision-makers on how tourism, small and medium-sized enterprises, return migration, and cooperation strategies can contribute to growth and sustainable development in rural areas. More specifically, it uses the Portuguese case to answer the following question: can the expectations and perceptions of emigrants provide directions for sustainable tourism development and common planning in order to contribute to rural development? The results obtained in a study developed in Portugal, through the application of a questionnaire survey of 5157 Portuguese emigrants, confirm the validity of this question. It is concluded that there are the emigrants at an active age (29–39 years old) and with a house in a rural area that have a greater propensity of returning, investing, and gaining employment in the area of tourism in Portugal, and they also have more training and professional experience in this area. Similarly, considering the experiences and migratory characteristics of these emigrants, it is argued that there is a strong probability that the return of emigrants from Southern European countries will contribute to the development of tourism in the rural areas of these countries. Besides, the study enables the identification of recommendations and directions for sustainable common planning in the political–strategic, financial–economic, resource sustainability, and sociocultural fields.

Keywords: tourism; return migration; sustainability; Portugal; common planning; Southern Europe

1. Introduction

In low-density areas and developing countries, where the socio-economic bases are almost indivisible from tourism activities, sustainable development strategies and approaches are critical [1–4]. In this context, return migration also presents several opportunities in terms of growth and development, since emigrants preferentially return to their starting regions, which are the most in need (see Section 2.2). Despite the importance that tourism and migration fluxes have gained in the current political and academic contexts, there is a gap in the literature on the impact of tourism and migration return on sustainable development. Contextually, studies that have addressed the impact of returned emigrants on sustainable development, in Portugal and the remaining Southern European and Mediterranean

countries, are very scarce, and furthermore, most of this literature belongs to the 1980s. These studies showed that return migration had no impact on rural development. Emigrants returned, but they did so with conservative ideas, which were reflected, above all, in the acquisition of a small parcel of land and a new house and with business objectives that were based only on the creation of small-scale companies linked to the services sector, particularly shops and bars [5–9].

Thus, this study provides greater knowledge to decision-makers on how tourism and return migration can contribute to growth and sustainable development in rural areas, using empirical evidence from the case of Portugal (Sections 2.1–2.4; Sections 3 and 4). Therefore, the population of the study consists of local Portuguese emigrants who expressed their views on the future of sustainable planning in their places of origin (see Section 3). The results and discussion section will demonstrate that investment and employment in tourism are among the Portuguese emigrants' priorities upon their return to their place of origin. Since spatial planning is crucial for growth and long-term sustainable development, as well as to achieve sustainable cities, some regional strategies will be briefly presented, approaching the main challenges and opportunities. In this context, cross-border cooperation projects in low-density territories will be highlighted, in the form of Euroregionalization [10], for the sake of achieving a common plan for sustainable development in Southern Europe.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *The Role of Tourism in the Growth and Sustainable Development of Rural Areas*

This section intends to highlight the potential of tourism in relation to small- and medium-sized enterprises to achieve sustainable development in rural areas. At the international level, there is a consensus that such areas have several common problems, such as economic decline, a large increase in unemployment, emigration, desertification, adverse impacts associated with restructuring agriculture and a loss of cultural identity [11–13]. Moreover, according to metadata from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Portuguese Statistical Institute, rural areas are those with a population of 2000 inhabitants or less, or counties with the lowest index of centrality (for a more detailed explanation see Section 4). At the European level, the countries in which most regions are less competitive are those of Southern Europe, where agriculture still plays a relatively important role. In this context, Labrianidis and Thanassis [12] argued that entrepreneurship increases employment, and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play an essential role in rural areas, to the extent that they comprise the entire volume of local business activity. The empirical results of a study that discussed the variation of entrepreneurship among regions of different sizes showed that local and external access to the Gross Regional Product (or accessibility to markets) has a significant impact on the entrance and exit of new companies [14]. For the primary and secondary sectors, this impact is negative, while for the services sector, this impact is positive [14].

Besides, the literature reveals that, in the period after World War II, the contribution of the agricultural sector to the Gross National Product and employment in this sector have declined in Spain, Italy, Greece, and Portugal [6,15]. During the period of 1970–1985, the reinforcement of the services industry and small industrial enterprises was the most notable feature in rural development [16–20]. However, the study of Meller and Marfán [21], concerning the impact of small and big industries in job creation in developing countries, demonstrated that, despite the importance of jobs directly created by small industries, the indirect multiplier effects of employment created by big industries are noticeably larger. This issue, associated with major industry location preferences in urban centers [22], lead us to suggest that, in particular cases, the industrial sector is not the most suitable sector for the development process since small industries have a lower multiplier and income effect compared with major industries.

It is also argued that, although the construction sector is a secondary sector of economic activity, it only stimulates the emergence of temporary jobs, because its continuation depends on the regular flow of emigrants returning to their areas of origin to maintain the construction growth [5]. On the other

hand, during the 1980s, increasing employment in the rural areas of OECD countries was largely due to network growth in the services sector [23–25]. Therefore, the increase in employment in the tertiary sector has proved to be the key variable for explaining immigration or low emigration [25]. The results of a study conducted in the United States of America (USA) illustrated this situation, revealing that rural areas with an intensive services sector have economically grown more than rural areas with intensive agriculture, mining, or industry sectors, which is due to the increase in employment, per capita income, and greater balance in rural income distribution [24].

However, not all activities of the tertiary sector have demonstrated the same ability of generating employment. Indeed, in the 1980s, public services, such as education, health, and public administration, were significant employers in many rural areas, yet in the late 1990s, their importance became smaller [23]. Likewise, it turns out that the activities that include small businesses also do not have a significant impact on job creation. Alternatively, the role of employment in tourism has made a major contribution to the growth of the national economy, as well as to the transformation of some regional economies [6]. The empirical evidence reveals that tourist spending creates more jobs and income than any other sector of the economy, and it generates and maintains employment in other sectors of the economy that support or provide visitors and tourism companies. Several studies conducted in developing countries and rural areas evidence this argument [26–57]. In rural areas, economic growth is fundamental to development. For this reason, and considering the geographic areas considered in this article, the potential of tourism for the economic growth of these territories is emphasized.

Moreover, not all rural areas that lack employment opportunities and income are candidates for the promotion of tourism as a strategy for economic development [27]. It is necessary that rural areas have quality resources and the know-how to take advantage of them. In such cases, tourism can be one activity capable of contributing to the revitalization of local economies, diversification of activities that act as tributaries, development of other economic sectors (by the multiplier effect), creation and qualification of employment, income generation, improvement of transport infrastructure [58–60] and services (which also benefit the local society), and the creation of local government revenue [61]. According to Hughes and Shields [31], a tourist program can also be used to attract new residents to a certain area. In his book, McWatters [62] identified a correlation that results in a kind of (semi) permanent consumption-oriented migration, i.e., starting with the evolution of short-term tourism, the development of amenities and consumer-oriented services and the creation of different streams become more permanent forms of consumption, oriented toward migration to a given destination or area.

Nevertheless, a particular strategy may not succeed everywhere or under all conditions, but only in some particular places under some particular conditions. This means that, firstly, a country's development policy must be based on large investments in the level of infrastructure and services essential to the investment (roads, railways, electrification) and the establishment of human resources [24]. Contextually, tourism should only be one component of a broader rural development program, which is essential for a close collaboration between the public sector, the private sector, communities, and civil society in order to ensure that the goals of its investment policy are achieved [29]. It is in this context that it is argued that the development of tourism, under certain conditions, can become a driving force in the development of rural areas, although it is not the only force, since all sectors of the economy make some contribution. In this context, the European Union states that the sustainable development of tourism is entirely in line with the cohesion objectives of a balanced development of the Union's territory [1].

2.2. Return Migration and Sustainable Development in Southern Europe

One of the issues that have motivated the study of the relationship between migration fluxes and sustainable development is the latter's relationship with return migration. For this reason, the factors that lead emigrants from rural areas become agents of innovation and promoters of the development of these regions, as well as the factors that, in the past, have prevented this development in Portugal and in other Southern European countries, will be discussed in this section. The geographic areas

under study are rural. However, it is important to note that it is not the purpose of this study to differentiate other typologies from rural areas, but to identify all rural areas as those with a population of 2000 inhabitants or less or that are in process of desertification (see Section 2.1). Thus, in general, economic growth is needed in these territories, as well as sustainable development. However, the type of return migration that is addressed here refers to the movement of workers and relatives from the more developed countries or regions to regions that provide labor in rural areas [5]. It will be argued that the permanent return of emigrants can contribute to rural development, since to the impact on consumption can be joined to the impact on production, because the people who return are also potential tourism promoters. According to the OECD [63], emigrants bring with them training and professional experience that they have acquired outside and can return with financial capital in the form of savings accumulated during their stay outside. They can also have social capital, obtained through their experience during emigration. In addition, the vast majority of businesses and jobs in rural areas are created by migrants, who were born or grew up in these areas.

In 2006, the European Union stated that the region was characterized by a spatial concentration of economic poles of development, where capitalism and economic growth are concentrated in the most productive forces in certain regions, creating an uneven distribution of growth and regional economic disparities [1]. Studies on the rural–urban migration in the cities of Southern Europe also revealed that emigrants maintain strong ties to their land of origin, to which they return on vacation and, if the distance is not too far, on weekends [25]. Therefore, the emigration return movement, except in its initial phase (the departure), presents several opportunities, in terms of local development, since migrants preferentially return to their starting regions, which are the most in need of employment and income opportunities [9,64–77]. However, in the countries of Southern Europe and the Mediterranean, there has been no impact of the return of emigrants on the development of their places of origin. This is because the emigrants returned, but they did so with conservative ideas, which were reflected, above all, in the acquisition of a small parcel of land and a new house and with business objectives that were based only on the creation of small-scale companies linked to the services sector, particularly shops and bars [5,6].

In Portugal, the studies that have addressed returned emigrants also highlight the application of the emigrants' savings mainly in consumer goods (food and clothing) and on the construction or purchase of a house—a goal to which most emigrants aspire [8,9,67,70,72,78–81]. There has been no impact of the return of Portuguese emigrants on rural development, because external barriers such as the lack of migration, return, and regional development policies to take care of the human and professional enhancement of emigrants, to report on the socio-economic local alternatives of rehabilitation, and to stimulate them, respectively [9,70,72]. In addition, cautious risk management (a behavior which is rooted in peasant culture) and a non-existent or limited entrepreneurship capacity had constituted internal barriers to the occurrence of the development of the locations of origin of Portuguese emigrants [8,9,70].

Similar to Neto and Neto [82], in the present study, it is concluded that, despite the importance of the demographic volume of the return of Portuguese emigrants throughout only one quarter of a century (1976–2001), the research on its impact on sustainable development in places of “origin” is very scarce, and furthermore, most of these studies belong to the 1980s. From the 1980s onwards, long-term exits have increasingly been replaced by temporary movements. In this scope, the profile of emigrants has changed, with more frequent departures from urban contexts and qualified populations. Studies about Portuguese return migration that have occurred at this new conjuncture, particularly after the turn of the century, are very scarce. Thus, the return trends of new emigration remain almost unknown. The only exception is the Project “Entrepreneurship 2020”, of the AEP Foundation, supported by Portugal 2020, under Compete 2020- “Collective Action Support System”, with an eligible investment of 868,228.89 euros, funded at 737,994.56 euros by the European Regional Development Fund. This project aims to stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit within the Portuguese diaspora, with a focus on qualified young people who have recently left the country in search of a different future. In this context,

between 2001 and 2011 (date of the last Portuguese Official Census) about 233 thousand Portuguese emigrants returned to their country of origin, of which about 214 thousand were 20 or more years old. It was about this adult population that the Project “Entrepreneurship 2020” have focused the analysis.

The same project shows that return is a possibility for a substantial part of respondents, although for many this possibility is not clearly structured. In addition, more than half of emigrants also say they would like to invest in a business in Portugal. However, expectations regarding investment, employment, training, and professional experience, by sector of economic activity, and in the country of origin were not analyzed. In this scope, it is noteworthy that among the various studies mentioned in this section, that have addressed the impact of return migration on sustainable development, the approach of the impact of return migration on tourism development in rural areas was pioneer [1].

2.3. Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises and the Sustainable Development of Southern Europe

In the previous sections, the importance that tourism and return migration may have on the growth and sustainable development of rural areas was highlighted. Moreover, in this section, it is argued that entrepreneurship associated with small- and medium-sized businesses is one way to achieve it in the rural areas of Southern Europe, since, among other things, it allows for an increase of employment and income. In this context, Labrianidis et al. [12] stressed the importance of European policies that consider entrepreneurship in Europe’s peripheral rural areas and its development through groups of countries (from the North/from the South/in transition), rural areas and types of companies, in order to achieve the development of Europe’s rural periphery. However, the lack of start-up capital and technical expertise constitutes a barrier to the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises [83,84]. In this context, the opening of a business is very dependent on external funds [84], and the potential return of emigrants can contribute positively to entrepreneurship in rural areas (see Section 2.2). The Portuguese case confirms this view, particularly in relation to tourism businesses.

According to King and Thomson [85], the four countries of Southern Europe—Portugal, Greece, Spain, and Italy—have a set of explanatory factors and migratory characteristics that generate migratory parallel trends, giving rise to a sort of “model” of Southern European immigration, which is distinct from that of Northern Europe. In each of these countries, the historical profile is divided into three phases: mass emigration between 1950 and early 1970, followed by a period of return migration and migratory balance during the decade of 1970–1980, and a growing and unregulated immigration during the decade of 1980–1990 and, above all, between 1990 and the early 2000s. Labor emigration was not only linked to Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal, but also to the countries of the West Indies, the Indian subcontinent, North Africa, Yugoslavia, and Turkey [86,87]. However, for the purposes of this article, we will only consider the associated emigration to Southern Europe, particularly Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, since they share many experiences that give them a common identity element [6].

Williams [6] argued that “Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece have similar positions in the world economic system”, since these countries have experienced significant economic, political and social changes that have led to the transformation of their socio-economic structures. More recently, the countries of Slovenia, Malta, and Cyprus also stand out in terms of their similar history of emigration, immigration, and the alternation between the two in the decade of 1970–1980 [85]. Among the common features between Southern European countries, the following stand out: (i) a dependency relationship with the Centre, particularly Northern Europe; (ii) a lack of effective control over their resources, because the big economic decisions are taken or significantly influenced by the Centre; (iii) a lack of local innovation and important knowledge and technology; (iv) weak links and information flows within the periphery; (v) migration flows from the periphery to the Centre; and (vi) reverse flows of tourists [6]. Despite the decline of agricultural employment, the four countries still have substantial agricultural sectors, with a tendency towards polarization between small and large holdings and a low productivity. However, the changes that have occurred at the level of actions to modernize agriculture in Spain and Italy should not be neglected [6].

In this scope, the answer to the problems caused by the adjustment of agriculture in peripheral rural areas, in general, and of the most remote areas of Southern Europe, in particular, should consider the creation of small- and medium-sized enterprises in the secondary and the tertiary sectors [72]. The empirical evidence found in Southern Europe shows that, regardless of which sector of activity emigrants had worked in during their stay in the host country (industry, construction, commerce, or public service), a comparison of their jobs, before and after emigration, shows a decrease in the proportion of returning emigrants working in the sectors of agriculture, industry, transport and public services, with an emphasis on the industry sector and an increase in the autonomous activities of the little boss. According to King [63], in most cases studied in Southern Europe, these businesses constitute imitations of companies already established in the locality and in the services sector (see, for example, [5,9,63,67,88]). However, this does not mean that the returned emigrants do not participate in forms of industrial development or other forms of development. According to the same author, after their return, a small proportion of emigrants will enter the industrial jobs sector, which is often evidenced by empirical studies [20,21,63].

Contextually, Saraceno [89] developed a study, in north-eastern Italy, and noted that, after the return of emigrants, there was a predominance of professions in the industrial sector. However, in the case of southern Italy, the association between immigration and industrial development was reflected in reduced levels of emigration and not in what motivated the return of emigrants [5]. Thus, in recognizing the importance of the creation of small- and medium-sized enterprises in the tertiary sector for the sustainable development of rural areas of Southern Europe, the importance of tourism activities for boosting this process is emphasized (see Section 2.1). Within the European Union, Cyprus, Malta, and Slovenia, as well as Italy, Greece, Spain, and Portugal, present the largest number of small farms (less than 5 hectares) (2007 data of Eurostat) [90]. Furthermore, returned emigrants in these countries show a greater tendency to integrate themselves into professions of the services sector in their country of origin, and their main form of capital investment is in the construction of a house in their place of origin, as a form of social ascension [5,18].

More recently, the research on second-generation “return”, conducted by King and Christou [91], provides similar findings concerning the motivations and circumstances of return and post-return reactions and experiences as that of other studies on this issue in Southern Europe [92–96]. Nevertheless, professional expectations, in terms of a job and sector of economic activity, which could motivate a “return”, have not been analyzed, as well as the propensity of emigrants to invest in their place of “origin”, their financial capital and their knowledge transfer. Therefore, the research on the impact of “return” migration on sustainable development in Southern Europe and Mediterranean countries is still currently an under-researched topic and is centered on first- and second-generation integration or assimilation into “host” societies (see also [91,93]) and the emigrants’ connection (and potential “return”) to the parental “homeland”.

This study seeks to fill this research gap. Its main objective is to evaluate the impact of Portuguese return migration on “rural” development in Portugal. It is concluded that there is a segment of Portuguese emigrants, aged between 29–39 years old, with a house in a “rural” area that can contribute to the development of tourism in the rural areas of Portugal [1]. Therefore, these arguments also lead us to suggest the relevance of evaluating the impact of a potential second-generation “return” for the development of tourism in Southern European (and Mediterranean) countries. That is why the identification of recommendations and directions for sustainable common planning in Southern European countries is also important (see Section 2.4).

2.4. Sustainable Common Planning in Low-Density Territories

International integrative projects and strategies of cross-border cooperation (CBC) in low-density territories have the objective of creating a global network of people in order to ensure benefits for everyone involved [97–99]. An example of what is at stake was the creation of the European Trade Association (EFTA), on the 4 January 1960, by the states of Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal,

Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, when they joined the “Common Market”. This agreement allowed for the establishment of a free trade area, in which products imported from member states were not subject to customs duties, which facilitated exchanges between territories within the European area [98–101]. Furthermore, the cohesion politics developed by the European Union were crucial at the beginning of several CBC projects [102], as more than fifty operational programs of Interreg A were developed (2007–2013) for territorial cooperation [101,103]. More recently, thirteen other European Union programs are being developed in neighboring countries through the tool of Neighborhood and Partnership [104,105].

However, state-of-the-art of sustainable planning is limited when addressing impact of cross-border integration and the regulation of these territories. As a result, the development of cross-border strategies that can efficiently regulate and create synergies between them is difficult [106]. Thus, it is necessary to address how common planning is being managed on a cross-border scale and the limits of cross-border strategy implementation in a way that includes institutional aspects, functional realities, ideational representations, and elements linked to differences in territorial contexts through an analytical framework [107]. In this scope, it is noted that regional strategies do not involve the creation of resources and operational landmarks for the comparison of the goals and priorities of EU 2020, that is, to set up “tracks” to be followed by any relevant means. Regional strategies define specific growth and development indicators for monitoring purposes, according to territorial analysis and collaboration, as well as the EU 2020 strategy, which includes the broad and inclusive concept of a good life, health and education, and labor market opportunities for cross-border collaboration [106,107]. Therefore, some regional strategies will be briefly presented, approaching the main challenges and opportunities associated with such strategies [108].

Furthermore, sustainable planning is crucial for growth and long-term sustainable development, as well as to achieve sustainable cities. Thus, strategies include key aspects of spatial planning and can be regarded as a type of cross-border planning mechanism in promoting the territorial development of the border region [109]. In this context, cross-border cooperation projects are suitable for the implementation of a genuine and long-term cross-border spatial plan in order to reduce the barrier effect and improve territorial capital throughout the cross-border region. It also supports territorial development across the border area [109]. As a result, cross-border spatial planning and strategies, as well as its government structures, focus on promoting the active involvement of regional and local actors in the process of cross-border cooperation and the implementation of cross-border projects that involve regional/local cooperation [4]. According to Castanho et al. [4], national, international and cross-border urban planning processes are not exceptional. In this context, projects and strategies of cross-border cooperation will have a critical role in relation to sustainability. In this context, it is highlighted in this section that projects and strategies of cross-border cooperation will have a critical role in relation to tourism sustainability in Southern Europe. Moreover, the cohesion politics of the EU have constituted an important step toward reaching stability and an improvement of the planning of world cities. While there are new planning models for cities all over the world, there are increasing concerns about how cities will develop and cooperate [4,109]. In this regard, Euroregions should be highlighted.

Public and nongovernmental initiatives of communities, with a common local interest, constitute a special type of CBC through Euroregionalisation. Its essence is cooperation, mainly on a regional or local level, between two or more countries. From the institutional point of view, Euroregionalisation is the highest degree of CBC, where solid structures are introduced on a regional or local level through the creation of, among other things, associations and developed according to the individual interests of the parties involved. The participants are mainly local authorities, regional authorities, non-governmental organizations, public institutions, schools and universities, and the consequence of Euroregionalisation is the emergence of Euroregions. On the other hand, CBC in entrepreneurship has not developed so fast and is generally weakly supported by European Union policy and public funds. Alternatively, Euroregions is a form of institutionalized cooperation of the border regions of different countries. Its

main goal is the implementation of cross-border cooperation through joint measures to strengthen neighborhood relations between territorial communities or authorities of one or more nations or countries. From the geographical point of view, the Euroregion is a region, located on the fringes of two or more states, that has a certain specificity, fully respecting, however, the national borders and laws of the countries involved. Its existence is based on a formalized cross-border cooperation on the common objectives of governments and other institutions and entities operating within its territory. Its activities are based mainly on sustainable common planning and the establishment of agreements and necessary arrangements for the implementation of such plans [110,111].

Another special type of CBC that is becoming more widespread is City-to-City Cooperation (C2C). The best examples of this CBC are Venlo–Dusseldorf; Aachen–Liege; Copenhagen–Malmo; Bratislava (Slovak territory) and Vienna (Austrian territory), among many others [10]. It involves the cooperation between the cities in the Central European countries that have a higher and faster rate of growth [112,113] and stronger business networks and cluster environments [10].

In fact, in 1992, the relationship between tourism and principles of sustainability was addressed for the first time in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [72]. In this context, the European Union [1] argued that sustainable tourism development does not follow the same standards as other economic activities, since the economy of tourism is mainly based on small- and medium-sized enterprises, which provide more disseminated benefits to the economy and society, thus contributing to the convergence goal. Therefore, the sustainability principles applied to tourism activities can ensure the suitable management of tourism under economic and social conditions, while preserving the environment and European Union heritage [114]. Tribe [115] characterized the sustainable development of tourism as the level of development at which the load capacity of a destination is not exceeded, avoiding considerable or irreversible changes and securing sustainability in the long term. In fact, several authors identify strategic planning regarding tourist destinations as a crucial process in tourism, aiming at efficient coordination and integration between resources, products, and services [116–120].

Moreover, Mojic and Susic [121] stated that strategic planning is not limited to defining objectives, but also establishes the way they are achieved. Thus, decisions taken in this context are based on an analysis of the internal, i.e., available resources and external environments, i.e., economic conditions. Moreover, the strategic planning also seeks to identify and solve problems, to create new alternative strategies and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders, leading to a reduction of future uncertainty and resistance to change [122]. Therefore, strategic tourism planning is a policy management tool that assists tourism entities (national, regional, or local) in organizing resources in order to achieve their expected goals, which is translated into a plan that assists organizations. It consists of the diagnosis and evaluation of the destination and the formulation of policies and strategies; besides, it also consists in the decision-making processes, aiming to maximize the potential contribution of the activity to the local community and the quality of the environment, which must be applied in the various geographical contexts and at various scales.

3. Material and Methods

Recognizing that return migration can contribute to rural development and that tourism is able to boost this process, in April 2008, a study began in Portugal, funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology, with the aim of assessing the contribution of the potential return of Portuguese emigrants to the development of tourism in rural areas [1]. The data collection process started on 1 July 2011 and ended on 31 October of the same year, with a total of 5157 filled and valid questionnaires [1]. The population target of this study was the locals of rural areas in Portugal (or Portuguese Emigrants). Because we did not know the number and characteristics of the target population of this study, we aimed to obtain relevant information from as many Portuguese emigrants as possible, leading to the option of an unrestricted sample (see sample in Table 1) [1]. The data were obtained through the application of a questionnaire survey to Portuguese emigrants [1]. For the preparation of the

questionnaire, nominal scales, checklists and ratio scales were used [1]. Data analysis was carried out by means of quantitative descriptive analysis (frequencies and crossings) and tests of the correlation of variables, as well as a qualitative analysis through the application of Student's *t*-tests and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) tests (Kruskal–Wallis and Mann–Whitney) [1].

Table 1. Features of the emigration sample.

Year of Emigration	No.	%
Until 1974	741	14.4
1975–1984	516	10.0
1985–1994	769	14.9
1995–2004	1054	20.4
2005–2011	1997	38.7
Did not know/Did not answer	80	1.6
Continent of Emigration		
Europe	3919	76.0
America	664	12.9
Africa	374	7.3
Asia	142	2.8
Oceania	30	0.6
Did not know/Did not answer	28	0.5
Length of Stay in the Country of Emigration		
Less than 1 year	814	15.8
1–4 years	1451	28.1
5–9 years	797	15.5
10–14 years	403	7.8
15–19 years	275	5.3
20–24 years	328	6.4
25–29 years	222	4.3
30 or more years	819	15.9
Did not know/Did not answer	48	0.9
Place of Origin		
Municipality with highest centrality index	2466	47.8
Municipality with smallest index of centrality	2575	49.9
Did not know/Did not answer	116	2.2
Country of Origin (Luso-descendants)		
France	86	26.1
Angola	77	23.3
Mozambique	44	13.3
Switzerland	26	7.9
Germany	18	5.5
South Africa	12	3.6
Remaining Countries	65	19.7
Did not know/Did not answer	2	0.6

Source: own study.

One of the ways of administering the survey was by mail, sending questionnaires to 4000 households of Portuguese emigrants in the various countries of emigration [1]. From the 4000 questionnaires sent by mail, 54 were returned, and concerning those delivered, a response rate of 9.32% was obtained [1]. The identification of regional publications associated with the districts and counties with the largest number of Portuguese emigrants' houses of origin allowed us to obtain listings with the full names and contacts of their subscribers [1]. In this way, the addresses of Portuguese emigrants in their countries of emigration could be also identified, and we sent them 4000 questionnaires by post [1]. During the same period, from 1 July until 31 October, the questionnaire was also administered via the internet and the social network of Facebook, allowing a further 4,800 filled and valid questionnaires to be obtained [1]. By 31 July, the administration of the questionnaire was conducted in the press and in digital electronic portals aimed at Portuguese communities abroad, as well as by sending e-mails to emigrant associations and official bodies directly related to emigration [1]. In addition to continually administering the questionnaire via the internet, during the month of August, it was disclosed on the social network of Facebook through the official pages of the administrators, themselves singers of Portuguese music [1].

In the last two months of data collection (September and October), a questionnaire management strategy was extended to the creation and maintenance of a study page on Facebook (in www.facebook.com/emigrantesportugueses) [1]. During this period, with the goal of informing Portuguese emigrants about the forms of participation in the study, the page was disclosed, several times a day, through the Portuguese radio and television, through channels of the International and Africa Radio, as well as the International RTP channel (RTPi) [1]. In addition, it was also disclosed in all digital newspapers, which co-operated in the administration of the questionnaire to Portuguese emigrants, and through e-mails sent to the Director-General of Consular Affairs and Portuguese Communities, consulates/embassies, associations and Benfica and Porto Houses abroad [1]. Finally, the study page was disclosed in several Facebook pages of groups of Portuguese emigrants [1]. Nevertheless, the administration of the questionnaire by the administrators of the official Facebook Pages of the Portuguese music singers was the method that significantly surpassed the results obtained [1].

4. Results and Discussion

The results of the study, described in Section 3, concerning the evaluation of the contribution of the potential return of Portuguese emigrants to the development of tourism in rural areas, supported the main argument that is being advanced in this paper. In fact, they reflected the expectations and perceptions of locals, as potential tourism promoters, in relation to the development of sustainable tourism in rural areas of Portugal. Moreover, the geographic areas under study are rural or areas with a population of 2000 inhabitants or less or that are in process of desertification (Official Portuguese Statistical Institute). Firstly, it was found that the majority of emigrants have at least one house in a county with the lowest index of centrality or deprived areas (77.4%) and that only 21.5% have housing in counties with a higher index of centrality (Table 2). The counties in which the emigrants' houses were located were organized into two groups, according to the respective analysis of the index of centrality. To this end, it is considered that the counties with the highest index of centrality are situated at a rank of 50 (hierarchy of urban centers in Portugal) [123]. The index of centrality in urban centers, based on the areas of influence and functional marginality, allows for the identification of the areas with a lower capacity of polarization, which are the most deprived areas. In this sense, it takes into account the number of functions provided by an urban center, as well as an associated weighting, to reflect the degree of specialization of the function and the number of functional units that the urban center holds [123].

To verify if there are any differences between the groups analyzed (the emigrants with a house in a municipality with the lowest index of centrality and the emigrants with a house in a municipality with the highest centrality index), an ANOVA test was applied. However, it did not fulfil the necessary assumptions. We opted for the Kruskal–Wallis test or Mann–Whitney test. It was concluded that there

are no differences between the groups analyzed, with the exception of the variables, “professional experience” and “professional training”, where there are differences, which are, however, negligible (values very close to 0).

Table 2. Municipality of houses in Portugal.

Municipality of House	No.	%
Highest centrality index	1109	21.5
Smallest index of centrality	3989	77.4
Did not know/Did not answer	59	1.1
Total	5157	100.0

Source: Own Study.

The results obtained from the Pearson correlation test made it possible to conclude that the municipality in which the emigrants’ houses were located in Portugal negatively influences the contribution of their participation in Portuguese associations in the host country ($r = -0.094$), their desire to return ($r = -0.007$), and the availability of jobs in the area of tourism ($r = -0.037$), and it positively influences having sufficient capital to invest in a business there ($r = 0.059$) (Table 3). The analysis of the intersection of the same variables also indicated that the participation of emigrants with a house in a municipality with the lowest index of centrality in Portuguese associations in the host country did not contribute to their desire to return to Portugal (30.4%) (Table 4). However, emigrants with a house in a municipality with the lowest index of centrality were those that desired most to return and settle in Portugal (39.4%) (Table 5).

The value of the test (0.620) was associated with a level of significance of 0.431. It is concluded that there are no differences between the groups.

The value of the test (3.776) was associated with a level of significance of 0.052. It is concluded that there are no differences between the groups.

Table 3. The Pearson correlation test.

		P7 Municipality of House in Portugal
P20 Participation in Portuguese associations in the country of emigration contributed to the desire to return and settle in Portugal	Pearson Correlation	-0.094 *
	No.	690
P21 Desire to return and settle in Portugal	Pearson Correlation	-0.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.710
	No.	2,806
P28 Desire to have a job in the tourism sector in Portugal	Pearson Correlation	-0.037
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.050
	No.	2806
P49 Have sufficient capital to invest in a business in Portugal	Pearson Correlation	0.059 **
	No.	5157

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: own study.

Table 4. Municipality of houses in Portugal vs. contribution of the participation in Portuguese associations to the desire to return to Portugal.

%	P20 Contribution of Participation in Portuguese Associations to the Country of Emigration and the Desire to Return and Settle in Portugal				Total
	Yes	Maybe	No	Did Not know/Did Not Answer	
Highest centrality index	4.3%	4.1%	4.3%	3.2%	15.9%
Smallest centrality index	18.3%	21.7%	30.4%	13.2%	83.6%
Did not know/Did not answer	0.4%	-	-	-	0.4%
Total	23.0%	25.8%	34.8%	16.4%	100.0%

Source: Own Study.

Table 5. Municipality of houses in Portugal vs. desire to return and settle in Portugal.

%	P21 Desire to Return and Settle in Portugal				Total
	Yes	Maybe	No	Did Not know/Did Not Answer	
Highest centrality index	9.3%	4.5%	2.7%	1.2%	17.7%
Smallest centrality index	39.4%	24.9%	10.4%	7.2%	81.8%
Did not know/Did not Answer	0.4%	0.0%	-	0.1%	0.5%
Total	49.0%	29.4%	13.0%	8.5%	100.0%

Source: own study.

In relation to the most important factors for emigrants at an active age and with house in a municipality with a lower centrality index are, fundamentally, having a house in the place where they were born (89.3%), engaging in a remunerated activity of their own choosing in the tourism sector (83.8%), and having a rural lifestyle (in their place of origin) (83.3%) (Table 6). These data also suggest that the house that emigrants regard as their “own” is most likely the property of their direct relatives. While these emigrants are those who more often deny having the capital to invest in a business in Portugal, they are also the ones that most often confirm this situation (12.9%) (Table 7).

Table 6. Municipality of houses in Portugal vs. most important factors for returning and settling in Portugal.

%	P22 If You Decide to Return to Portugal, What is Most Important to You?								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Highest centrality index	18.2%	19.4%	16.3%	18.6%	-	17.1%	10.5%	15.5%	16.0%
Smallest centrality index	81.0%	79.9%	83.3%	80.9%	81.3%	82.3%	89.3%	83.8%	84.0%
Did Not Know/Did Not Answer	0.8%	0.7%	0.4%	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	0.3%	0.7%	-

A: job opportunity; B: income opportunities; C: a rural lifestyle; D: near family in Portugal; E: returning with children; F: existence of infrastructure for living and investing in a business at the place of origin exist; G: a house in the place of origin; H: being able to engage in a paid activity of their own in the tourism sector; I: none. Source: own study.

Table 7. Municipality of houses in Portugal vs. sufficient capital to invest in a business in Portugal.

%	P49 Have Sufficient Capital to Invest in a Business in Portugal				Total
	Yes	Maybe	No	Did Not Know/Did Not Answer	
Highest centrality index	4.2%	7.2%	5.4%	4.7%	21.5%
Smallest centrality index	12.9%	24.4%	28.7%	11.3%	77.4%
Did not know/Did not answer	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.5%	1.1%
Total	17.2%	31.9%	34.3%	16.6%	100.0%

Source: own study.

It should also be highlighted that, among these emigrants, who are at an active age and have a house in a municipality with the lowest index of centrality (77.4%), there is still a significant proportion who did not know or did not respond to these issues related to their propensity to return, invest, and gain employment in the tourism sector in Portugal. For them, tourism is also the area where they would most like to invest in Portugal, following livestock (84.4%) and transport (84.9%) (Table 8). In this context, emigrants residing in counties with a higher index of centrality (15.5%) also stand out significantly (83.9%).

Finally, the analysis of the knowledge that the emigrants have acquired during their stay in their country of emigration also leads us to observe that most emigrants have little formal knowledge relating to the areas of hospitality and/or tourism, although emigrants residing in counties with a smaller index of centrality have more (new) knowledge (course/training/professional experience) in that area (Tables 9–12). In this case, it is observed that those who are between the ages of 29–39 years and have their own house in Portugal, also have the most knowledge of hospitality and/or tourism (Table 13).

Table 8. Municipality of houses in Portugal vs. area/s where emigrants would like to invest in Portugal.

		Highest Centrality Index	Smallest Centrality Index	Did Not know/ Did Not answer
P26 Area/s where emigrants would like to invest in Portugal	(a) Agriculture	18.1%	81.2%	0.7%
	(b) Forestry (forest)	16.6%	82.9%	0.6%
	(c) Fisheries	20.2%	78.8%	1.0%
	(d) Livestock	15.6%	84.4%	-
	(e) Hunting	26.3%	73.7%	-
	(f) Extractive industry (mining, oil, wood and paper)	23.2%	75.9%	0.9%
	(g) Manufacturing	18.2%	81.0%	0.9%
	(h) Construction	20.7%	78.7%	0.6%
	(i) Energy production	18.8%	80.8%	0.4%
	(j) Trade	18.2%	81.2%	0.5%
	(l) Tourism (hotels, restaurants, transportation, cultural services, etc.)	15.5%	83.9%	0.6%
	(m) Transport	14.7%	84.9%	0.4%
	(n) Financial Activities	20.2%	78.5%	1.4%
	(o) Other	17.6%	82.4%	-

Source: own study.

Table 9. Kruskal–Wallis test.

	(a) Hospitality and/or Tourism Professional Experience	(b) Hospitality and/or Tourism Professional Training	(c) Hospitality and/or Tourism Course
Chi-squared	5.213	5.432	3.751
Df	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	0.022	0.020	0.053
Exact Sig. Point Probability	0.025	0.021	0.053
	0.003	0.004	0.011

Source: own study.

Table 10. Course in hotel management/tourism vs. municipality of houses in Portugal.

a)	Course	P7 Municipality of House in Portugal			Total
		Highest Centrality Index	Smallest Centrality Index	Did Not Know/ Did Not Answer	
P25 During the emigration, the emigrant obtained (new) knowledge in the field of hospitality and tourism	Yes	1.0%	6.7%	0.1%	7.8%
	No	15.0%	65.3%	0.4%	80.7%
	Did not know/ Did not answer	1.7%	9.8%	0.0%	11.5%
	Total	17.7%	81.8%	0.5%	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 11. Professional training in hospitality/tourism vs. municipality of houses in Portugal.

b)	Professional Training	P7 Municipality of House in Portugal			Total
		Highest Centrality Index	Smallest Centrality Index	Did Not Know/ Did Not Answer	
P25 During the emigration, the emigrant obtained (new) knowledge in the field of hospitality and tourism	Yes	1.7%	11.0%	0.1%	12.9%
	No	14.5%	62.3%	0.3%	77.0%
	Did not know/ Did not answer	1.5%	8.6%	0.0%	10.1%
	Total	17.7%	81.8%	0.5%	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 12. Professional experience in hospitality/tourism vs. municipality of houses in Portugal.

c)	Professional Experience	P7 Municipality of House in Portugal			Total
		Highest Centrality Index	Smallest Centrality Index	Did Not know/ Did Not answer	
P25 During the emigration obtained (new) knowledge in the field of hospitality and tourism	Yes	4.6%	25.2%	0.3%	30.0%
	No	12.4%	53.1%	0.2%	65.7%
	Did not know/ Did not answer	0.7%	3.5%	0.0%	4.2%
	Total	17.7%	81.8%	0.5%	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 13. Age vs. house ownership in Portugal.

%		P18 Age			Total
		Less than 18 Years	Between 18 and 28 Years old	Between 29 and 39 Years	
P5 House ownership in Portugal	Own	1.1%	12.0%	22.3%	35.4%
	Rented	-	0.6%	2.3%	2.9%
	Of relatives	1.7%	21.7%	38.3%	61.7%
	Total	2.9%	34.3%	62.9%	100.0%

Source: own study.

The value of the tests, 5.213 and 5.432, was associated with a level of significance of 0.022 and 0.020, respectively. It is concluded that there are differences between the groups. However, in relation to the respondents that have taken a course in the area of hospitality and/or tourism, it was observed that the test (3.751) was associated with a level of significance of 0.053, and there are no differences between the groups.

In summary, the presented and analyzed empirical data show the intention of Portuguese emigrants aged between 29–39 years and with a house in a rural area of Portugal (or with the smallest centrality index) to return, invest and gain employment in the area of tourism in Portugal. Moreover, the same segment of Portuguese emigrants would like to have a rural lifestyle on their return to Portugal (see Table 6). In addition, given the discussion of Sections 2.2 and 2.3, we can conclude that after 2011, no other study evaluated the impact of Portuguese return migration on “rural” development. For this reason, data of this study remains current and valid. In addition, the theoretical research of this study has improved the state of the art of studies that, from the second half of the 1980s onwards, addressed the issue of the impact of return migration on development in Portugal by introducing a new variable, able to boost development in the “rural” territories, namely the development of sustainable tourism.

Through the analysis of the obtained results and comparing them with the principles of sustainable regional planning, particularly in low-density and frontier areas, based on studies of critical factors relating to territorial success in frontier areas [101], it is possible to define the following recommendations and directions for a common sustainable planning (Table 14): (i) ecological sustainability: the rational and efficient use of environmental resources as the basis for proper tourism development, maintenance of the essential ecological processes and conservation of resources and biodiversity; (ii) sociocultural sustainability: respect for the culture and values of the local community, contributing to intercultural tolerance and understanding; and (iii) economic sustainability of resources management: allowing for the use of resources by future generations, ensuring economic development, and providing a fair distribution of benefits between all parties involved.

Table 14. Identified recommendations/directions for sustainable planning in low-density Portuguese areas.

Theme	Directions, Challenges and Opportunities
Political–Strategic	(Re)designing regional plans with a wider scope, providing an answer to the specific needs and typologies of the populations
	Rethinking policies and creating new policies that are able to fix the population, foster entrepreneurship, and protect returning emigrants
Financial–Economic	Stronger investment in human capital
	Access to more EU funds, specifically related to the emigrants returning to interest areas (agriculture; fisheries; SMEs; etc.)
	Investment in connectivity and accessibility: movement between low-density areas and major city centers
Resources Sustainability	Creation of common strategies at regional and local levels
	Smart management of incoming know-how
	Strategies for inverter magnet
Sociocultural	Increase populations' life standards through qualified employment creation; better health care; career progression (via education opportunities)
	Foster the sense of belonging

Source: own study.

According to Edgell and Swanson [124], the advantages of proper planning of a tourist destination are associated with the following: (a) A close relationship between government policies and planning, i.e., strategic tourism planning strengthens tourism policies; (b) Strategic planning of tourism, which is a forward-looking organized effort of thoughtful and rational thinking; (c) A planning process, which presents several stages, starting with the inventory of tourism resources and ending with the establishment of a developmental model for the future; (d) Strategic planning of tourism, which promotes the resources from which tourism needs to develop; (e) Strategic planning of tourism, which balances economic objectives with the preservation of heritage and improves the quality of life of the population; and (f) Strategic planning of tourism, which promotes the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the stakeholders. Based on these advantages, in the following (Table 14), recommendations and directions for sustainable planning and development, defined through the identified challenges, barriers and opportunities, are presented.

5. Conclusions

The introductory chapters, including the literature review, were crucial for understanding the contribution of some variables, such as tourism, small- and medium-sized enterprises, migration return and cooperation strategies, to sustainable tourism development and common planning in Southeastern Europe. In this scope, the discussion section presents evidence from the Portuguese case, particularly relative to the contribution of Portuguese emigrants, as potential tourism promoters of sustainable tourism development in the rural areas of Portugal. In addition, the final section presents some opportunities and directions for sustainable common planning.

The typology of return migration shown in the present work refers to the movement of workers and relatives from the more developed countries or regions to regions that provide labor in rural areas [60]. It is concluded that return migration presents several opportunities in terms of sustainable development, since the impact on consumption can be linked to the impact on production [9,64–77]. Thus, emigrants are also people who return to live and work and cannot be considered exclusively in terms of the savings and consumption models. Additionally, sustainable development involves the articulation of the various dimensions of sustainability, including economic, environmental, and sociocultural factors, where tourism can have a major contribution to the growth and development of

some regional economies, especially in low-density territories in Portugal and the remaining countries of Southern Europe and Mediterranean countries [1,6,72,114]. Thus, recognizing that emigrants are agents of development in their countries/regions of “origin”, their participation should be facilitated by tourism development projects that stimulate the economy of these territories, with the aim of establishing them. In this context, return emigration will also have a critical role in tourism sustainability in Southern Europe. Nevertheless, the development of sustainability in tourism is an ongoing process that requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing preventive and/or corrective measures when necessary [115–122]. The dimension of the exercise of citizenship and governance by all social actors involved in the development process, along with strong political leadership, will be crucial for building consensus and engaging all actors in the sustainable tourism development process. Besides, the results illustrated reflect the expectations and perceptions of the locals—Portuguese emigrants—as potential tourism promoters in relation to the development of tourism in rural areas. From these results, it was possible to extract recommendations for the main actors towards sustainable planning. Furthermore, it was concluded that Portuguese emigrants at an active age (29–39 years old) and with a house in a rural area (or with the smallest index of centrality) have the greatest propensity to return, invest, and gain employment in the area of tourism in Portugal, and they also have more training and professional experience in this area.

Contextually, the study provides data on the expectations and perceptions of Portuguese emigrants in relation to tourism sustainability development in rural areas of Portugal.

As a final remark, from the analysis of the results obtained in the present study, compared with the principles of sustainable regional planning, particularly in low-density and frontier areas, it was possible to define recommendations/directions for common sustainable planning. However, it should be noted that “one size does not fit all”, i.e., the identified recommendations/directions are based on the case study area and their populations. For different regions and territories, similar studies should be carried out to properly define the directions for sustainable planning.

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