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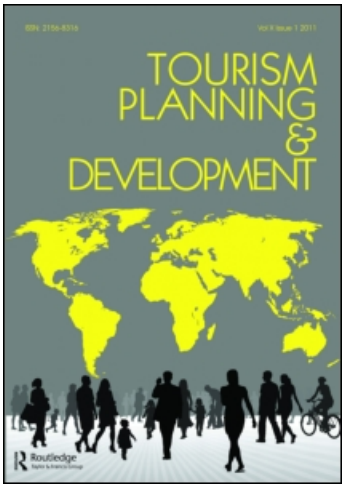

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Tourism and Third Sector Organisations—Strangers or Partners?

Paula Martins de Brito[a]; Ana Maria Ferreira[a]; Carlos Costa[b]
[a] University of Algarve, Portugal [b] University of Aveiro, Portugal

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Tourism and Third Sector Organisations—Strangers or Partners?

PAULA MARTINS DE BRITO*, ANA MARIA FERREIRA* AND CARLOS COSTA**
*University of Algarve, Portugal and **University of Aveiro, Portugal

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ABSTRACT *This article is concerned with the third sector (in particular, local development agencies, arts and culture organisations) in relation to opportunities, barriers, and challenges they face and their potential roles within the context of tourism planning and development. These organisations often perform a central role as keepers and nurturers of a region's identity and traditions, often supplementing the state and private sectors in cultural intervention in traditional sun and sea destinations. Thus, they potentially make a valuable contribution to sustainable tourism development. However, there is a lack of research exploring third sector organisations, and in particular their interface with tourism. The purpose of this paper is to address this gap in the literature. Based on qualitative research amongst leaders from the third sector, the tourism industry and cultural leaders in the Algarve, Portugal, it considers the interface between the third sector and tourism from two perspectives: that of the third sector leaders regarding the tourism industry; and, the tourism sector leaders regarding the third sector's potential role in tourism. Preliminary findings indicate that local third sector organisations should play a more active role in tourism, complementary to those played by the state and private sectors, their specific knowledge being perceived as an added value to the tourist experience. However, it is also evident that, as yet these organisations have no formally recognised role in tourism planning and development.*

Introduction

There is much research regarding the relationship between tourism and culture (Richards, 1996, 2002; McKercher and Du Cros, 2002; OECD, 2009). Nowadays, the existence of synergies between these two sectors, as drivers to increase the competitiveness of destinations in the global market, is relatively consensual. For the tourism industry, culture represents a potential opportunity to create place distinctiveness; for the cultural sector, tourism may represent a way to reinforce and support cultural production. However, this relationship is not straightforward and different perspectives need to be acknowledged. That is, while the tourism sector is frequently associated with terms such as "short-term profits", "performance", "tourists" and "clients", the predominant terms within the cultural sector are "cultural expression", "creativity", "residents" and

Correspondence Address: Paula Martins de Brito, MS, Department of Management, Hospitality and Tourism, University of Algarve, Portugal. Email: pmartins@ualg.pt

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"community". Moreover, the tourism private sector is often controlled by national or multinational companies with limited connections to the destination's specific cultural features (Hughes, 2000). These different perspectives render the collaboration process problematic. Arts and culture manifestations are deeply rooted in local communities and depend highly on the involvement of third sector organisations. As a consequence, without the participation of these organisations, it becomes very difficult to represent and convey a region's identity and distinctive features to its visitors.

The Third Sector: Definitions, Characteristics and Potential Roles

Evers and Laville (2004) distinguish two research traditions within the third sector international literature: an American legacy identifying the third sector with the non-profit sector, and a European legacy stressing collective entrepreneurship and identifying the third sector with social economy that integrates associations, cooperatives, foundations, and mutual societies. According to Defourny (2001, p. 3), the idea of a distinct third sector with a theoretical basis began to emerge in the 1970s, since when a considerable amount of scientific literature has been developed, with major contributions from disciplines such as economics, management, political science and sociology. There are several reasons for the sector's institutional invisibility until almost the last decade of the twentieth century, mainly explained by the lack of a rigorous conceptual definition of the features that the different types of organisations share and the absence of a regular data-gathering system. However, a number of factors have contributed to its recent increasing importance and visibility amongst analysts, academics, and the media in recent years. Principally, its economic significance has grown in terms of employment and production (services); for instance, it represents about 10% of total employment in countries such as Belgium, Ireland, and the Netherlands (Defourny and Pestoff, 2008). At the same time, there has been an expansion of universities and departments related to third sector postgraduate studies, together with the creation of important research centres such as the International Society for Third Sector Research, The Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies in the USA, and the CIRIEC (Centre International de Recherches et d'Information sur l'Économie Publique, Sociale et Coopérative), based in Liège, Belgium.

The denomination "third sector"[1] derives from the institutional structure of western societies, which are composed of three sectors: the public sector (the state—local, regional, national, continental), the private sector (the market, business firms), and the third sector (community and voluntary organisations). Third sector organisations are often seen as a part of, and born within, civil society; they are considered as largely community-driven initiatives reflecting the citizens' interests and, as a consequence, having a closer relation with the civil society (Kiviniemi, 2008).

Although this may represent a trend, we should bear in mind that the creation of several of these organisations is sometimes stimulated by the public sector as a way to gain access to public funding. It should also be acknowledged that civil society is not a uniform reality: "Global civil society is the sphere of ideas, values, institutions, organisations, networks and individuals that are based on civility, located *between* the family, the state and the market" (Anheier, 2007, p. 10–11). This contextual approach positions the third sector within civil society and suggests different types of relationships with the other sectors. However, some researchers point out dangers in identifying the third sector with civil society, such as that of arbitrary action, a lack of transparency in its practices, and competition for resources, recognition and legitimacy (Jelin, 1997). Researchers such as the political scientist Robert Putnam state that the density of third sector associations is often regarded as a sign of the activity level within civil society. In other words, building

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up the capacity of third sector organisations can be viewed as an important strategy for building up civil society, or social capital, in local areas (Putnam, 1993). It has become common to distinguish two dimensions of social capital. The first, "bonding" social capital, refers to ties between people who are similar in terms of their characteristics, such as family members and friends, and through interactions with local institutions, such as voluntary associations. In this context, a stronger sense of collective action is likely to emerge. The second, "bridging" social capital, refers to ties between people who do not share many of these characteristics, thus allowing community empowerment to transcend geographic boundaries and encouraging ties with new sources of information.

According to Salamon and Anheier (1997, p. 33–34), third sector organisations can, to some extent, be distinguished by five distinctive attributes: organised (with some institutional reality, which separates the organisation from informal entities); private (institutionally separate from government); non-profit-distributing *(*which distinguishes it from businesses); self-governing (controlling their own activities and internal procedures); and, voluntary (with some degree of voluntary input in either the activities or the management, and also creating public spaces for civic interaction within civil society). They also document a growing role for the third sector, distinct from the state and the market but connected to both.

We favour a concept of the third sector that follows the current European literature (Defourny and Monzon Campos, 1992; Evers and Laville, 2004), which considers the possible innovative input of third sector organisations in the democratisation of public policy. Evers and Laville (2004, p. 14) consider that in Europe the third sector has historically been associated with the expansion of public participation and its intermediary dimension emphasised, acting as a counterbalance in the context of the post-welfare state crises. Potential vulnerabilities have been identified in some third sector organisations, namely their dependence on public sector grants, excessive amateurism or professionalism, lack of accountability, paternalism and resource insufficiency (Salamon *et al.*, 2000, p. 8–9). According to the literature the trend will be for governments at both central and local levels to support a limited number of organisations with the capacity to play important roles in meeting public needs (social, cultural) and that can be easily held accountable (Hughes, 2000; Haywood and Stapenhurst, 2001).

The literature review identifies a group of characteristics and roles played by these organisations that can be understood as an added and distinctive value of the third sector in the context of the challenges of contemporary societies (Drucker, 1990; Light, 1998; Salamon *et al.*, 2000, p. 5–7; Thompson, 2002): 1) the service role—the provision of health, social, and cultural services difficult for the private sector to provide, which is expected to differentiate them from other types of organisations because of their value-based mission; 2) the innovative role—these organisations tend to be potentially more adaptable than other types of organisations, and this flexibility enables them to test new ideas and methods; 3) the expressive role—the organisations would serve as vehicles for group self-expression of cultural interests; 4) the community-building role—the capacity to mobilise the local community and local resources (in the delivery of services/experiences), generally leading to greater levels of participation, and ultimately making the organisation a tool in the local development process; 5) the leadership role—the social entrepreneurs in the voluntary sector tend to play a major role in caring and helping the communities; and 6), the advocacy role—their independence from the public and private sectors, and their ability to establish links among individuals, allowing the expression of a group consensus at the public level. These characteristics demonstrate a potential role in building community capacity at a local level. In theory, these organisations should find it easier than either the public or private sectors to undertake some of

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these roles and/or exhibit these characteristics more intensely (Salamon *et al.*, 2000; Bolton, 2003).

Halfpenny and Reid (2004, p. 533) note that "while substantial progress has been made over the past twenty years in describing and explaining aspects of the sector, concentration on the larger, more formal organisations has left gaps in our understanding of small, local voluntary activity." We might add that another gap lies in research concerning local third sector arts and culture organisations. The data regarding the third sector tend to be presented on a global level, including the social, educational, sports, and cultural dimensions, or focused in particular on social services (see also the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CCSS, 2011)).

The available data point to an increase in the scope and scale of this sector. Furthermore, about one third of the effort is concentrated in the "sector's more expressive activities such as culture and recreation" (Anheier and Salamon, 2006, p. 97). Despite this fact, the authors recognise that the third sector is a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be captured fully by any single measure and is strongly characterised by the historical context of each country. Also, the terminology used (third sector, social economy, nonprofit sector) depends on the institutional context. For instance, the variety of structures of the third sector in Europe represents a constraint in the effort towards creating a cross-comparison. In this context, DiMaggio (2006, p. 454) identifies the main research priorities: "we need community cultural-resource studies that view arts organisations as interrelated parts of coherent systems...and link them to other arenas of public life...If we want to grasp the dynamism of the nonprofit sector in art and culture, we must focus on the less well institutionalized portions of the organisational universe from which new functions and future directions continually emerge."

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Third Sector Organisations: Opportunities, Challenges and their Interface with Tourism

As for the importance of the third sector organisations, the Empiric project, funded by the Directorate-General V of the European Commission in 1999 within the context of the "Third System and Employment" (1999) pilot scheme, conceived a qualitative model of four different clusters of organisations that are developing cultural strategies and sustainable projects within the third sector. The first cluster is represented by grassroots organisations interested in socialising their activities based on members' fees and characterised by internal democracy (and potentially with a high contribution to social capital), with limited direct impact on employment and economic growth. The second cluster, also covering grassroots organisations, is centred on the social promotion of culture, also similarly has a strong commitment to internal democracy, valuing the engagement of volunteers, and often proposing activities to local authorities and receiving grants. The third cluster integrates organisations that work in close relation with local authorities, providing cultural services through contracts and engaging in regular partnerships. Their contribution to direct employment seems to be rising despite some funding problems. A fourth cluster, more entrepreneurial and at work in the marketplace, was also identified. However, as their profits are reinvested, they are also considered to belong to the third sector (Interarts, 1999, p. 51).

According to the findings of this project, the expansion of arts provision in Europe over the last thirty years has been the result of factors such as the development of new infrastructure, the high mobility of audiences and artists, the extraordinary increase in tourism, and higher education levels. However, the Empiric project concludes that "a great deal of credit must be attributed to the expansion of voluntary and amateur cultural initiative—the third system—and to a renewed drive towards particularistic

group-expression in contemporary society" (Interarts, 1999, p. 49). This is particularly true in peripheral regions where the tourism industry tends to follow a traditional sun and sea monoculture model of development. In some peripheral regions, the growth of cultural industries is not considered as a development strategy and the tourist private sector has not yet identified a strong market potential for culture that could provide direct economic benefits for investing in culture and arts. Underneath this reality are variables such as the demand fluctuation related to the seasonal nature of tourism (Hughes, 2000).

However, the type of tourists seems to be changing as previously recognised by Murphy (1988, p. 97), who notes that "as the tourism market has matured more tourists are looking for authentic experiences and local flavour, so the conservation and marketing of genuine local or regional characteristics will help to provide the distinctiveness and intimacy that more tourists are seeking." We should not forget that in the mind of the visitor, tourism is not a set of services; it is mainly a set of experiences. This perspective has also been confirmed by authors such as Ferreira and Costa (2006), Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Poon (1993).

According to Costa (2001, 2005) and Murphy (1985), a region's strategies should be based on its endogenous resources. This line of thinking is reinforced by Macbeth *et al.* (2004, p. 516): "Culture is an important resource. It represents the accumulated capital of generations of skilled, creative, and innovative people and is made up of the historic record of our societies; it can be a source of inspiration for creativity and innovation." In this context, it is fair to state that many celebrations of popular culture would have been forgotten without the efforts of many third sector cultural associations, which are active agents in providing a sense of "community" and "place" in many locations.

Hall (2000) suggests the introduction of a "sustainable approach to tourism planning" which means that tourism planning must be able to articulate the physical/environmental, cultural and economic dimensions, requiring a commitment from all the stakeholders involved in the process. Several authors state that tourism planning requires an "inclusive planning approach" as well as a "lateral thinking approach", with support from public participation (Inskeep, 1991; Jamal and Getz, 1995; Hall, 1999; Costa, 2001; Burns, 2004). These new tourism planning approaches create new roles for tourism and third sector collaboration within the context of regional distinctiveness.

To date, the tourism literature has given limited attention to the third sector link to tourism planning and development. Although the literature recognises third sector organisations as actors within the tourism planning process, in practical terms the ways they participate have not been explored in detail (Swarbrooke, 1999; Hughes, 2000; Gunn and Var, 2002; Parkinson, 2006; Mason, 2008; Moscardo, 2008). Consequently, their potential to act as a counterbalance between the short-term goals (of tourism) and the sustainable development of resources, due to strong social concerns and cultural responsibility, has not been considered, although Andersson and Getz (2009) have explored this theme within the context of festivals management and tourism policy.

As for barriers, Gunn (2004, p. 4–7) identifies several problems yet to be overcome in tourism planning, due to the complex nature of the industry, namely: little understanding of the interdependency among governmental agencies, commercial enterprises, and non-profit organisations; a lack of understanding of how each participant depends upon the decisions and activities of the other participant; poor organisational integration (emphasis on promotion and not on planning); and finally, a lack of dialogue and tourism literacy. These barriers have also been identified in research into the building of community capacity for tourism development (Pearce *et al.*, 1996; Moscardo, 2008). These issues also have direct implications on the potential relation between tourism and the third sector.

As Feighery (2009, p. 5) points out, "In the current economic downturn the potential of tourism—third sector interactions to stimulate social change through the development of

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innovative projects which create social and community benefits seems more important than ever as both producers and consumers of tourism products and services adjust their modes of demand and supply." Recent years have also witnessed considerable concern for the maintenance of third sector initiatives due to global government cut-backs in arts and culture organisations, both at the national and the local levels. Andersson and Getz (2009, p. 5) also acknowledge this reality and argue that reinforcing the services provided to the community could also generate opportunities for the tourism industry: "Cultural activities are sometimes funded by public money, but not always fully financed. Not-for-profit organisations involved in organising cultural activities may, therefore, receive a part of their financing from public sources and part in the form of business revenue." Academic studies agree on recognising the third sector as one of the actors in tourism. However, the main constraints, opportunities and potential roles of arts and culture organisations have not been studied in depth. The professional perspective has also been neglected; that is, tourism leaders' opinions about third sector participation in tourism development. This subject is discussed further in the research findings.

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Methodology

This paper focuses on how third sector organisations operate, and on their links to tourism, in the Algarve region, Portugal. It presents the initial stage of an exploratory research.[2] The methodology follows a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 1995). The 30 interviews were conducted with the following informants from various public and private sectors operating in the region of the Algarve, Portugal: 1) leaders from third sector (associations and foundations) organisations ($n = 12$). These informants work mostly at the regional level, in areas as diverse as local development agencies, cultural organisations (cultural and social intervention), as well as in performing arts (dance, music, theatre), and friends of museum associations; 2) public and private sector tourism leaders at the regional level, namely regional tourism organisations and representatives from travel agencies, hotels, and business associations ($n = 7$); 3), public sector cultural leaders ($n = 3$), also at the regional level; and 4) key informants with experience in the tourism third sector interface, identified as individuals who have worked in third sector organisations as volunteers and, in some cases, have developed or tried to develop projects with the tourism sector ($n = 8$). The snowball sampling technique was used. This combination of exploratory research and qualitative approach was chosen since there is little present knowledge of the field both theoretically and empirically. The case study approach has been assessed as the most appropriate research tool in such cases, providing a richer description of the reality (Ragin, 1987; Eisenhardt, 1989; Feeney, 2004). The recorded one-hour interviews took place in the respondents' workplaces during 2009. In the final part of the interview, the respondents were given the chance to provide additional information that they considered important within the study context. The region chosen (the Algarve) is one of the main tourism destinations in Portugal. The method and location meet the criteria for the construction of case studies proposed by Coller (2000, p. 29); that is, the region's dependence on tourism and the number of visitors.

The Algarve Region

According to a study published by CIRIEC (2000), Portugal is positioned as having an emergent third sector. The criteria used in this research were the degree of recognition by the public, institutional, and legislative authorities, and the degree of impact in

academia and in the media. The universe of the third sector in Portugal is quite diverse and integrates a wide range of social, cultural and economic needs. The majority of organisations are associations developing activities such as in the fields of arts, dance, folklore, handicrafts, heritage, leisure, local development, music, and theatre. The Algarve's share in the country's third sector arts and culture organisations is 22%. The vast majority has a localised scope (in small villages and towns). It is important to note, however, that less-structured associations are not always included in the official statistics.

The Algarve region is located in the southernmost province of Portugal on the western extremity of the Iberian Peninsula, and has a population of 400,000. Its main tourist resources are concentrated in the coastal area, and tourism activities represent 44% of the wealth of the region. The Algarve's model of tourism development has been based on the "sun, sea, sand" product, and the region presents every characteristic of the consolidation stage in the product life cycle model (Butler, 1980). Nowadays, the greatest challenge is to prepare the region for a long-lasting stage of stabilisation, with special emphasis on effective planning orientation at the public sector level. The public sector intervention on culture has been focused on heritage conservation; the intangible features of culture and arts have been considered as a secondary priority in terms of investment. So far the private cultural sector has not managed to demonstrate ability for cultural creation and production.

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Findings

Third Sector Organisations' Perspective

The research findings are structured into three main areas of analysis: the profile, management practices, and future challenges of the third sector; the third sector organisations' perspective regarding tourism in the region; and the potential roles, opportunities, and barriers in third sector interface with tourism.[3]

Third Sector Profile, Management Practices, and Future Challenges

The interviews revealed that the sector is not an emerging one, but is nevertheless a young sector. According to the results, 50% of the organisations have been in existence for less than 10 years. When the informants were asked to list the main reasons for the associations' creation, the majority indicated reasons such as "a way to fill a gap that existed and was not fulfilled by the public sector", "a form to have an active voice regarding local development", and "a way to gain access to European Community funding programmes." The main goals of these associations were "community cultural and social development" and their key areas of operation were related to activities such as: preservation and education (professional training in areas such as handicrafts, and cultural and environmental education); research (history, archaeology, environment, cultural heritage, and traditions of the region); itinerary/route conception and promotion (publishing materials, books); events organisation (fairs, crafts workshops, guided tours, European cinema festival); and the performing arts (dance, theatre festivals and traditional music concerts, for example "Summer Academy—Holidays with Music" and "Music in Churches"). According to the respondents, a considerable part of these activities were also attended by visitors, in particular those related to events and the performing arts. Their target is primarily the resident community, but they also feel that their work might be of significance to the region's visitors. In terms of geographical location (office), half are situated in the mountain region (which suffers from human desertification problems, high levels of unqualified labour, and the loss of traditional techniques and knowledge) and half in the coastal area.

Those based in the mountain area tend to perform diverse activities related not only to culture but also to social development. As far as management practices are concerned, the majority of the organisations have a small human resources structure ranging in size from one person working full-time to a staff of forty people, although the second case is an exception. The mean was 10 people. Only half of the organisations recognise the importance of having volunteers and mobilise them to accomplish their mission. In general, they did not report an increase in volunteering over the past years. The organisations tend to rely on individual membership (it was difficult to establish a pattern since the membership numbers range from 30 to 300 people); only two organisations had members from private sector organisations. Their financial resources (funding sources) come mainly from European Union programmes, grants, and contracts with the local municipalities and/or public sector regional culture entities; a small amount of revenue is generated from individual donations. Few reported the existence of partnerships within third sector organisations. The main future challenges faced by these organisations are financial capacity (they all report difficulties in earning revenues or obtaining funding), and communicating their knowledge and expertise (the relevance of their work) to the public and private sectors (including the tourism sector). When asked how the third sector could adjust to address these future challenges, several possible adaptation measures were identified, such as providing services to companies/businesses and the public sector, and developing better funding practices and diversifying their funding sources.

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Third Sector Interface with the Tourism Sector

The results obtained in the first stage of the investigation demonstrated an overwhelming consensus from the third sector leaders concerning the recognition of tourism as an important economic activity in the region; however, a considerable number of respondents revealed doubts regarding the model of tourism development followed in the coastal area (due to its seasonal character, dependence on a few generating markets, and spatial concentration), and reinforced the need to plan and develop complementary tourism initiatives in areas such as cultural tourism, ecotourism, and nature and rural tourism. As for the establishment of contacts between the third sector and the organisations responsible for the tourism sector at the regional level, the frequency was not regular; in general, the contacts were dependent on "who is in power" (public sector leaders), and only a few contacts with private tourism organisations were mentioned. Almost all of the respondents stated that their participation in regional tourism planning was kept to a non-active status, as they were not invited to give their opinions or to share their knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, they reported difficulties in finding support for their tourism-related initiatives. However, their willingness to participate in the planning and development process is strong, as they believe they add value to the tourism destination product. As for collaboration with tourism organisations at the regional level, there were a few instances though such collaboration was not undertaken on a regular basis. It was possible to identify two "best-practice" projects that deserve mention. Firstly, the Cork Route Project (Associação Rota da Cortiça, 2009), which covers several thematic routes in order to offer visitors a deeper insight into the cork production process. Cork is the theme of the trip, which has several points of interest: heritage, nature, tradition, and innovation. A third sector association prepared the contents of the brochure, which is directed to tourism industry intermediaries (tour operators and travel agents). Secondly, Via Algarviana (Associação Almargem, 2009) is a project coordinated by a third sector organisation, and entails a footpath, mostly in the countryside area of the Algarve, adjacent to the most important natural and cultural places. These two examples are particularly interesting because the initiative

was taken by the third sector, which is also leading the two projects. The main aim was to promote the endogenous resources and give them new functions. Without the third sector knowledge of these resources and their proximity to the local community, it would have been very difficult for tourism representatives to develop such distinctive projects.

Potential Roles, Opportunities, and Barriers in Third Sector Interface with Tourism

Third sector leaders believe the regional tourism authorities should be responsible for the potential cooperation process; they see themselves as potential consultants, serving as members of a committee and, in some cases, as service providers. The opportunities for collaboration that were identified included dimensions such as "a way to maximise the visibility of our activities", "more audiences", "more funding opportunities", and "the challenge of artistic creation for a multicultural audience." The majority of the respondents indicated that they would like to have the opportunity to contribute to the planning of the tourism events annual calendar. Some associations also mentioned that a considerable part of their volunteer structure was comprised of foreign citizens (residential tourists) who tend to be very active, and would like to contribute from their experiences in the area of cultural motivations in the specific (and important) tourist markets for the region (UK, Germany, and the Netherlands). Third sector organisations identified the following main barriers to the collaboration process: a lack of know-how regarding the tourism industry system (how to articulate initiatives with the tourism sector); a lack of dialogue with the tourism sector; unstable volunteering structure; short-term planning basis due to financial uncertainties, and the predominance of a short-term vision from the tourism private sector that does not recognise the value of culture and arts.

The Perspective of the Tourism Sector, Cultural Sector, and Key Informants

A similar semi-structured interview was prepared for tourism authorities, cultural leaders, and key informants, focusing on their views on the third sector potential roles and opportunities, and the barriers to its collaboration with tourism. The aim was to identify differences and similarities in opinions and perceptions.

Public and Private Sector Tourism Leaders

According to these informants, the potential interface between the third sector and tourism should be mainly the responsibility of the local cultural and tourism departments, although some also recognised the intermediary role of the regional tourism board. The majority indicated that the potential role of the third sector in tourism should be one of consultancy, identifying features of cultural significance, and providing information and ideas. In this line of thinking the main opportunity identified was in adding value to the tourism experience. Several barriers to this collaboration were identified: different audiences (community), financial dependency of the third sector on the public sector, information regarding the third sector activities does not circulate, is dispersed and fragmented, excessive amateurism and lack of accountability of some associations, too many associations doing the same activities, and competition with private sector companies in areas such as events.

Public Sector Cultural Leaders

Public sector cultural leaders regard the potential interface between third sector and tourism to be mainly the responsibility of the local cultural departments and the regional

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tourism board. The potential role of the third sector in tourism could be one of volunteering (to plan, coordinate, and participate in monuments/places of cultural value activities, for example, friends of museum associations). A considerable number of opportunities were identified: added value as a form of complement and diversification of the region tourism supply, contribution to region differentiation which cannot be separated from the contemporary cultural production, opportunity for tourism to understand the features of the region's identity, opportunity for some third sector organisations to become more professionally orientated, and opportunity to qualify their production and to share their creative processes with audiences from different backgrounds. The main barriers identified were mutual mistrust and different work methods.

Key Informants with Experience in the Tourism Third Sector Interface

The respondents regarded the interface between the third sector and tourism as one that should be implemented through local cultural and tourism departments, and the regional tourism board. Based on their experience in the field they believe the third sector plays a key role in tourism hospitality, being the face of the region's cultural and artistic production. Due to their link to the community, they are able to provide experiences that can only take place within that geographical location and which are difficult for the tourism private sector to provide. Issues such as: contribution to regional differentiation, increasing visitor's awareness of local cultural attributes, the opportunity to share know-how within tourism events through volunteer structures, the opportunity to coordinate the development of an annual calendar that considers events within the cultural and artistic context of the region, and the opportunity for the development of a new generation of third sector organisations that are more professionally orientated and understand tourism potential, were also taken as main opportunities.

These informants recognised a considerable number of barriers to the collaboration process, some due to the third sector nature and others related to the tourism sector characteristics: the fragmented nature and lack of cooperation within the third sector, mainly in the arts area, the amateurism of some associations, which leads to a lack of trust from the tourism sector, non-regular nature of activities due to financial uncertainty, which contributes to incompatible planning with the tourism sector activities, a lack of skills in areas such as management and marketing, which could help the third sector become more financially independent, and the third sector's limited knowledge of the tourism system. The respondents also identified the following barriers related to the tourism sector: short-term vision in the tourism private sector which focuses on day-to-day needs, the non-existence of a collaborative spirit among tourism companies beyond their close boundaries, culture and arts perceived as a public sector responsibility at the local level, a lack of dialogue and cooperation, and non-existence of administrative structures that should enable joint work.

Discussion and Conclusions

According to these research findings, third sector organisations play an important role in areas such as the presentation and promotion of endogenous resources, and know-how in specific fields such as history, traditions and artistic creation; consequently, they have the potential to develop and present new and differentiated proposals that can be seen as an added value to the tourist experience. Depending on the nature of each organisation's mission and key operation areas (local development, research and consulting, events, performing arts), they clearly want to have a more active role in tourism, providing access to

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expertise, giving assistance, and playing a complementary role to the state and private sectors in specific areas. There was an overall consensus in relation to the third sector potential contribution to tourism qualification and differentiation. The vulnerabilities of the third sector referred to in the literature are also reflected in these findings, namely in the main barriers identified by the tourism sector (amateurism, lack of accountability), in what concerns the performing arts in particular. A possible way to deal with these barriers could be to mobilise the public sector, which could provide assistance to those organisations that need to improve their management and marketing skills. Building networks and partnerships within the third sector are the other areas that need improvement. Reinforcing their strength and allowing these organisations to speak with "one voice" would also prevent fragmentation and duplication of effort, and help develop better coordination (reinforcement of the "bonding" social capital dimension). At the global level, the trend will be towards less public funding and government support. This is acknowledged by the third sector that recognises the urgent need to diversify their funding sources, which implies an effort of creativity and innovation. This perspective is related to the qualitative model of clusters developed by Interarts (1999). In the near future we will possibly see the development of different clusters of organisations with different approaches to this major challenge. The major opportunity was identified predominantly by key informants experienced in this interface and by the third sector, namely their ability to provide experiences that can only take place in the local setting, in areas where the private sector has a lack of know-how or interest, which could represent an opportunity for a new generation of organisations to emerge that are more professionally orientated. This means that through the ongoing search for innovative approaches that go beyond the mainstream borders of the public and private sectors, these organisations could make themselves appealing to tourism.

According to the results of the Algarve case study, the third sector does not yet seem to have a formally recognised role in tourism. It seems clear that their skills are needed in the tourism planning and development process; however, the non-existence of administrative structures that enable joint work is an important barrier to overcome. The diversity of third sector organisations interviewed allowed us to conclude that the ones who seem to have potential to develop closer relations with the tourism sector are the local development agencies working not only in the cultural and arts area, but also those who focus on broader goals (social and economic development). The research findings demonstrate that its leaders are highly educated and come from diverse areas, such as anthropology, engineering, management and sociology and are engaged since the beginning of the association's constitution.

The creation of inter-sector structures seems crucial in order to co-ordinate efforts, a role that, according to the respondents, could be played by the regional tourism organisation and the local authorities. At this level it is important to mention that recent Portuguese legislation allows for the participation of organisations outside the tourism sector in the regional tourism board committee. However, the integration of new members depends on the committeès previous approval, and in case of acceptance, these new members do not have the right to vote.

Third sector organisations act as a bridge between the sector and the wider community. One of the main problems to be tackled is the stagnation in volunteering in these associations. Perhaps it is time to have a more pro-active attitude with regard to this dimension. Since we are speaking about culture, arts and tourism, we are in fact identifying several areas that could benefit from the exchange of experiences (contributing to the reinforcement of the "bridging" of the social capital dimension). The participation of the third sector in everyday activities and challenges could also function as an educational tool for teaching responsibility towards life and, ultimately, towards the future. It should be

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a "laboratory" for young people to improve their skills and knowledge. Universities have a role to play here as a partner in civil society construction, particularly if we consider students who are being prepared to work in the tourism, culture, arts, and management areas. Therefore, we must highlight the opportunity for a wider collaboration process (university, tourism sector, third sector, arts and culture organisations). Britain, Canada and the USA, for example, have a strong tradition of volunteering in these areas that should be acknowledged as examples of "good practices" (Haywood and Stapenhurst, 2001; Benson, 2009). The present study aims to contribute to the refinement of our understanding of the relationship between tourism and the third sector in a changing world by identifying the main opportunities and barriers in this relationship from the viewpoint of the actors who work in the field. We do acknowledge that the third sector mission and intrinsic values are wider than tourism interests; thus, they cannot be seen only as an instrument for tourism, and in some cases there is no opportunity for a synergic relationship between the two sectors.

In the context of this research, the general trend, apart from a few exceptions, is for the third sector and tourism to remain strangers and not partners, working within the same geographical location but in separate ways. It seems the implementation of a joint policy among the actors in these sectors has a long way to go. The future challenges are centred on issues linked to financial resources, on the need to clarify the third sector's role regarding tourism development, and on how to communicate the value of their work. Third sector organisations do not directly depend on tourism and appear to be on the margin, yet they are essential actors in tourism development. The limitations of this study are intrinsically related to the specific features of the regional context. It would be interesting to develop further research on the roles, opportunities, and barriers in the tourism–third sector interface in other regional and national contexts in order to understand whether new dimensions emerge in specific contexts. In addition, as an exploratory research that does not include a representative sample, our results should be analysed with caution. The findings of this exploratory study could have both theoretical and empirical implications for the tourism sector and for the third sector. They should be regarded as a contribution in order to allow the third sector leaders and those responsible for tourism planning to reflect on community capacity building and tourism development. Questions such as whether several generations of third sector organisations present significant differences, and whether such differences have an impact on their management practices, their adjustment to the challenges faced, and their relationship with the tourism sector need to be answered.

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Notes

1 According to the CIRIEC (2007, p. 29) "Although the term 'third sector' has been used in the English-speaking world to describe the private non-profit sector that is largely composed of associations and foundations, 'third sector' is also used in Continental Europe and in other parts of the world as a synonym for the social economy."

2 This study is part of a PhD research project on tourism and the third sector.

3 The first two themes were developed during the first stage of the investigation, and a considerable part of the results have been presented at the inaugural conference of the Educational Travel Foundation (ETF) during the first International Conference on the theme Tourism and the Third Sector: Releasing the Potential, Neuchâtel Switzerland, 18 September 2009.

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