


Chapter 6

An Application of the “Amplifying Casual Looping” Model to Manor House Management

José Luís Braga

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7668-5200>

Polytechnic Institute of Tomar, Portugal

Marta Dionísio

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4654-3399>

Polytechnic Institute of Tomar, Portugal

ABSTRACT

This chapter attempts to explain the main strategies adopted by the hosts of manor houses when they engage in lodging activities. The present research draws on 53 non-structured interviews made to owners/hosts of housing tourism facilities (HT). The methodological approach used is classic grounded theory (CGT). CGT encompasses a set of strict research procedures leading to concepts which explain what is going on in the HT substantive area. Within this context, the authors reveal a theoretical code, designated as ‘amplifying casual looping’, which the authors believe has the merit of effectively conceptualizing the substantive codes generated by us. This causal model broadens in both directions: positive (virtuous circle) and negative (vicious circle).

INTRODUCTION

Housing tourism (HT), as a type of accommodation, was implemented as a pilot project in 1978, and put into practice in four territories: Ponte de Lima, Vouzela, Castelo de Vide and Vila Viçosa (Pereiro, 2018). Its creation was aimed at fighting regional asymmetries in the national territory and offering

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differentiated hotel capacity in areas where it was scarce. In 1982, through Order No. 102/82, the HT program started (Silva, 2009).

In compliance with the Portuguese legislation currently in force (Decree-Law no. 80/2017, 30th June), ‘housing tourism enterprises are establishments of a family nature installed in old private properties that, due to their architectural, historical or artistic value, are representative of a particular epoch, namely palaces and manors, which can be located in rural or urban spaces’ (CENTER, 2020a).

In fact, HT has been contributing to restore countless houses of erudite heritage, gaining recognition and consideration by the populations of the places in which it operates, also contributing to the ‘return to the origins’ of countless families once installed in urban areas and for the emergence of new types of tourism in rural areas (Braga, 2016). In addition, together with the rural tourism (RT), HT contributed, definitely, to the diversification of the tourist offer; the reduction of seasonality; cooperation between local actors; the boost of tourism animation projects and the provision of services that support tourism activities, which led to an awareness of entities and institutions regarding their social, economic and environmental impacts (Silva, 2010).

HT is performed in manor houses – some of them dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries – which requires a big effort from the owners to preserve their original character. Hence, this chapter intends to explain the main strategies used by owners to solve the problems they face in this activity. Our research shows that when owners put a lot of effort in being competent hosts, they are more able to preserve their house. By contrast, if they do not engage to the full extent with HT, they will struggle to keep the house repaired.

According to CGT principles, the research process here deployed enables us to understand what is happening in HT lodging facilities. This chapter highlights a theoretical code (an ‘amplified casual looping’ model) that emerged during the analysis stage of our doctoral dissertation (Braga, 2016) and which helps to understand the main concern of the hosts: the transmission of the property (the manor house) to the next generation in the best possible condition.

This chapter will make a brief foray into the history of HT in Portugal, from its origins to the present. Then, it will be analysed the specificities of this type of tourism; the methodology used for the collection and analysis of empirical data; the results achieved and, by way of conclusion, the discussion, and other final considerations.

BACKGROUND

The Beginnings

Some of the manor houses that constitute the HT offer have remote origins. Several of them belong to families whose lineage descends from the first nobility of the kingdom of Portugal. This fact explains its concentration in the North of Portugal and, mainly, in Ponte de Lima (Stoop, & Sotto Mayor, 2015). Since their construction - which often dates to the 17th and 18th centuries - these houses have had numerous functions, the last of which has been welcoming tourists since the 1980s (Silva, 2012).

HT, in its origins, is indelibly associated with a desire to return to the countryside, which dates to the European Romantic Movement of the dawn of nineteenth century (Jepson & Sharpley, 2018). It demonstrates the desire of some layers of the population to retrieve their rural origins or constitutes an

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