

“Cante Alentejano” and Tourism in Alentejo

BERNADETE DIAS SEQUEIRA¹³⁸

PAULO MARIZ LOURENÇO¹³⁹

MANUELA GUERREIRO¹⁴⁰

JÚLIO MENDES^{141 142}

Abstract:

The bid to recognise *Cante Alentejano* as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was approved unanimously on 27, November 2014, exactly three years after *Fado* became part of the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

This candidacy was promoted by Tourism of Alentejo, E.R.T, in partnership with the municipality of Serpa and including the participation of the community, musical groups and local and regional public bodies. The purpose of the bid was the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage and it was built upon, among others, the collection and analysis of documents about the *Cante Alentejano*, the collection and analysis of its musicography, and the characterization of groups and singers of *Cante*.

This recognition of *Cante Alentejano* as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity poses challenges to stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the management process.

In this context, and given the strategic importance of tourism for the development and competitiveness of Alentejo, it is important to promote the debate about the UNESCO recognition of *Cante*, in order to draw the most appropriate strategies for its preservation and appreciation, while enhancing the multiplier effects on the tourism development of the region

¹³⁸ University of Algarve (Portugal), Faculty of Economics, CIEO - Research Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics, bsequei@ualg.pt

¹³⁹ DGLAB - District Archive of Faro (Portugal), paulomariz@gmail.com

¹⁴⁰ University of Algarve (Portugal), Faculty of Economics, CIEO - Research Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics, mmguerre@ualg.pt

¹⁴¹ University of Algarve (Portugal), Faculty of Economics, CIEO - Research Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics, jmendes@ualg.pt

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Using a set of in-depth interviews conducted with key informants, we aim to analyse and discuss the potential of *Cante Alentejano*, recognised as Intangible Heritage of Humanity, for the experiential tourism development in the tourism destination Alentejo.

Keywords: Cante Alentejano; UNESCO Intangible Heritage; Cultural Tourism; Alentejo

Resumo:

A candidatura do Cante Alentejano a Património Cultural Imaterial da Humanidade foi aprovada por unanimidade a 27 de Novembro de 2014, exatamente três anos depois da inscrição do Fado na lista de Património Cultural Imaterial da Humanidade da UNESCO.

Esta candidatura foi promovida pelo Turismo do Alentejo, E.R.T, em parceria com a Câmara Municipal de Serpa e contou com o envolvimento da comunidade, de grupos musicais e de entidades públicas locais e regionais. O objetivo desta candidatura é a salvaguarda do património cultural imaterial e a mesma foi consubstanciada, entre outras, na recolha e análise documental sobre o Cante Alentejano, na recolha e análise da musicografia do Cante Alentejano e na caracterização do Cante Alentejano, dos grupos de Cante e dos cantadores.

Este reconhecimento do Cante Alentejano como património imaterial da humanidade vem colocar um conjunto de desafios aos diversos stakeholders direta e indiretamente envolvidos na gestão do processo.

Neste contexto, e devido à importância que o turismo assume como setor estrategicamente importante para a competitividade e desenvolvimento do Alentejo, torna-se necessário promover uma reflexão sobre esta distinção de modo a desenhar as estratégias mais adequadas à sua preservação e valorização ao mesmo tempo que são potenciados os efeitos multiplicadores no desenvolvimento turístico da região.

Através da condução de entrevistas em profundidade a um conjunto de personalidades-chave, pretende-se analisar e discutir as potencialidades do Cante Alentejano, distinguido como Património Imaterial da Humanidade, para o desenvolvimento do turismo experiencial no destino turístico Alentejo.

Palavras-chave: Cante Alentejano; Património Cultural Intangível; Património Imaterial da Humanidade; Alentejo

Resumen:

En el 27 de noviembre de 2014, se aprobó la candidatura del Cante Alentejano como patrimonio cultural inmaterial por unanimidad; exactamente tres años después de la inscripción del fado en la lista del patrimonio cultural inmaterial de la UNESCO.

Esta candidatura fue promovida por la Agencia de Turismo de Alentejo, E.R.T, en colaboración con el Ayuntamiento de Serpa e incluyó la participación de la comunidad, grupos musicales y las autoridades locales y regionales.

El objetivo de esta candidatura es la salvaguardia del patrimonio cultural inmaterial y se ha plasmado en su contenido, entre otras, la recogida y el análisis de documentos sobre el Cante Alentejano, en la recogida y análisis de musicografía del Cante Alentejano y la caracterización del Cante Alentejano de los grupos Cante y de sus cantantes.

Este reconocimiento del Cante Alentejano como patrimonio inmaterial de la humanidad ha puesto una serie de retos a los diferentes actores involucrados directa e indirectamente en la gestión del proceso.

En este contexto y teniendo en cuenta el importante papel que desempeña el turismo -como dinamizador de un sector de importancia estratégica para la competitividad y el desarrollo de la región del Alentejo-, es necesario promover la reflexión sobre esta distinción con el fin de diseñar las estrategias más adecuadas para su conservación y mejora mientras que los efectos multiplicadores se potencian en el desarrollo turístico de la región.

Con la realización de entrevistas en profundidad a una serie de personalidades clave, se pretende analizar y discutir el potencial del Cante Alentejano, -distinguido como Patrimonio Inmaterial de la Humanidad-, para el desarrollo del turismo experiencial en el destino turístico Alentejo.

Palabras Clave: Cante Alentejano; Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial; Patrimonio Inmaterial de la Humanidade; Alentejo

1. Introduction

Cante Alentejano (Alentejo Song) is a melodic structure characteristic of Alentejo, southern Portugal; a way of singing without instrumental accompaniment; a poetry, a chant that is based solely on the voices of its performers (Cabeça and Santos, 2010). This cultural expression was recently classified as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This recognition give

rise to other dynamics around *Cante Alentejano*, either as an object of study or tourist attraction, or even as an artistic expression that must be protected, in order to maintain the authenticity.

Generally speaking, research around this artistic expression of identity focuses, above all, on the perspective of *Cante* while musical structure or from the perspective of sciences such as Anthropology, History or Sociology. The study of the relation between *Cante* and tourism is a recent field of research that began with the recognition of *Cante* as Intangible Heritage by UNESCO. Its relations with tourism, impacts, authenticity and attractiveness are aspects that arise after the approval of this bid and, simultaneously, a concern and a challenge to the entities that manage the areas of culture, heritage and tourism in the region.

In this study, we aim to understand the perceived impacts of the distinction of *Cante Alentejano* as Intangible Heritage of Humanity in the enhancement of the tourism region of Alentejo. Underlying the achievement of this general objective of research are the following specific objectives: 1) Investigate to what extent the recognition of *Cante Alentejano* as UNESCO Intangible Heritage led to a transformation of *Cante Alentejano*; 2) Analyse to what extent the recognition of *Cante Alentejano* as UNESCO Intangible Heritage has led to an expansion of the manifestation of *Cante Alentejano*; 3) Analyse to what extent UNESCO brand promoted new public interest in *Cante Alentejano*; 4) Understand the importance of the promotion of *Cante Alentejano* as tourist attraction; 5) Assess to what extent *Cante Alentejano* is perceived as an asset for the development of tourism in Alentejo.

We tried to understand these dimensions through the perceptions of the actors involved in the candidacy of *Cante Alentejano* to UNESCO Intangible Heritage and that were, at the time, key entities linked to *Cante Alentejano*. Thus, it was assumed that the impact in a region of the recognition of a cultural expression as UNESCO Intangible Heritage is a complex phenomenon and it can only be understood in the light of the perspective of the social actors involved.

Therefore, in this research, we opted for an exploratory qualitative study. We tried to pave the way for new approaches and raise questions for future research.

One of the main objectives of the qualitative approach is the reconstitution and "understanding" of the actors' subjective meaning regarding their actions. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 2) deepened this question by saying: "qualitative research study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". In this sense, the possible realities are constructed socially and mentally by the people who experience the events, and result from the individual construction of these

experiences. We sought to produce an "objective" knowledge about the subjective meaning that the actors give to the world around them.

This is an exploratory study of a qualitative nature based on a methodological strategy that includes the semi-structured interview. The main results point to the emergence of a set of common ideas around which it will be feasible to develop the guidelines of the region tourism strategy with regard to the use of *Cante Alentejano* as a tourism product.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Cante Alentejano* as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, commitments and challenges

In the bid enacting terms, *Cante* is presented as an "intangible cultural expression, a performing art and a tradition, an oral expression that includes language as a vehicle of heritage" (Lima, 2015: 16). *Cante* is described as an expression of traditional polyphonic singing without instrumental accompaniment. Its temporal dimension reveals a continuous documented presence that goes back to more than a hundred years. Throughout this period, the expression soaks in and conveys the social changes of society and consolidates as a cultural and identity symbol.

Cante is considered a cultural phenomenon of Alentejo, but it surpasses its geographical barriers, gaining a global dimension with its people's diaspora. The support from various choral groups and their geographical dispersion clearly illustrate the spread of *Cante*, even beyond Portuguese territory.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), signed in Paris on 17, October 2003, laid the foundations for the creation of a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and, since then, the Organization promotes the safeguarding and classification of Intangible Heritage of Humanity. In fact, over the course of 13 years, bids from different countries have been submitted to UNESCO, with a multiplicity of socio-cultural expressions of identity that have enriched the intangible heritage list from 2003 to the present day. In this list, Portugal submitted the Mediterranean diet, a joint bid of various countries, *Fado*, *Cante* and, very recently, the Art *Chocalheira* (cowbells). This momentum reveals the great interest that the country has shown in promoting the recognition and safeguarding of its intangible heritage.

According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2012: 27) the prerequisites for the recognition of cultural forms to be included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO include:

- 1 - The element constitutes Intangible Cultural Heritage, as defined in the Article 2 of the Convention (UNESCO, 2003).
- 2 - The inscription of the element will contribute to the visibility and awareness of the importance of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the promotion of dialogue, thus reflecting the world's cultural diversity and giving testimony of human creativity.
- 3 - Safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element.
- 4 - The element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent.
- 5 - The element is included in an inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage present in the territory of the submitting State party, according to the Articles 11 and 12 of the Convention (UNESCO, 2012: 27 and 28).

The candidacy of *Cante* to Intangible Heritage of Humanity, resulted from a long process, starting in 2011, based on research, analysis and dialogue between public and private entities, local groups and civil society. At that time, the town of Serpa presented its candidacy to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, in which *Cante* assumed a major role.

The promotion entities were *Confraria do Cante Alentejano*, *Casa do Alentejo* and the Association MODA. The municipality of Serpa and the Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo (E.R.T.) sponsored the initiative. The Committee of Honor, chaired by the (then) President of the Portuguese Republic, included members of the Government, elements of the Catholic Church, business representatives and other Portuguese cultural and social institutions. The management of the bid has gone through a period of upheaval, when Rui Vieira Nery, President of the Scientific Committee, criticised the strategy outlined and argued for a greater involvement of *Cante* practitioners in the submission process (Diário do Alentejo, 2012). After a period of some uncertainty, the team responsible for the process was restructured and the *Casa do Cante de Serpa* has come to assume a pivotal role in the management process that culminated with the submission, in Paris, on 30 March 2013, along with other 46 bids.

The submission of *Cante* had the active involvement of communities, choral groups and individuals in the safeguarding of their own intangible cultural heritage that included, among

others, the collection and analysis of documents and musicography related to *Cante Alentejano*, and the characterization of *Cante*, the choral groups, and the individual singers. Meanwhile, it was developed a safeguarding plan of this heritage since this is one of the main factors to be evaluated by UNESCO, because "the States must demonstrate the creation of safeguard measures aimed at the protection and promotion of the element" (Lima, 2015: 22).

The safeguard measures indicated in the submission of *Cante* were based in four courses of action: the creation of institutional networks, the recognition of *Cante* as Intangible Cultural Heritage, its transmission and sustainability, and the promotion of information and communication channels. The framework of initiatives and actions presented a chronological continuity and pointed to actions already undertaken or underway for 2015 and 2016.

Within the creation of institutional networks, the proposal provided for the promotion of shows, debates, and exhibitions, the development of an educational programme and the creation of a digital archive of open access.

Regarding the recognition of *Cante* as Intangible Cultural Heritage, the submission has committed to develop actions that promote the classification and registration of *Cante Alentejano* as municipal interest, to provide to the bearers of the tradition of *Cante* the conditions for documentation and transmission of their knowledge, to elaborate ethical guidelines for the actors and agents of *Cante* regarding the protection of the intellectual property.

Within the scope of transmission and sustainability, the bid committed to promote *Cante* among young people. For that, it intended to carry on a strategy of joint promotion involving all actors and institutions linked to *Cante*. This effort would entail debates around *Cante* and the promotion of cross-cutting events encompassing all *Cante* groups, their performance in public spaces of various nature and participation in intercultural events; support and encourage formal and informal learning of *Cante*.

Regarding communication and information, a crucial aspect of the safeguard plan, the bid committed with the creation of communication channels and networks between bearers of *Cante* and the public, using, for this purpose, traditional and digital media, such as the publication of monographs, critical editions and recordings, creating a record label for *Cante* and a music festival circuit. In order to bring closer bearers, researchers and other publics, the candidacy provided for the creation of a digital platform that gathered and allowed the sharing of knowledge about *Cante*, the creation of a virtual museum, a traveling exhibition about *Cante*, the dissemination of information through QR-code and the promotion of *Cante* in social media.

The bid of *Cante Alentejano* to World Heritage was considered exemplary and approved unanimously on 27 November, 2014. As of this date, the *Cante* is inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The UNESCO recognition of the tangible or intangible cultural heritage of humanity means a "collective ownership" of that heritage, a kind of property of all and not of a particular country or region. Despite this appropriation, it should be noted that this cultural expression and identity of the people from Alentejo will always have its epicentre in this region, that must assume a more prominent role in terms of management for its safeguarding, preservation, and dissemination. According to Rui Nery, the inscription on the list of UNESCO brings "a huge international visibility, but also an enormous responsibility, both for the Government and for local authorities in the region, in terms of the preservation and dissemination of our cultural memory" (Diário do Alentejo, 2014).

Since then, *Cante Alentejano* gained a new dimension and visibility, "in the last 12 months, a lot has changed. *Cante* packed houses, became a strong identity, created tastes and projects, traveled, became much more mixed with a territory" (Lima, 2015: 8). The country began to listen to *Cante* and to learn a little about its reality and dimension. "The recognition of UNESCO breathe new life to *Cante*, with many new projects appearing and the renewal of the existing groups. The world began to look at us (...)" (Pires, 2015: 9). This new visibility also increased the requests for choral groups' participation in national and international events.

The actions listed in the *Cante* Safeguard Plan are currently the major concern of the different actors of *Cante Alentejano* - bearers, researchers, organizations or the community in general. It is the task of everyone involved to meet that commitment.

Within the framework of the institutional network, the municipality of Beja has recently launched its safeguard plan of *Cante Alentejano*, which is part of the regional effort of the trans-municipality safeguard plan transposed from the candidacy regulations (Pporto.pt, 2016). Generally speaking, the municipalities have promoted shows, debates, exhibitions and other initiatives focused on *Cante*. In addition, several activities have been carried out with the schools in the region, in particular the teaching of *Cante*, and various initiatives aiming to promote the creation of younger or mixed groups, in order to ensure genuine continuity of this tradition for future generations. Examples of this effort are the municipalities of Serpa and Vidigueira that have been promoting the teaching of *Cante* in primary schools (CIMBAL, 2016; Rede Portuguesa de Municípios Saudáveis – Portuguese Network of Healthy Municipalities, 2016).

The municipality of Serpa, which was at the origin of the creation of the *Casa do Cante* (House of *Cante*), among other initiatives, participates in a partnership with the municipality of Portel and the company of *Sistemas de Futuro* for the development of the open access digital archive of *Cante*, the *Arquivo de Cultura Popular* (Popular Culture Archive). Meanwhile, some publications on *Cante Alentejano* were released adding to the visibility and momentum on social media, namely through the *Casa do Cante*, present on Facebook and Instagram.

The *Casa do Cante*, in Serpa, was created in June of 2012, aiming the protection and safeguarding of this Intangible Heritage of Humanity. It is, together with the competent authorities, one of the responsible for the actions of compliance with the Safeguard Plan for *Cante Alentejano*. Currently, the *Casa do Cante* is developing the Museum of *Cante* (Pires, 2015).

2.2 Tourism and culture on the way to the development of regions

According to Richards (2005), the definition of cultural tourism is complex, because it relates to two equally complex and no consensual concepts – tourism and culture. Also, the definition provided within the Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies, culture is understood as "the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group, which includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the human being's fundamental rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs." (UNESCO, 1982: 1). This broad definition goes beyond art and heritage and encompasses an intertwined web of aspects, which, as a whole, defines a particular society in cultural terms.

Cultural Tourism is a recent concept, though, in Europe, tourism and culture have always been closely linked (Richards, 1996: 5) and they are both permanently associated with the relevant historical-cultural assets that characterize this region of the globe since the most remote times, attracting the attention of those with a spirit of curiosity and adventure (Henriques *et al.*, 2014: 23).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 1985) presents two definitions of cultural tourism. A more narrow definition associates cultural tourism to the movement of people associated essentially to cultural motivations, such as learning, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to attend festivals and other events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art and pilgrimages. Another broader definition assumes, in the perspective of the European Centre for Traditional and Regional Cultures (ECTARC, 1989), that tourism should be understood as cultural whenever the selection of holiday destinations is, firstly, related to cultural motivations and includes activities that, in general, can be considered

high culture, associated with "all movements of persons to satisfy the human need for diversity, tending to raise the cultural level of the individual and giving rise to new knowledge and encounters". For the European Union (2010), culture refers to a set of attitudes, beliefs, customs, values and practices that are often shared by a group; or as a tool to qualify a sector of activity: the cultural sector. It should, therefore, be understood in the context of the relation between high culture and every day culture (or popular culture) and increasingly focused on the intangible. The UNESCO (2003), on its definition of cultural products, points out that these are not necessarily tangible. The importance of the intangible cultural heritage is highlighted, including oral traditions and expressions, knowledge and social practices as well as a set of practices concerning Nature.

Accordingly with UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) there are five domains in which intangible heritage is visible: (1) Oral traditions and expressions, (2) Performing arts, (3) Social practices, rituals and festive events (4) Knowledge and practices concerning Nature and the Universe, (5) Traditional craftsmanship. In each of these domains, the UNESCO distinguishes those which, due to their historical, scientific or aesthetic qualities have universal value.

The association between tourism and culture derives, on the one hand, from the recognition of the contribution of culture to the economy, and, on the other hand, from the structural changes in society which acknowledges culture as a commodity (UNESCO, 2010).

The impact of having a cultural resource at the World Heritage List (WHL) is considered to be of great interest both by professionals and politicians. The attraction of tourists and the expected impacts on economic development of regions is getting the attention of professionals from all over the world (Cuccia, Guccio and Rizzo, 2016).

There is, among academics and professionals, a growing recognition of the importance and relevance in exploring the unique features of the destinations, in particular with regard to their cultural and historical heritage, as a source of product development able to enhance the unique and differentiating tourism experiences (Agarwal and Brunt, 2006; Costa, 2004; Smith, 2004; Valle *et al.*, 2011). In this context, cultural products contribute actively to add value to tourism destinations becoming strategically important within the tourism development plans of the regions (Myerscough, 1988; Richards and Bonink, 1995).

Specially in the last two decades, tourism has become one of the driving forces of the world economy accounting for 9.3 percent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (total contribution – Travel and Tourism economy) and for about 8.7 percent of total employment, in 2012 (WTTC,

2013). In Europe, in the same year, tourism represented 8.4 percent of GDP and 9.1 percent of employment (WTTC, 2013a). Data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2009) show that cultural trips rose from 190 million in 1995 to 359 million in 2007, equivalent to a growth from 37 percent (1995) to 49 percent (2007). A study of the United States Cultural and Heritage Tourism Marketing Council (2009) concluded that 78 percent of all leisure travelers are undertaken by cultural/heritage tourists. Various authors (Richards and Raymond, 2000; Valle, Guerreiro, Mendes and Silva, 2011) recognise that certain segments of tourists search, in their holidays, for tourism experiences, which contribute to their personal enrichment.

From a political and business perspective, Cultural Tourism is of strategic interest whether for its promising growth, with repercussions in terms of employability, as for the strengthening of identity and cultural diversity of the regions. Richards (2007) and Richards and Palmer (2010) point out as major trends within Cultural Tourism the increasing number of individuals who seek to live a "cultural holiday"; the increase in the level of education and income of the contemporary tourist; tendency for short-term holidays; greater use of the internet in the purchase-decision process, particularly for information and booking; greater demand for festivals and cultural events (in a context of increased supply); greater interest in having unique and 'creative' experiences.

The relevance of Cultural Tourism is also associated with its impact in reducing seasonality, insofar as it has an interesting potential to amplify positive effects of tourism development at the regional level (European Commission, 1995 in Bonet, 2003; Cuccia and Rizzo, 2011; Figini and Vici, 2012). This argument posits that regions far from the main tourist routes or without the usual resources to attract tourists have the potential to develop economically and attract tourists through the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage (European Commission, 1995 in Bonet, 2003).

In an analysis on cultural and artistic entities in Portugal, Gomes, Lourenço and Martinho (2006) conclude that, in general, the regions are turning to Cultural Tourism due to its recognised potential for local development. In general terms, new areas of culture are emerging, in particular in the field of popular culture and intangible heritage (European Commission, 2010). According to the same document "omnivorous" patterns of cultural consumption are developing, i.e., people consume every form of culture combining popular and high culture. Munsters (2004) draws attention to the fact that the culture is "fragile for massive consumption", stressing that the attractiveness of cultural tourism product is determined by the quality of the

cultural offer. There is a sustainability factor that must be balanced with the increasing demands of tourists (Munsters, 2004).

Some studies posit that, if the material and symbolic values that have contributed for the World Heritage status are to be maintained and remain accessible to present and future generations, thus the sustainable management of tourism activities must be prioritized (Landorf, 2009). In addition, the historical and cultural environment is a non-renewable resource (Phillips, 2015) and some of the impacts of tourism are irreversible and intangible.

3. Research methodology

In this section, we present the setting of the research, the perspective that has guided the study, the research method, the techniques of data collection and sampling, as well as the process of field work and data analysis.

3.1 Setting

The Alentejo region extends from the Tagus River, in the North, to the first rocky outcrops of the mountains of the Algarve, in the South, bordering Spain to the East and the Atlantic Ocean and the region of Lisbon to the West. The territory "presents internal coherence from the economic and social perspective, and also in its landscape, its culture and its traditions, strong features that often hide the diversities that effectively exist" (Almeida, 2002: 8). According to the European Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS), it is the largest NUTS II region in the country (DR, 1989: 590), with an area of 31,605 km² (Região do Alentejo em números, 2014: 4) which corresponds to about a third of the national territory (Almeida, 2002: 8). The region has 757,302 inhabitants, about 7.2 percent of the country's total population (Censos 2011 Resultados Definitivos - Região Alentejo, 2012: 18) and a population density of about 24 people per km², lower than the average density of the country - 114.5 people per km². Similarly to the country, the age structure of the region shows an increasing share of older persons, with an ageing index of 162.69, higher than the national index (102.23) (INE, 2012).

The Alentejo has a rich natural and cultural heritage. The region is characterized by dispersed settlement, low population density and the landscape features large landed estates. In addition to the agricultural landscape, the region also has "a coast line of 263 km, one of the best preserved in Europe ..." (CCDR Alentejo, 2012: 12).

From an economic perspective, the tertiary employment rate in Alentejo is lower than the European and the country's average rate. The economic structure is characterized by a "productive specialization profile", in which "farming, forestry and fishing" stand out, "being a poorly diversified economy, largely dependent on the public sector" (Augusto Mateus e Associados; CIRIUS; Geoldeia; CEPREDE, 2005: 93).

The tourism sector in Portugal has been consolidating its growth in recent years and the Alentejo has followed this trend. The large region of Alentejo has a diversified tourism offer, presenting itself as "a certified and internationally recognised destination for its identity and unique experiences offered" (Turismo do Alentejo, 2013: 3). In this region, the tourism offer is diversified and includes products like eco-tourism, cultural tourism, wine tourism, handicrafts and cuisine, along with an extensive coastline.

In the national context, the accommodation capacity (bed places) of Alentejo, in 2013, represented 5.1 percent of the total, of which 40 percent is on the coast (Fazenda, 2015). In terms of regional distribution of overnight stays in hotels, resorts, apartments and others, between January and August 2016, the region recorded 1,110,100 overnight stays and accounted for 3 percent of the national total (Turismo de Portugal, 2016). The rate of change of tourism demand for overnight stays increased 17.2 percent between 2013 and 2014 (Fazenda, 2015). These figures show a strong increase in the tourism demand in the region. In this period, most of the guests in the region were domestic tourists. With regard to the external market, the major source countries were Spain, France, Brazil, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The Regional Tourism Promotion Agency - Tourism of Alentejo - in its strategic document for tourism 2014-2020, sets the goal of contributing to the creation of a regional strategy to boost tourism in all sub-regions in an integrated manner. This document sets quantitative objectives of increasing the supply of bed-spaces by 27 percent and the overnight stays in the region by 63 percent until 2020 (Turismo do Alentejo, 2013).

3.2. Design of data collection instrument

This study adopts two main techniques of data collection, namely, the documentary research and in-depth (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and semi-structured (Bryman, 2008) interviews.

The documentary research consisted mainly of secondary sources, in particular the *Cante Alentejano* project proposal submitted to UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, newspaper articles and the websites of the entities linked to *Cante*

Alentejano. The main purpose of this technique was to characterize the contexts of the bid of *Cante* to UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage and review the literature in the field of tourism and culture, as well as to complement the information obtained through the semi-structured interviews.

The primary research was carried out through in-depth interviews, whose main advantage is the collection of abundant and detailed information about a specific phenomenon (Stake, 1995). This instrument allows to ask a set of guiding questions, relatively open, without a fixed sequence. The semi-structured interviews meet the two requirements: on the one hand, they allow the respondents to structure their thinking about the object under analysis, although, on the other hand, the very definition of the object of study restricts the respondent's field of interests and requires the deepening of aspects that they could not clarify. This instrument allows, therefore, to deepen a particular topic or verify the evolution of a particular domain (Ghiglione and Matalon, 1997).

According to Guerra (2006: 53), the most important issue in the construction of the interview guide consists of the "clarification of the goals and the dimensions of analysis that the interview contains". So, as a first step, the guide was built according to specific goals which resulted from the topic under study, as it is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Dimensions of the semi-structured interview

Source: Authors

3.3. Sampling

The interviews were essentially addressed to actors who were involved in the submission of *Cante Alentejano* to UNESCO Intangible Heritage and represented, at the time, key entities related to the *Cante Alentejano*. Therefore, it was used purposive sampling consisting of five elements, of which three have been interviewed.

3.4. Data Collection

Respondents were firstly contacted by telephone and the objectives of the study were presented highlighting the importance of the interviewee in the provision of information and ensuring confidentiality. After that, an email was sent providing a link to access the interview guide.

3.5. Data Analysis

Although other sources of information were used, research data were collected primarily from the semi-structured interviews. The answers given by respondents were analysed by content analysis in order to address the objectives of this study.

Content analysis is basically a technique to interpret textual data through a systematic classification process, composed, normally, of the following steps: clarification, codification and identification of themes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In this way, the content analysis focused on thematic analysis (Ghiglione and Matalon, 1997) or categorical analysis (Bardin, 1995), in the sense that we sought to identify the central corpus of the interviews, with the identification of categories and subcategories (Guerra, 2006). In this way, the categories are at the core of the analysis, being the discourse dismantled and the pieces grouped in categories (Bardin, 1995). In the initial stage of data processing, we started a project in the software QSR NVivo version 9, to which we imported the texts of the interviews and defined the main categories of analysis that resulted from the specific objectives of the research.

It is common to assign codes to context units¹⁴³ constructed from letters and digits, linking each registration unit¹⁴⁴ to the code assigned to the context unit from which it was withdrawn.

¹⁴³ It is frequent in the analysis of transcribed text of several interviews consider each of the interviews as a context unit, since it is the whole interview that allows the understanding of the meaning of each unit of record and that we intend to codify (Esteves, 2006).

In this study, we decided to identify the context units, specifically each of the interviews, as follows: E1; E2; E3. The documentary analysis was based primarily on in-depth reading, selection and systematization of information.

4. Results

The classification of *Cante Alentejano* while cultural expression listed as Intangible Heritage of Humanity brought with it changes and consequences. One of the most visible consequences is the high visibility of this cultural expression, at national and international levels. Another sign of change could be the way the community redefines its perception of the cultural expression itself. Under this perspective, we question about the appearance of new groups dedicated to this cultural expression.

From the respondents' point of view, we are witnessing the birth of new groups of *Cante*. However, there is no clear agreement on this issue. They have different perspectives because not all share the idea of a massive appearance of new groups, one of the interviewees, for example, emphasized the lack of continuity of these new formations.

In effect, one of the respondents reveals a greater enthusiasm about the outbreak of *Cante* groups.

They've exploded! There is an online platform, the www.paisagem-id.pt, as we find new groups we entered the information there. We're shooting all groups, singers, costumes. At the moment, there are between 150 and 170 groups. (E1)

The other respondents assume the emergence of new groups, some of young people, but consider less remarkable the amount and put the emphasis on continuity.

Long before, there was a higher number, however, its continuity was ephemeral. The document submitted refers to groups with regular activity. (E2)

As far as I have been given notice, although not in great quantity, new groups have emerged, with young people, dedicated to Cante. (E3)

¹⁴⁴ The registration unit is an element of meaning to be coded in a particular category (Esteves, 2006).

All artistic expressions suffer influences, the result of a social context where their current or potential practitioners work as agents of change, whether it is voluntary or involuntary. As above-mentioned, the very sustainability of the practice of *Cante* is based on promotion of its continuity. The text of the submission and the respective safeguard plan point to an opening up to the society as a way to strengthen the relationship with the community, not only with a view to preservation, but also as a vehicle to promote this expression. In this sense, the study of *Cante*, its dissemination, the attraction of new practitioners, new audiences is indicated. These new actors will bring with them new ways of looking, thinking and expressing *Cante*.

When faced with the question of whether the new practitioners have contributed to the transformation of *Cante Alentejano*, opinions are divided on some aspects. One of the respondents reveals a more open, inclusive and informal attitude, revealing a concern with the content and practice of the expression, regardless of the form or presentation and clothing of practitioners. On the other hand, another of the respondents, although recognising the original identity of *Cante*, he believes on the contribution of new generations to the construction of a live cultural expression that mirrors a new connection to current society and that responds actively to any mutations.

We don't judge the way of singing or the costume. The important thing is that people come together and sing! (E1)

The major contribution of the new practitioners lies above all in the statement that Cante, regardless of its "patrimonialization" and/or "turistification", is a cultural practice, with a strong identity value in the region that is still alive, with its own dynamic and capable of adapting to new social practices and new forms of conviviality. (E3)

One of the respondents does not share this view. In fact, this respondent recognises the inevitability of the influences, but reveals some concern with the mutations. To him, the practice of *Cante* should be guided by moderation and by the defense of the artistic expression while legacy passed between generations.

Mutations in current societies interfere with the modus vivendi. Cante is also subject to them, it seems to me, however, that moderation is the prerogative of those who love the legacy of our ancestors!

As above-mentioned, *Cante Alentejano* is a very old cultural expression with an identity matrix uniquely linked to the very history of society and the peoples of Alentejo. This is one of the cornerstones of the bid. Over time, societies change and, thus, ideas, thoughts and even aesthetics come into mutation. *Cante Alentejano* is characterized by traditional ideals but over time new subjects emerge, intertwined with the contemporary social context of their interpreters

When asked if the new compositions of *Cante* are just revisiting the traditional themes or if they are innovative lyrics that illustrate new themes, the respondents say that they are under the impression that the new lyrics have contributed to bring new subjects to *Cante Alentejano*. Although the traditional themes are revisited, the introduction of topics that reflect issues of contemporary society is also observable.

As some respondents refer:

There is, undoubtedly, a revisitation of traditional themes, however, following the evolution of the times and social practices and even the changes in the landscape, new themes are being introduced in the lyrics of the songs, and to name one I'd say the topic of the Alqueva dam. (E3)

The introduction of new subjects is happening. There is a group in Alcáçovas that from the Paulo de Carvalho's song "Children of Huambo", introduces a letter against the «Troika». (E1)

Two respondents highlight that one of the particularities of *Cante Alentejano* is that it is a cultural manifestation constantly evolving, and therefore it turns out to be a representation of their own story.

We feature Cante as a voice that begins, there's a soloist who takes the place and another that enters. From this model Cante Alentejano may include everything. The big difference with the folk movement is that Cante Alentejano constantly reinvents itself and the former is a historical re-creation. (E1)

Everything evolves, and also Cante, "Canticum Novus". (E2)

The text of the submission of *Cante* to Intangible Heritage of Humanity shows a cultural expression with a spread of actors that goes beyond a traditional geographic scope. In fact, in

this document, active groups with a long history are identified predominantly spread through the Alentejo. However, the text still refers to the presence of *Cante* in other regions of Portugal and even the formation of *Cante* groups abroad. In this context, when questioned about whether the recognition of *Cante Alentejano* as UNESCO Intangible Heritage has resulted in a new geographical dimension to this cultural manifestation, two of the respondents highlight, firstly, that the municipalities of Serpa and Cuba correspond to central geographical areas of *Cante Alentejano* and in each of these municipalities it is sung differently.

It is subject to controversy, these are lands (municipalities (Serpa and Cuba)), distinguished in many aspects, even in singing. Cuba is called the "Cathedral of Cante", but Serpa is "the Vatican", who authorizes a church to be a Cathedral or not... (E2)

In Cuba, the singing style is slower and in Serpa is faster. Cuba wants to be the Cathedral of Cante. A few days ago, I was with the singers of Serpa and one of them said that if Cuba is a cathedral, Serpa is the Vatican! (E1)

Despite the implementation surpasses the boundaries of the Alentejo at the time of the preparation of the bid, all the respondents recognise unanimously that the inscription of *Cante Alentejano* as UNESCO Intangible Heritage has allowed the consolidation of its geographic expansion, particularly in the South of the country, including the Algarve, without forgetting the groups of Alentejo communities in the Lisbon region and those abroad.

Cante has a larger geography! Following the bid it happened the strengthening of this geography and the extension to the South. Until then, we went as far as Évora and right now we are also in Castro Verde and recently even in Zurich. (...) The Cante Alentejano goes from Évora to the mountains in the Algarve, and from Serpa to Sines. (E1)

(...) I mean that is not only in Serpa and Cuba that we fight (for Cante Alentejano), it's in all municipalities of Baixo Alentejo, in some from Alto Alentejo and in the region of Lisbon and Faro, Cante is alive! (E2)

Serpa and Cuba are, and maybe they'll continue to be, the vital centres of the formal bid process that has led to the recognition of UNESCO, but the nerve centre of Cante, while manifestation and cultural practice of a community, is

wherever it is practised, in particular the corresponding area of Alentejo where it happens, without forgetting, anyway, the groups of communities from Alentejo in the region of Lisbon and the Portuguese diaspora around the world, in Europe and in other continents (E3).

The 'label' UNESCO offers a unique attractiveness and visibility, specially in terms of interest. This reality is evident with respect to the tangible heritage, but could it be extended to the classified intangible heritage? In this regard, all respondents have the clear perception that the UNESCO brand promoted the interest of new audiences and new fans of this cultural manifestation. The respondents associate attracting new audiences to tourism, that is, when new audiences are mentioned, they are referring to tourists. One of the respondents also mentions to a greater presence of *Cante Alentejano* in the media and in new stages.

Yes, of course. There are two moments: before and after the inscription. (...) The new audiences' adhesion stems from the recognition of UNESCO and also from a previous valuation of Alentejo as a tourism destination. The CCB venue was full. This stems from the UNESCO. (E1)

Certainly, earlier, for the first time, Madrid was enthralled with our Cante (...), before audiences of tourists we did one, two encores, this happened after the UNESCO designation. (E2)

(...) being a mere empirical perception, while circulating around the region, you see quite often, in the early evening, choral groups heading to hotels wherein, presumably, they'll perform. Although it happened before, after the inscription of Cante on the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage, it seems to happen more often now and, in this way, it can reach new audiences. (E3)

In the text of the submission of *Cante Alentejano* to the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage, within the scope of safeguard measures, it was recommended the design and implementation of a joint promotion strategy by the municipalities, groups and other institutions linked to *Cante*. In the respondents' discourse, it is observable that there are initiatives and an effort of entities linked to *Cante* for its promotion. However, one of the interviewees points out that a comprehensive and coordinated strategy will be very difficult to draw up and put into practice without a strong structure.

All agents are working in this direction, just take a look at the initiatives that are carried out on a weekly basis, with sacrifice, but with an unwavering will! (E2)

There is a growing interest of institutions on Cante. For example, the interest of schools on Cante. (E1)

This coordinated and comprehensive strategy will be very difficult to implement. (...) Without a strong structure, it will be too complex to create a common strategy. The safeguard plan outlines the strategic paths. (...) It isn't possible to force a municipality to take this or that way... All we can do is negotiate, so that it does it in this or that way. (E1)

In the words of the interviewees, we can discern, on the one hand, still some uncertainty about the role assigned to *Cante Alentejano* while attractive tourism product. On the other hand, the analysis of the respondents' discourse reveals that these are convinced that a strategy for the joint promotion of *Cante Alentejano* is relevant to attract tourists to the region. *Cante Alentejano* could be a tourism attraction factor among others in the region, although without a relevant role.

We have to figure out first if Cante itself increases the interest for the territory; then, if Cante itself can be a product. Cante is not a product! Or, at least, cannot yet be regarded as such. We are in a territory that already has other tourism products. In this sense, it (Cante) enhances the territory. (E1)

The attraction of tourism is a result of several factors, this is, of course, one of these factors, with no particular importance, in my view. (E3)

However, *Cante Alentejano* has today additional visibility. This new dimension turns out to echo in the offers of tour operators that will eventually incorporate this cultural expression within the set of tourism attractions in the region. Against this background, from the respondents' words is clear the belief that the recognition of *Cante Alentejano* as Intangible Heritage of UNESCO may be a possible enhancer factor for the tourism in the region. One of the respondents mentioned the transformation underway in the choral movement and the existence of some projects in order to create tourism offers referring to *Cante*. However, he warns to the

fact that we are in an initial phase, and it is early to have a real perception of the impacts of these initiatives. One of the problems singled out is the lack of resources in order to study the changes in course.

(...) the choral movement is changing. After almost two years, movements not yet well known begin to emerge pointing to interesting directions. We still haven't been able to understand the impacts. (E1)

There are already some projects. There is a pilot project in which we motivated a choral group to buy a tavern in Pias. We're going to create a tourism route between Pias, Cuba and Évora connected to three choral groups (...) associating Cante to other products such as wine, the cuisine (E1)

Another respondent believes that the recognition of *Cante Alentejano* as UNESCO Intangible Heritage reinforced the potential of *Cante* for tourism development, working as a kind of universal certification of the authenticity of *Cante*.

The "turistification" of Cante, as the "turistification" of any other cultural asset, tangible or intangible, goes through a previous process and that is the process of "patrimonialization" and that's what happened to Cante, a cultural value of ours, becomes an asset of humanity and, in the process, it can be assumed that, as a result of this recognition, works as a kind of universal certification of the authenticity of this product. The Cante has strengthened its potential for the development of tourism of Alentejo. (E3)

The respondents put forward various suggestions for maximizing the impact of the distinction of UNESCO in tourism development of the Alentejo region, in particular: ensuring a responsible tourism and heritage ethics; invest in safeguarding the authenticity of *Cante Alentejano* and greater commitment of the regional tourism organization of Alentejo – Tourism of Alentejo.

The only suggestion that one can give is to ensure a responsible tourism and heritage ethics. (E1)

To resist the temptation of the obvious, of a possible mass "consumption" of Cante, strive for safeguarding of the authenticity of this cultural manifestation.
(E3)

5. Conclusion

The growing closeness between tourism and culture has prompted, among academics and professionals from the cultural and creative sector, tourism, and territorial management, an increasing wish of exploring this relationship, which is intended to be symbiotic. The quest for exciting and unique experiences, the search for authenticity of the products and the contact with the most genuine cultural elements of places, have led to the exploitation of the unique features of the destinations, in particular with regard to their cultural and historical heritage. The development of culture-based tourism products contribute to add value to tourism destinations and become strategic areas within the tourism development plans of the regions. The World Heritage brand, conferred by UNESCO, is, thus, an important asset insofar as it certifies the virtues, tangible and intangible, of the listed object. However, this process threatens the conservation and safeguarding of those objects, because, as they become increasingly exploited for tourism purposes, the authenticity is put at risk. This is a concern repeatedly expressed by the bearers of *Cante Alentejano* and by UNESCO, which determines the design of the safeguard measures to be implemented following the classification.

The implementation of a safeguard plan is not devoid of difficulties. Despite all the commitment expressed by the various stakeholders, the promoters lack the capacity to take responsibility for financing and ensuring the implementation of this plan. The socio-economic context is adverse and the budget availability is increasingly limited. This may be the right time for a strategic realignment that would allow mobilizing the agents of *Cante* for the establishment of commitments and networks of partnerships between the various entities, including civil society actors. This is a course of action wherein all actors are involved in the safeguarding project, understand and participate in setting goals and the very definition of a strategy of change embodied in a new organizational and integrated model.

Following the listing of *Cante Alentejano* as UNESCO Intangible Heritage of Humanity, the municipality of Serpa develops efforts to register *Cante* in the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In general, all municipalities involved have sought, through various activities, to raise awareness of the value of *Cante*, in particular through educational plans targeted at young people. However, it would be necessary to verify among the bearers of the tradition of

Cante if they are been given the appropriate conditions to the documentation and the transmission of knowledge and the protection of the intellectual property.

Throughout the region of Alentejo, it is possible to observe the existence of several initiatives and performances. However, it would be essential to realize to what extent a consistent and global promotion strategy is being implemented aiming the protection, safeguard and enhancement of *Cante*. The transmission of knowledge and skills is a major concern of the bearers of *Cante*, cultural associations, and other institutions across the Alentejo and in the whole country.

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