

Building the Bridge between the Academia and the Regional Government in Hospitality. A Case Study

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Abstract: This paper attempts to shed light on the current role of academia in the context of rural areas of low population density, which are regional interaction models. In this study, we follow a qualitative research methodology of a case study. We found that through the case study applied to a hotel unit, that the Academia can through its third mission, and in the context of regional triple helix dynamics (Academia-Business-government interaction), play an important role in terms of knowledge dissemination, wealth creation and employability. The limitations, which our study presents, are principally related to the measurement of the variables. Some of the characteristics of education should be studied more deeply. In the instance of a case study applied to the hospitality industry, it is important to take as limitations of the study to its direct application to any economic context. This study allowed however, contribute to the enrichment of literature through case studies presented in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: HEIs Third Mission; Triple Helix; Tourism; Hospitality; Regional Development; Monsanto GeoHotel Escola

1. Introduction

The traditional mission of higher education institutions (HEIs) has traditionally been twofold: (1) higher education and training, (2) the diffusion of knowledge via academic research. Nowadays, HEIs are considered to be key actors in regional innovation systems. The third mission complements the mission of teaching and the mission of research - the "community's engagement", bridging between science and society (Brown, 2016; Jaeger & Kopper, 2014). In this holistic perspective, HEIs should take strategic options capable to serve their own goals at the same time they must strengthen their regional involvement (Benneworth, de Boer & Jongbloed, 2015).

In the modern economies, as well as a higher education place for the next generation of leaders and specialists, HEIs' research is essential to expand the frontiers of codified knowledge through publications, industrial property and prototype development. In this perspective, HEIs can play a key role in regional competitiveness improvement, enhancing wealth creation, employment, and economic growth based on the knowledge economy, through teaching and research excellence (Cesaroni & Piccaluga, 2015; Kolehmainen *et al.*, 2016). Equally important is the involvement capacity of HEIs with the community, thus contributing to increase the territorial competitiveness through the commercialization of research, problem solving, and providing public space for knowledge exchanges and application (Rolfo & Finardi, 2012; Wu & Zhou, 2012). According of its third mission, the establishment of a deeper commitment to the business community, local authorities and society are today key concerns of HEIs. They have started to reorganize internal resources, to redefine their activities and policies, and to redesign their overall knowledge transfer business models (Cesaroni & Piccaluga, 2015).

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The third mission of HEIs, especially in rural, less-favoured and low populated regions, becomes even more important when inserted in the regional triple helix dynamics (Academia - Business - Regional government) or quadruple helix dynamics (which includes the civil society participation) (Björk, 2014; Gestal, Rivero, Dorado & Pazos, 2002; Kolehmainen *et al.*, 2016; Rinaldi & Cavicchi, 2016).

According to Björk (2014), particularly in the tourism sector, collaborative dynamics work well in the context of regional quadruple helix, with a mix of governance structures, thus creating a 'Consortium Creative Knowledge Environment'. Assuming the models of triple, quadruple and more helixes, an explanatory metaphor of collaborative dynamics between the actors present in a given territory (Leydesdorff, 2012), our focus is on the dynamics of regional cooperation, which we call "regional helix".

This study intends to address the gaps identified in the literature on presenting case studies framed in the context of the regional helix, applied to the tourism sector, in particular in the hospitality context and in rural areas of low population density. Therefore, this paper aims to explore, through a case study, the governance model and operating structure of a hotel unit located in a rural and peripheral territory, located in a tourist area at the Central region of Portugal – village of Monsanto, in the municipality of Idanha-a-Nova.

According to the aim of this study, the paper addresses three inter-related research questions: (i) How can the third mission of HEIs be operationalized in a peripheral territory of low population density? (ii) What is the role of academia in the context of regional collaborative dynamics? (iii) What type of 'Consortium Creative Knowledge Environment' which can be defined in Hospitality?

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 defines the “Theoretical Framework”, followed by the “Methodology” in Section 3, and the “Case Study” in Section 4 before closing with Section 5, which presents the “Conclusions” of this study.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Tourism an important sector of economy development

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) tourism continued to be a key driver of the global economic recovery, and a vital contributor to job creation, poverty alleviation, environmental protection and multicultural peace and understanding across the globe (UNWTO, 2015). In Alberti and Giusti (2012) perspective, the tourism sector is considered one of the most important in the world, with great consensus regarding the key role it plays in the development and competitiveness of regions.

Contrary to the past, nowadays, governments and society in general have recognized in tourism, increased importance in economic and social fields as a source of wealth creation and employment at regional level, with particular focus on less developed regions (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Jackson & Murphy, 2002, Cabugueira, 2005; Botti, Camprubi & Torrès, 2008). Most of the activities and services that make up the tourism product tend to be associated with a natural or cultural attraction, thus assuming greater importance for the development of the most depressed regions (Cabugueira, 2005); through direct and indirect effects and induced the economies (Carvalho & Vaz, 2005). Campos, Mendes and Albino (2006) adds that this is an industry with increasing expression and value to national and regional economies, which develops by providing associated services or the needs, expectations, demands and wishes of tourists.

Rodrigues (2003) states that while other economic activities are the products moving into the market, in tourism exactly the opposite happens. So that there is an effective consumption of the tourism product, the tourist has to travel up along the structure that supports it: the tourist destination. The author further states that it is not possible to separate a product approach to tourism, tourist destination, the latter being a central element of tourism.

Tourism also has the ability to have multiplier effects on economic activity, motivated by extension, the development of other economic activities, thereby contributing to the competitiveness of territories (Silva & Silva, 1998; Cabugueira, 2005; Botti *et al.*, 2008).

2.2 Hospitality and Regional Growth

Within the tourism sector, the hotel industry plays a key role. According to Matias (1992), hospitality is a key component of tourism, contributing to the growth and tourism prosperity in a nation or region.

Accommodation is a central element of any tourism experience and contributes largely to the definition of the level of tourist satisfaction (Villamarín, Vila & Gonzalez, 2012). According to Wu, Liang and Song (2010), the hotel industry in various tourist destinations has been confronted with fierce competition from national and international hotel groups. To become competitive, hotels have to review their internal operational procedures, looking for a more efficient use of physical and human resources in order to increase their competitive advantages.

On the other hand, the rapid growth in the number of international hotels contributed to this highly competitive market, requiring the formulation of marketing strategies, strengthening of business operations and quality of service modernization, key ingredients for their survival (Wang, Huang & Shang 2006).

Thus, performance measurement should be a constant concern for managers, not only to ensure the continuous improvement of processes, but also to ensure the survival and competitiveness of organizations, in the long term (Chen, 2009; Anderson, Fok & Scott, 2000). According to Martins (2004), in the operation of a hotel complex there are three major functional vectors that can function as motivators introducing innovation or development: information and communication technologies, the environment and quality. The hotel business requires sophisticated management methods, not only by the complexity of the human, material and financial resources which it involves, as well as the need to balance the cost of these resources with the ever increasing demand for quality standards in customer services, resulting from a careful and systematic analysis of information from the external surroundings, in particular the market and competition (Pestana, 1998; Baptista, 2003).

The development of a competitive strategy is a difficult task for many hoteliers, given the radical change that is observed in the sector due to the intensity of competition, rapid technological advances and increased customer sophistication (Tavitiyaman, Qu & Zhang, 2011).

The growth of a community stimulates the performance of a hotel unit which, in turn, contributes to the economic, social and cultural community (Go, Pine & Yu, 1994). The presence of a hotel in a particular territory can support the further development of tourism, improve the well-being of people in the areas of influence of tourists and revitalize a number of economic activities at risk of disappearing without this presence (Olmos, 2012).

2.3 Strategic networks for increased regional competitiveness

The importance of small businesses networks, in particular, is well-documented, and globally recognized by governments at national and regional levels by prioritizing resource allocation to its creation, support and maintenance, in order to achieve higher levels of competitiveness (Kingsley, Malecki & Malecki, 2011).

In the view of Crotts, Buhalis and March (2000), the strategic alliance terms, relationship and strategic partnership, have in common the union of two or more entities, in association with a resulting increased value of the synergic strategy. The partnerships may be formed for several reasons. Authors like Riege, Perry and Go (2001) and the UNWTO (2003) identified several reasons for integrating into a partnership: i) reduction of risk and the costs of access to new markets by strengthening financial resources and sharing human Resources; ii) the extension of the scope of action of operations, and such small businesses reach international markets through membership with companies or larger groups; iii) the range of skills and knowledge; iv) the direct customers through more efficient distribution channels; v) the creation of new products or services; and vi) the ability to achieve higher levels of efficiency and economies of scale.

Kernaghan (1993) defines a partnership as a relationship that includes the sharing of power, work, support and or information with others, in order to achieve common goals or mutual benefits. Partnerships are recognized as forms of cooperation of great importance in promoting strategic thinking in the long term. According with Spink and Merrill-Sands (1999), a set of factors that explain the success of a partnership, namely: i) clearly define the objectives to be achieved; ii) strong and shared leadership; iii) sharing in the definition and approach to the problem; iv) equal

power; v) interdependence and complementarity; vi) sharing responsibility; vii) attention to the process; viii) communication links; ix) explicit decision-making; x) trust and commitment; and xi) credit and recognition.

To Pizam, Okumus and Hutchinson (2013) successful partnerships should be undertaken through mutual trust, understanding the needs and expectations of each and successful collaboration between the parties involved. Partnerships, a strategic alliance configuration, are a form of cooperation that can be established between public sector entities; between private sector institutions; and also between both sectors, public and private (Camagni, 2008; Elmuti, Abebe & Nicolosi, 2005; Janowicz-Panjaitan & Noorderhaven, 2008; Smith & Bagchi - Sen, 2006; Zeng, Xie & Tam, 2010; Ženka, Novotný & Csank, 2012).

In the context of its Third Mission, entrepreneurial universities have also reinforced their capacities to transfer the knowledge produced, enabling economic and social utility and thus, contributing to the improvement of the competitiveness of organizations and territories (Abramo, D'Angelo, Di Costa & Solazzi, 2009; Bernasconi, 2005; Etzkowitz, 2008; Van Looy, Ranga, Callaert, Debackere & Zimmermann, 2004).

In this alignment, **Figure 1** shows the dynamics of interaction of Triple Helix in regional context, ensuring cooperation between HEIs, the regional government, and local organizations (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Etzkowitz, 2003, 2008; Farinha, Ferreira & Gouveia, 2016; Peris-Ortiz, Ferreira, Farinha & Fernandes, 2016). Based on the different missions of HEIs, the Regional Helix model highlights the third mission of the Academia, which results from greater involvement with the community, focusing on regional engagement and support of regional development process. The conceptual framework presents a regional collaborative ecosystem, involving regional engagement and knowledge transfer, entrepreneurship support, career entries of graduates in local firms (Jaeger & Kopper, 2014).

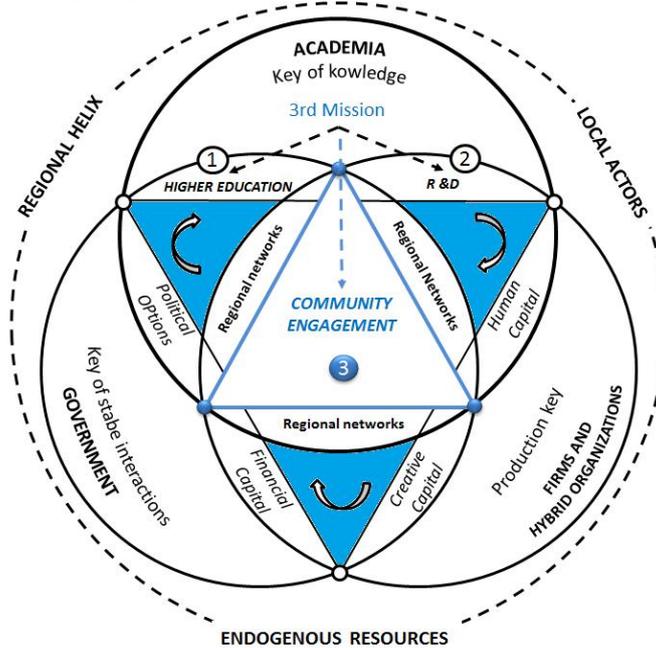


Figure 1; Regional Helix Framework for Territorial Competitiveness.

Source: Elaborated from Farinha *et al.* (2016)

According to the Regional Helix Framework for Territorial Competitiveness, the HEIs interaction results from its three missions: education, research and involvement with the regional community. This community involvement comes up of collaborative interaction with regional governance bodies, companies and other hybrid organizations (formed from interaction models with other regional entities) (Etzkowitz, 2008; Kolehmainen *et al.*, 2016; Leydesdorff, 2012; Predazzi, 2012).

In a context of increasing competition and globalization of markets, the role played by small businesses, which constitute a large share of the business fabric of the tourism sector, and its ability to establish themselves successfully proves to be an unknown reality. In this perspective, Witt and Moutinho (1995) argue that the partnership through

strategic alliances can be the key to the survival of small businesses in the hospitality and travel industries, as well as other tourism sectors. Alliances can be applied to small-scale business by creating networks of partners. These alliances arise within the trends of concentration and internationalization, coupled with the industry and the tourism industry.

Long (1997) states that partnerships in tourism are sets of collaborative efforts between independent stakeholders, representatives of two or more sectors with interests in tourism organizations, which join an interactive process using common rules, standards and structures in an organizational level advance and established a defined geographical area, acting or making decisions on issues related to tourism development. Ekpenyong and Mmon (2015) argue that the partnerships in the tourism sector will lead to a more competitive market, to improve the supply of goods and tourism services, improving cost recovery, increasing capital investment, creating jobs and sustainable economic growth.

According to Pizam *et al.* (2013), the establishment of strong partnerships between tourism organizations, hospitality and hotel schools requires the participation of teachers of higher education institutions to work closely with industry owners in order to strengthen mutual trust, friendships and a common understanding of the needs and expectations of the industry.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research position

Overcoming a gap in the literature in terms of direct approaches to triple helix projects in hospitality follows an interpretive case study-based approach. The unique application of quantitative methods cannot capture the essence of phenomena in certain areas of knowledge with some complexity (Beach, Muhlemann, Price, Paterson & Sharp, 2001).

Various authors approach the case study as a research strategy. Yin (1994) and Stake (1995) stipulate that a case may be something well defined or concrete, as an individual, a group or an organization, but it can also be something less described or defined in a more abstract level as, decisions, programs, implementation processes or organizational changes. It is in this case study definition that our research is framed. Through the case study, this research strives to demonstrate just how triple helix dynamics, reinforced by the presence of the Academia's third mission, are susceptible to develop new projects and commercialise new products, thus contributing to the creation of regional wealth and employment (Predazzi, 2012; Rinaldi & Cavicchi, 2016). Data were collected through documentary sources and unstructured interviews responsible for the various partner institutions during the year 2016.

3.2 Unit of Analysis

This study focuses on the case of partnerships for the creation of Monsanto GeoHotel Escola (Monsanto GeoHotel School). Monsanto GeoHotel Escola was the name chosen for a new hotel located in Monsanto, a village in the municipality of Idanha-a-Nova, Castelo Branco district, located in the Central region of Portugal.

In the Hotel documentation is the reasoning of its name: *"Mons Sanctus or Holy Mount is the name contained in the charter given by King Afonso Henriques in 1174. It is shown at the top, dominating almost inaccessible. Granitic outcrops lend his touch watchman justified, early, assigning charter, the letter of the law that good men wove and fulfilled"* (MGHE, 2015).

Monsanto, the most Portuguese village of Portugal, is located in full Geopark Naturtejo Meseta Meridional is an ex-libris network of Historic Villages of Portugal - Twelve villages which applies a development strategy and value centered on the values of history, culture and heritage. It is the first Portuguese Geopark, integrated in the European Network and Global Geoparks of UNESCO, developing a territory of 5,000 km².

The hotel edifice is therefore a construction of history and culture, integrates tangible and intangible elements of the past, seeking the appearance / construction of other / new producers of meaning. We believe that the regions have their own symbolic repertoire that simultaneously gives cohesion to the collective representation of its members and differs from other national entities. The hospitality, gastronomy, comfort and safety were concerns of promoters.

The Hotel has 10 rooms; air conditioned and equipped with LCD TV, with a decor that seeks a dialogue with the

natural surrounding and cultural heritage. Each room has a name with a specific narrative: a) Suite King Afonso Henriques; b) Suite King Manuel I; c) Marafona; d) Alegrios; e) Nave de Pedra; f) São Miguel; g) São Salvador; h) Vir-a-Corça; i) Penedos Juntos; j) Torre de Lucano.

The Hotel has the following amenities: breakfast buffet served in the Sala Galo de Prata (as recognition of the denominative award of the most Portuguese village of Portugal in 1938); Bar Adufe (musical instrument that remained in the territory since ancient times and that is the symbol of the Municipality); Free internet access; Multilingual staff; Safe at reception; Laundry; Newspapers; Room Service; Access for people with reduced mobility.

4. Case Study

4.1 Characterization of Monsanto GeoHotel Escola

Monsanto GeoHotel Escola was born from the will of three institutions: The Municipality of Idanha-a-Nova, the Municipal Centre for Culture and Development (CMCD) and the Polytechnic Institute of Castelo Branco (IPCB), through the Management School of Idanha-a-Nova (ESGIN). This project thus results from the collaborative interaction embedded in the concept of the triple helix (Loet Leydesdorff & Fritsch, 2006); taking as an example an initiative framed in the Third mission of the University (Mora, Ferreira, Vidal, & Vieira, 2015; Rolfo & Finardi, 2012).

The Municipality of Idanha-a-Nova, to pursue public interest purposes, is committed to the creation of partnerships with developing agents that operate in the territory, concerned with the safeguarding of its heritage, preventing desertification, and seeking to attract new population. The municipality owns the real estate property, which is transferred, free of charge, to CMCD for a period of four-year renewable period.

The CMCD, an organization of collective interest and intervention in the area of education, has qualified human resources and has a business activity dedicated to creating value through sustainable exploitation of natural and cultural heritage. Its mission is to promote integrated development, enhancement and sustainability of the territory in its different dimensions. Its objectives, stands out to promote the development of training, the qualification of the population and the development of entrepreneurship. It is responsible for the management of Monsanto GeoHotel Escola specifically: the staff answerable to the functioning of the hotel unity (recruitment, selection, training, evaluation); celebrated, with the competent authorities, the contracts for the supply of water, electricity and telephone, as well as the payment of associated costs arising from the operation thereof; of the costs of licenses, fees, taxes, liability insurance, and other charges and penalties that are subject to. It offers technicians who service with proven competence for the purpose, to monitor and train IPCB/ESGIN students in the field of various skills.

The IPCB has established itself as a nuclear structure with strong presence and influence in the region. ESGIN confirms the beneficial influence on the economic and social fabric of the region. As a higher education institution, ESGIN has the capacity to intervene in the surrounding territory, focuses on the themes that enhance competitiveness and where tourism takes on major importance. ESGIN uses Monsanto GeoHotel Escola as a space for theoretical / practical classes, in conjunction with the CMCD; collaborates in the functioning of Monsanto GeoHotel Escola, through the expertise of its professors, technicians and students in management defined by CMCD.

Students of courses in the areas of hotel and restaurant have assigned school hours, of one day a week at the hotel, serving a total of 30 hours throughout the semester. They perform functions in all sectors - Accommodation, Kitchen, Commercial, Events, and formulate a hotel operating idea. In fact, we intend to promote direct contact with real customers, as specific teaching resource, providing students with a deep knowledge of the industry and their full integration into the labour market.

The three institutions have joined this project, many efforts and hard work. Still imperfect, it emerged from one of the existing structures in the territory: The Pousada de Monsanto functioned between the years 1993 and 2004. The objectives that are proposed are: a) Reactivate a hotel complex for tourists visiting the area; b) Create a new tourist service for the region; c) Recover existing assets and streamline the 3-star hotel, providing characteristics of "GeoHotel Escola"; d) Creating jobs; e) To innovate in the training of students; g) To promote the equipment as "showcase" of

practices, the Geopark Naturtejo Meseta Meridional (See **Figure 2**).

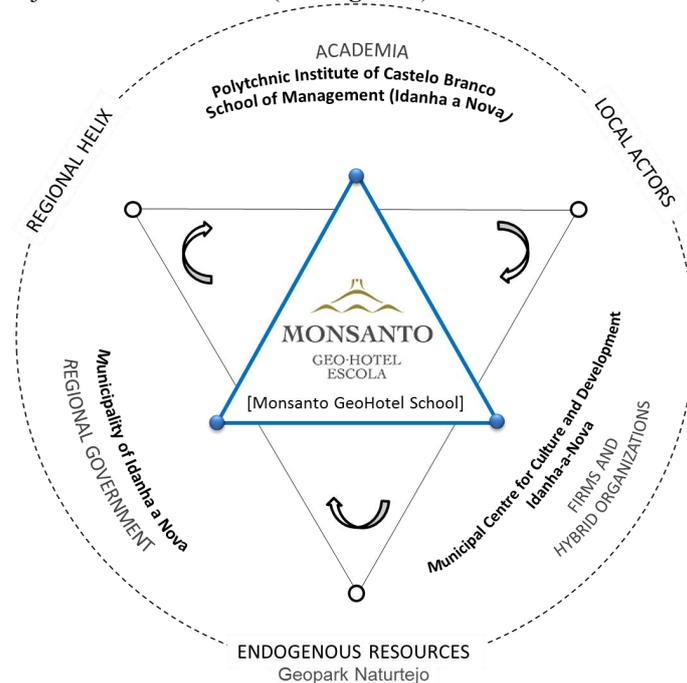


Figure 2; Monsanto GeoHotel Escola Framework.

Source: Authors

The Monsanto GeoHotel Escola contributes to an on-going process of institutionalization and consolidation of a culture of cooperation, networking, helping to enter the territory where it belongs in the national, Iberian and international panoramas, creating jobs, wealth and a better quality of life on a sustainable basis.

Using local natural heritage resources, it is intended to create dynamics that can be created as a development factor, valuing these features and other complementary aspects. The competitiveness of the hotel unit by creating wealth and well-being will be promoted.

The hotel unit bets on the complementarity with other activities through partnerships with tourism companies in the region. These activities include bird watching, mountain biking, observation of fauna and flora, ornithological tourism (nature trails with bird watching), day and night themed trails, shooting (crossbow, bow, blowgun, slingshot and accuracy), donkey and horse/riding, canoeing, paintball, bungee, trampoline, inflatables, guided tours (museums, historic villages, etc.), climbing, artificial climbing, rappelling, sliding, zip lining, canyoning, orientation, conferences, training sessions, multi-activities (team building), mycological tourism (hiking with observation mushrooms), TT rides (cars, motorbikes, bicycles), hunting and fishing, paragliding, ballooning, festivals, boating, among others. Furthering the connection to rural areas. There will be underpinned visits to local producers of regional products, particularly cheese, sausages and olive oil and the artisans of typical products.

In the global context, Monsanto GeoHotel Escola is, today, recognized for the quality of its services, through its national and international customers (**Figure 3**).



Figure 3; Booking Score.

Source: Elaborated from www.booking.com

Benefiting already a good rating from their customers, in the booking.com platform, Monsanto GeoHotel Escola can now achieve a reference level (**Table 1**).

Country	Positive comments	Negative comments
Australia	Location, architecture, integration of building into environment	Nothing to report
South Africa	Beautifully decorated Good breakfast Excellent position Modern accommodation	Dinners not served at the hotel
USA	Great location, easier to get bags to the room than it is at other places. Elevator. Spacious room with terrace, remarkable view, better than our place above the Douro the previous week (Room 2.5). Desk, nightstands with reading lights, some fruit and cookies left for us. Good breakfast. Everything looks new and bright with cheery colors. Wish we had stayed longer.	Wall on terrace too high to see the view when seated. Electrical plug beside the desk (and lamp plugged into it) not working. Towel rack is inside shower, so towels got wet when 1st person showered. No hooks or shelves in bath or shower. No plug for hairdryer in bathroom. Just needs some minor fixes and additions to be a 10.
Portugal	Great location, right in a mystical village. The staff is nice and welcoming.	
United Kingdom	Staff great and human, not fixed brain, Hugo, Carlos, Fatima and the rest. Make them all president !	We need a WIFI computer/printer area
United Kingdom	All the Staff were very friendly, helpful and efficient. Ask for room 2.5. Has a terrace and fantastic views.	Cold bacon, eggs and mushrooms.

Table 1. Guest Reviews

Source: www.booking.com, accessed on 06-12-2016

In sum, this partnership between CMIN the CMCD and IPCB / ESGIN fulfils the mission of the resources of each of the institutions, promoting the development of the territory, setting people and innovation in the teaching / learning in

a space that chose education as a starting point for quality and excellence.

Through these collaborative dynamics and active participation of the IPCB in educational and entrepreneurial dynamics of the territory, it is possible to answer the first research question: (i) How can the third mission of HEIs in a peripheral territory of low population density be operationalized? Still, the answer to the second question of research is found: (ii) What is the role of academia in the context of regional collaborative dynamics? The IPCB and ESGIN have an active role in the education of hotel experts in the region, training them in a real work environment. Furthermore, with the involvement of teachers and their connection to other consortium entities can prepare students for work life, placing them in direct contact with a hotel unit, facilitating their integration into the labour market. According to the above, it is possible to create a 'Consortium Creative Knowledge Environment' rooted in the regional dynamics of the triple helix, enhanced by the completion of the third mission of HEIs. In this case, the question is answered: (iii) What type of 'Consortium Creative Knowledge Environment' can be defined in Hospitality?

The network between local and regional actors, associated with endogenous land resources, enhances, the context of Regional Helix, a key to improve regional competitiveness, particularly in remote areas of low density (Benneworth *et al.*, 2015; Farinha *et al.*, 2016; Leydesdorff & Zawdie, 2010).

5. Conclusions

In recent years there has been many reflections on the effective role of the Academy in the context of their territories and their third mission (Benneworth *et al.*, 2015; Jaeger & Kopper, 2014; Mora *et al.*, 2015; Predazzi, 2012; Rolfo & Finardi, 2012; Sánchez-Barrioluengo, 2014).

In terms of the involvement of the HEIs with its territorial community, the models of the triple, quadruple or more helixes have been massively deployed in the recent literature (Carayannis, Barth, & Campbell, 2012; Etzkowitz, 2008; Leydesdorff, Dolfsma, & Vanderpanne, 2006; Leydesdorff, Dolfsma, & Van der Panne, 2006; Leydesdorff & Zawdie, 2010; Leydesdorff, 2012; Papagiannidis, Li, Etzkowitz, & Clouser, 2009).

In a highly competitive sector such as tourism, companies must implement alliances and other forms of cooperation in order to develop synergies and achieve competitive advantage. In that sense, this partnership plays an important role in regional development (Fraj, Matute, & Melero, 2015; UNWTO, 2015).

This study has shown the importance of partnerships in order to ensure sustainable development of the tourism sector of the region by creating jobs and contributing to the economic well-being of the community. Combining history with culture, valuing and preserving its resources, integrating the material and immaterial elements of the past, seeking the appearance / construction of other / new meaning producers accessing new markets, the establishment of quality and service standards, in obtaining initial investment and implementation of investment barriers. This partnership is still characterized by mutual trust and a mutual understanding of the needs and expectations of the tourism sector.

As future research suggestion, we propose to compare this study with other partnerships in other sectors.

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