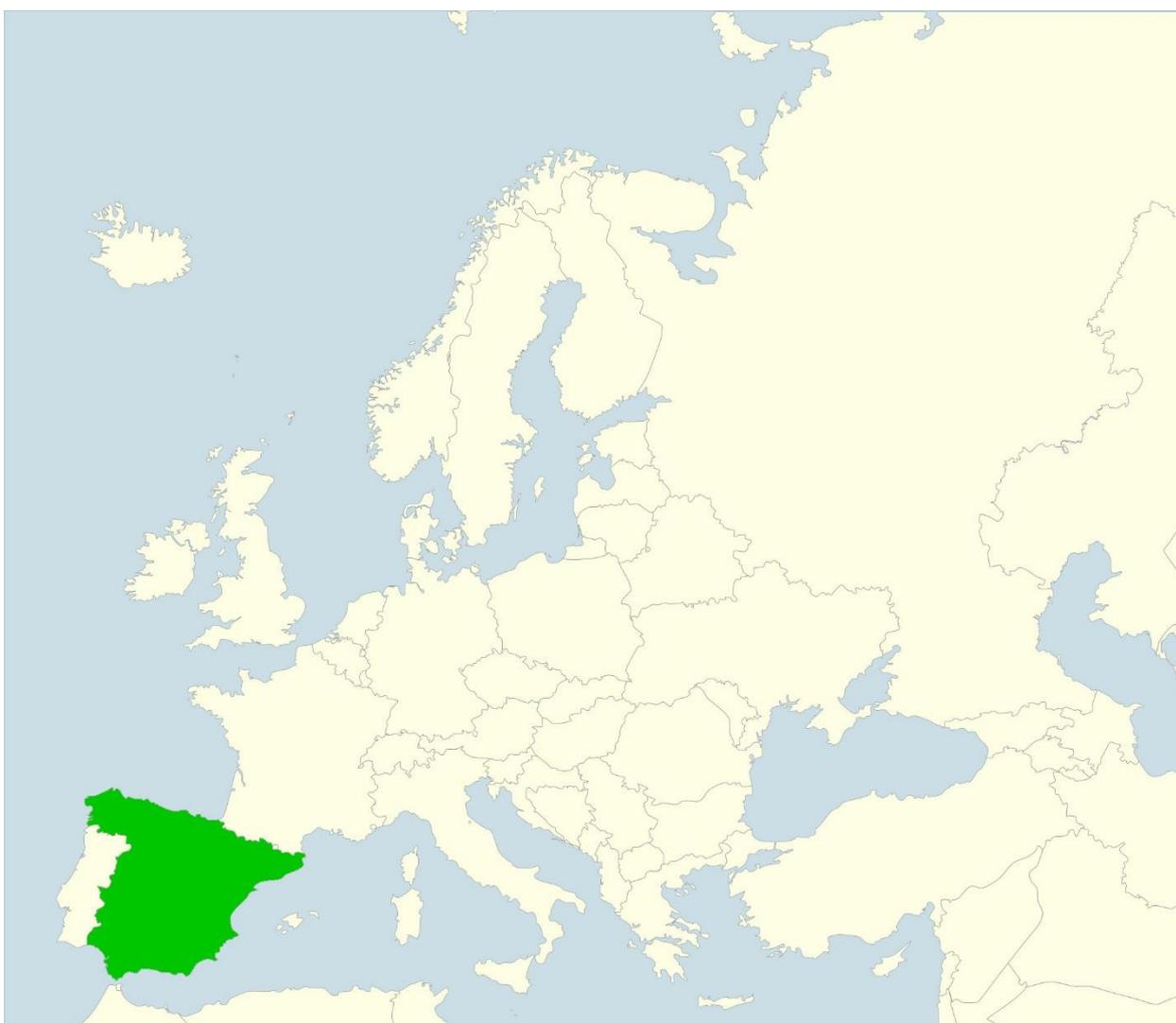


THE ILLUSION OF PROXIMITY IN TERRITORIAL CONSTRUCTION. AN APPROACH TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT VIA SOCIAL NETWORKS IN SIERRA DE ALBARRACÍN (SPAIN)

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Abstract: Tourism development has been a particularly intense area of negotiation in the Spanish countryside since the 1990s because of its major role in public policies for the economic restructuring, the regionalisation of policy instruments and its own intersectoral nature. This leads us to examine how the coordination takes place within the actors engaged in the tourist development of Sierra de Albarracín. This research adopts an inductive approach to the social relations that underlie the construction of a tourism project territory. From the meeting between the methodology of the social network analysis and the analytical framework of the School of Proximity, the procedure presented here helps to understand the logics of territorial construction. Cooperation appears more fictitious than the policy instruments of governance envisage. Questioning both cooperative and conflictive proximities offers new clues for the evaluation of public policy instruments.

Key words: territorial governance, proximity, LEADER, tourism in rural areas, social network analysis, Sierra de Albarracín (Spain).

Resumen: **La ilusión de la proximidad en la construcción territorial. Una aproximación al desarrollo turístico desde las redes sociales en la Sierra de Albarracín** El desarrollo turístico constituye un espacio de negociación especialmente intenso en el medio rural español desde los años 90 debido al lugar preponderante que ocupa en las políticas públicas de reestructuración de la economía, a los instrumentos de descentralización y a su propia naturaleza intersectorial. Esto nos conduce a examinar la manera en que la coordinación se efectúa entre los actores del desarrollo turístico de la comarca de la Sierra de Albarracín. Esta investigación adopta un enfoque inductivo de las relaciones sociales que subyacen a la construcción de un territorio de proyecto turístico. Del encuentro entre la metodología del análisis de redes sociales con el marco analítico de la Escuela de la proximidad nace el procedimiento que aquí se presenta. La cooperación aparece más ficticia de lo que los instrumentos de gobernanza prevén. Cuestionar el juego de proximidades cooperativas y conflictivas ofrece nuevas pistas para la evaluación de los instrumentos de políticas públicas.

Palabras clave: gobernanza territorial, proximidad, LEADER, turismo en áreas rurales, análisis de redes sociales, Sierra de Albarracín (España).

1. Introduction

As in other European countries, tourism development in rural areas began in Spain in the 1960s. Relatively delayed by late industrialisation (Cànoves, Herrera, & Blanco, 2005), it took off about thirty years ago, at a time when tourism became a key strategy for rural development public policies at various levels of government (Cànoves, Garay, & Duro, 2012). Whilst the territorial impact in terms of population growth (Jurado Almonte & Pazos-García, 2016) or sustainable development (Cànoves, Villarino, & Herrera, 2006) has been called into question, the reorganisation of space and the shift in uses, perceptions and expectations of society were much more significant (Barrado Timón & Castiñeira Ezquerro, 1998; Hoggart & Paniagua, 2001). In that sense, tourism as an action tool (with its body of representations, prevailing set of arguments and policy instruments) can be seen as the most recent vehicle for the territorial transformation of rural areas in Europe.

Tourism strategy features strongly in the European guidelines for economic restructuring of rural areas (Pitarch & Amandis, 2014). It is precisely through the implementation of European funds that Spain channelled its public measures for the development of tourism in rural areas, in

particular in the implementation of the LEADER programme³. Since then, a participatory utilisation of tourism resources within the principle of 'local governance' is heavily promoted: "*The 4th axis [Leader] introduces possibilities for innovative governance through locally-based, bottom-up approaches to rural development*"⁴. As such, LEADER provides for the institutionalisation of a collective player, the Local Action Group (LAG)⁵, which acts as a "promoter" of consensual strategies for local development (Chevalier, 2014). By virtue of its transferability, the LEADER method has spread the development of tourism projects throughout the country. The success of this measure in terms of financing and projects promoted by LAGs during the 1991–2010 period was noted (Red Rural Nacional, 2011); particularly in its initial version, 51.3% of funded projects were intended for tourism (Blanco Herranz, 1996).

At the same time, other public policies supported the trend towards the territorialisation of tourism development instruments. For example, the national tourism policy, within the framework of National Tourism Plans⁶, started using Destination Plans as early as 1995, helping the local territory (one municipality or a grouping of municipalities) emerge as a new target of a historically sector-based tourism policy (Velasco Gonzalez, 2005). Then, other project areas launched a more or less strategic and consensual process of resource exploitation for tourism purposes, including the *comarcas*⁷ and protected natural areas. At a local level, the perception of expectations linked to tourism in terms of economic impetus leads municipalities to establish tourism departments within local governments (López Palomeque & Font Urgell, 2011), as well as new independent management mixed entities such as consortia, public companies or foundations, as is the case for heritage cities (Garcia Hernandez 2007).

Consequently, there are many occasions where tourism project territories overlap when it comes to action areas, instruments and/or players involved: local politicians, natural resource managers, cultural heritage owners and local associations are all forces which combine and sometimes conflict. The fact that, in this context, LAGs are expected to coordinate public action would lead to a shift in the balance of power. This leads us to examine how public action is coordinated among stakeholders in order to understand the conditions for the construction of a tourism project territory. Therefore, the territorial challenge of rural tourism development in light of these instruments is also political in nature. Little social science research has been conducted with such a theoretical view on local authorities' tourism policies (Guibert, 2012), especially in Spanish literature.

Our study postulates the idea that the construction of a tourism project territory could be explained by the configuration of the system of interrelations between stakeholders. The tourist destination is considered as a tourism project territory in order to emphasize the fact that it is a result of a political will and a set of interactions in order to achieve tourism development as a common goal. Thus, destination is clearly seen here as territorially embedded and socially constructed as other destination conceptual frameworks envisage at varying degrees (Pearce, 2004).

The approach set out here arises from the encounter between the methodology of social network analysis and the School of Proximity's analytical framework. The analysis in terms of

³ Liaison entre Acteurs du Développement de l'Économie Rurale (Liaison among Actors in Rural Economic Development). The LEADER programme is an endogenous approach to development set up in order to transfer the European model for integrated rural development. It was initially offered as an autonomous Community Initiative (1990–2006), then became the 4th axis of the European policy for rural development (2007–2013).

⁴ Council Decision of 20 February 2006 on Community strategic guidelines for rural development (programming period 2007–2013) (2006/144/CE).

⁵ Opened, according to European regulations, to representatives of the given territory's not only political, but also economic and social players. Through this principle of partnership, all stakeholders within a given area are encouraged to negotiate their local development strategy.

⁶ "Plan Marco de Competitividad del Turismo Español" (FUTURES I and II, 1992–1995 and 1996–1999), "Plan de Integral de Calidad del Turismo Español 2000–2006" (PICTE), "Plan del Turismo Español Horizonte 2020" and "Plan Nacional e Integral de Turismo 2012–2015".

⁷ Spanish political and administrative division for a grouping of municipalities, whose existence is differently recognised from one regional government to another.

proximities allows us to suggest that such a system cannot be defined by the framework of relationships established by the instruments of territorial governance alone. Its construction goes beyond the existence of a geographical proximity, which forms the basis of the instruments' action areas. It rather relies on an organised proximity which is more difficult to formulate and which would actually be in all cases (whether a *success story* or a *failure* in tourism terms) locally hybridised. In this case, it builds on pre-existing local structures, both geographical and organised, but also on the development of new proximities. How do stakeholders (re)organise themselves around tourism development? Which proximities are institutionalised, removed or created? Proximities foster the gathering of people for collective action, but they can also contribute to dividing territories (Torre & Beuret, 2012).

This research seeks to contribute to rural tourism studies through a territorial and inductive approach to social relationships that support the construction – from different angles of public intervention – of a project territory. Questioning the interplay of enabled proximities offers new avenues of research for the assessment of public policy instruments beyond the economic sphere alone.

The relevance of using the analytical framework of proximities is examined first. A social network analysis applied to the case study of Sierra de Albarracín (Teruel) is then introduced in a methodological section. This tourist area is located in the east of Spain and has been intensely subjected to the territorialisation of tourism development instruments since the mid-90s. The results are discussed in three parts. First, an analysis of the reconfiguration of relationships between organisations around tourism development is explained for the 1996–2015 period. This reconfiguration process occurs gradually as policy instruments for decentralisation appear such as LEADER or the setting up of *comarcas*. Secondly, the collected relational data outlines the 2015 tourism action system at a local level and is interpreted. Thirdly, the importance of the logics of belonging at a local and extralocal level in the system configuration is explored. Finally, the noted effects of polarisation of proximities involved in the construction of a tourism project territory are discussed and the capacity for action of such a system is questioned.

2. From governance to territorial proximity: an analytical framework aimed at understanding the dynamics of local public action

Territorial governance stems from developments in research into territories as places for collective projects and expression of global and local relationships (Simard & Chiasson, 2008). Its rise is due to adapted research into new forms of territory steering and management, capable of creating a territorialised interest. Yet its weak epistemological foothold actually promotes plural adherence to more technocratic ideologies of public action (Pasquier, Simmoulain, & Wesbein, 2013). The approach through instruments helps to move away from this positivist risk and get closer to the conditions for the territorialisation of governance policy instruments by focusing on the power and influence at play that lead to the development of local public policies (Leloup, 2005). In that sense, territorial governance is defined as the set of processes and mechanisms by which stakeholders or actors of a different nature (entrepreneurs, associations, private individuals, public or local officials...) contribute to the – sometimes cooperative, sometimes conflicting – development of joint projects for the future development of territories (Leroux, 2006). A number of researchers thus approached the phenomenon from a socio-political perspective, particularly within local spaces: "*The governance approach focuses on the contingent dimension and local orders, and recognises the diversity of institutional solutions to the issue of collective action, social and political order or regulation of the economy*" (Le Galès, 2010, pp. 306–307). This approach also highlights multi-scale relationships. In this regard, Anne-Cécile Douillet states that local public action is partly 'delocalised', i.e. it refers to rationales that are not simply local (Douillet, Négrier & Faure, 2015). Development policies blend territories considered relevant, as a result of which rationales behind different levels of public action are increasingly hybridised. Finally, in order to explain the contemporary forms of local public action, one must first understand the interactions between stakeholders, whether they take place within the framework put forward by

the government or more independently, then their contribution to the emergence of decisions, measures or territorial institutions (Torre & Beuret, 2012).

The School of Proximity was established in France (Bellet et al. 1993) in order to explain the ongoing changes in the socio-economic foundations of "rural worlds" (Torre & Filippi 2005). As it is acknowledged (Torre, 2008), it embraces the theories of regional and industrial economy, economic and urban sociology, economic geography or management to suggest that proximity dynamics explain the development of territories. The moving of boundaries, the effects of inclusion and exclusion, the joining of networks or productive meeting are some of the effects of these territorial dynamics (Pecqueur, 1993). In debt to concepts such as clusters, industrial districts, local productive systems or networks, it recognises how co-localization matters for the generation of comparative advantages through cooperation and complementarity to understand a productive space. However, by moving its approach forward towards a more constructivist focus (e.g., integrating conflict dynamics), the School of Proximity stands out of the merely economic rationale to embrace a global perspective of human interactions in space. In that sense, Saarinen already observed that destinations are institutionalized and de-institutionalized, reproducing social structures and learning through the adopting and adaptation of previous ones (1998 in Pearce, 2004). The set of concepts provided by the School of Proximity, timidly applied to tourist destinations, has a great potential to explain these dynamics within a more integrative approach.

Research carried out for more than twenty years by the School of Proximity (Bellet, Colletis, & Lung, 1993) attempts to offer useful insights into the processes of territorial governance. The innovative stance on which it is based and which is adopted here is not to *a priori* assume that the local dimension is a relevant level of analysis, but to deduct it (Bouba-Olga, Carrincazeaux & Coris, 2008). In that sense, the relationship between proximities and territory is bidirectional: proximities are a consequence of the ever-changing history of the territory and the territory is a construction whose limits shift along with the interplay of proximities established at every moment (Rallet, 2002). The territorialisation of governance policy instruments leads to a new framework of new formal structures of interaction. The shift that occurs is then defined not only by the institutional origins of the stakeholders, but also by the formal structure's degree of hybridisation to the pre-existing proximities. Therefore, the territorialisation of new forms of public action can be seen as a driver for the transformation of territorial proximities.

The objective of the territorial proximity's analytical framework suggested by Torre and Beuret (2012) is to provide relevant categories in order to identify proximities that help to build common languages, references and links among stakeholders whose backgrounds, representations, action formats and legitimacies are different even though they are concerned with the same localised resources.

Territorial proximity can be split into two categories: geographical and organised. Geographical proximity refers to the distance between stakeholders, weighted by the cost of covering it in terms of money or time. It relates to the morphological characteristics of space, but also to the availability of infrastructure, people's wealth and their subjective perception. Two rationales underlie geographical proximity according to its constraints: it can be desired or suffered. Desired proximity represents stakeholders' search for closeness with other stakeholders, resources, activities, places or objects, whereas suffered proximity represents a situation in which geographical proximity to other stakeholders, resources, activities, places or objects is forced upon some stakeholders. Geographical proximity is a necessary, albeit insufficient, condition for the coordination of stakeholders as it can lead to conflicts.

Organised proximity refers to the different ways in which stakeholders get close to one another other than simply through membership of a particular organisation. It is based on two essential and complementary rationales: the logic of belonging to the same formal or informal network and the logic of similarity or mental adherence to common categories. The logic of similarity can be built on two types of relationships: mutual relationships (sharing common projects, education, shared knowledge within the same network ...) or relationships founded on common ground (culture, social standards, religion ...), helping members who do not necessarily know each other to communicate.

Proximities are dynamic in the sense that their development is ongoing and follows the renewal of the rationales behind them (which can occur at different paces), the risk being that if the pattern of the interactions' renewal is too slow for example, it can be problematic.

Geographical proximity is consubstantial with the nature of the tourist destination and with the interface between the tourist system and the territorial system (Barrado Timón, 2004). The process of production and consumption is based around localised resources: accommodation, restaurants, leisure, sports or cultural activities. Unlike other service industries, tourism relies by definition on people travelling (demand): the nature of this phenomenon thus induces a desired proximity (by tourists and tourism producers) as well as a potentially suffered proximity for other stakeholders. As for organised proximity, the level of competition makes it difficult to bring stakeholders together, whilst the introduction of integrated products or 'packages' is regarded as a source of competitiveness, as shown by many studies carried out on mountain tourism in France (Bocquet, 2008; Boutroy, Bourdeau, Mao, & Senil, 2012; Marcelpoil & François, 2008).

Action systems are then inferred from the interactions at work between the relevant stakeholders. The traditional approach was to determine people's behaviour through their affiliation with organisations, while *"the [individual] actor does not exist outside of the system that defines his/her freedom ... but the system does not exist without the actor who alone can change it"* (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977). The interactionist movement reverses this approach and tries, starting from the individual, to understand how the limitations of organised action emerge from the juxtaposition of these two rationales. Structure and margin of freedom are therefore two aspects of this system which enable the construction, reconstruction and destruction of relational proximities that we endeavour to study through the analytical framework suggested by the School of Proximity.

3. Methodology

As part of the research conducted by the School of Proximity, a relational statistic to systematically describe networks of stakeholders in order to explain tourism systems at a local level was requested (Marcelpoil and François, *op. cit.*). The social networks analysis (SNA) is suggested here as a method of structural sociology which inductively models a system of interdependencies conceived like a series of specific relationships in terms of collaboration, support, advice, control, influence, etc. around a finite set of stakeholders (Lazega, 2007). Social relationships, a proxy for interdependencies, fulfil two primary functions: channel the transfer or exchange of tangible and intangible resources, and demonstrate the deliberate compromise between its members. Stakeholders are represented as nodes and relationships as axes between the nodes. With the emphasis being more on the topological properties of the network than on individual attributes, this method supports our assumption that the construction of the tourist destination would be explained more clearly by the configuration of the system of interdependencies between stakeholders.

This method has been used in tourism studies since the 1990s under the relational approach which seeks to consider relationships as sources of competitiveness that shape organisational performance and tourism competitiveness. Amongst the studies published over the past 25 years, Merinero (2015) highlights the prominence of research subjects dedicated to a single project or resource. Yet, destinations have only recently been accepted as a valid input in this field of research (Baggio, Scott, & Cooper, 2010) where most studies have focused on the structural description of tourist networks and their impact in terms of information flows, thereby prioritising the issues around competitiveness over those about the dynamics of governance.

The SNA uses questionnaires to collect relationship information, but it was deemed preferable to conduct semi-structured interviews in order to foster people's involvement and help collecting contextual information about proximity relationships (see Box 1). Relational data was collected during 12 interviews conducted between March and May 2015. The social group studied is representative in the area of tourism development in the Sierra de Albarracín. At the same time, other sources of information such as websites and tourism promotion and planning material are

analysed. The combined use of qualitative and quantitative methods is advocated both by the authors of the neo-structural approach (Lazega, 2007; Mercklè, 2011) and by those of its application to tourism (Scott, Baggio, & Cooper, 2008).

Box 1 Construction methodology of the local tourism action system through social networks analysis.

Methodology box
Sampling technique
<p>Non-random. Selection criteria for key agents on two levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through their operability: in the territory's tourism development (creation, promotion, marketing of tourist products or infrastructure management) regardless of their activity in other roles (political, associations etc.). In order to ensure that institutional boundaries do not <i>a priori</i> mark the scope of the action system, formal ties between people and organisations are not a prerequisite. • Through mentions: individuals who are added to the analysis, are mentioned by more than 2 other individuals.
Semi-structured interviews
<p>Data relating to relationships between two people was acquired through the interpretation of semi-structured interviews. The relationships of interest are those that are enabled through formal or informal interactions, be they of a cooperative or conflictual nature, with a view to developing the Sierra de Albarracín for tourism (at whatever stage). The questions asked in order to collect this type of information were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Who do you work with in order to successfully carry out your tourism projects? – Who do you trust?
Adjacency matrix
<p>Mathematical support on which relationship information is recorded and on which the graph is based. The resulting matrix is symmetrical (all relationships between a finite number of players are observed) and directed (relationship directions are noted, and reciprocity is not <i>a priori</i> assumed).</p>
Adjustment criterion
<p>Reciprocity assumption: During the interviews, two individuals appeared inaccessible, which is why this assumption was made. It involves considering that the ties established between accessible individuals and those who are not are of the same sign and vice versa. The problem arises regarding the relationship between those two inaccessible individuals, deemed null in this study.</p>

4. Results

Sierra de Albarracín is an area of 546 square miles comprising 25 municipalities and approximately 5,000 inhabitants situated in the Spanish province of Teruel (Aragon), in the heart of the Montes Universales (Iberian system). The 'oil stains' shape of its political and administrative boundaries (see Fig.1) follows the medieval local settlement features. Faced with the power held by its capital Albarracín, this historical territory had set up the *Comunidad Historica* (Historical Community), headquartered in Tramacastilla, with a view to ensuring communal use of agricultural and forest resources located in the "interstices" of the area. Its history unfolds as tensions evolve between the *city* and the *comunidad* (Latorre Ciria (Coord.), 2003).

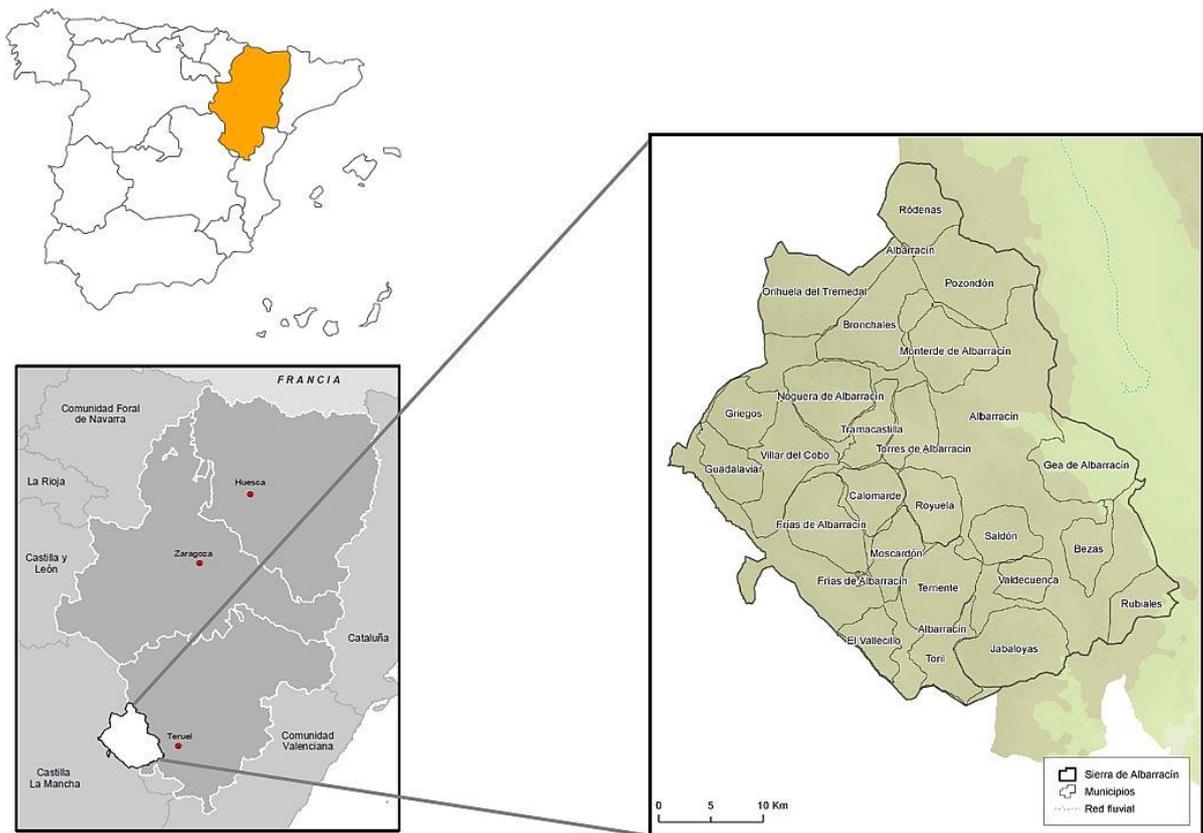


Fig 1. Study Area: Sierra de Albarracín. Source: Gobierno de Aragón (www.comarcas.es)

The study area is located in the most depopulated region of Spain (ESPON & University of Geneva, 2012), it has been losing population since the rural exodus and its density today barely reaches 3 inhabitants/km². This is particularly surprising given the number of public institutions. Indeed, some of its action areas overlap as a result of the territorialisation of public policies which, whilst different, share one common strategic objective: tourism.

While its capital has been following a tourism development path since the 1970s revolving around importantly built heritage assets which have been restored since the civil war, the *Sierra*⁸ has been offsetting industrial and agricultural decline with tourism opportunities since the 1990s, especially since funding began with the LEADER programme. Today, this tourist destination can be read along the following lines: a tourist centre where the components of enabled heritage give meaning and content to key tourist trips, and a periphery of tourism of a generic type that creates a flow of secondary/day trips (Yubero & García Hernández, 2014, 2016). According to the people interviewed, since the 1990s, the challenge in the field of tourism is to build a collective player capable of producing a shared project of tourism development at intermunicipality level.

4.1 Territorialising governance policy instruments produces a shift in the interplay of proximities (1996–2015)

The study area is the focus of the efforts of ten local institutionalised organisations involved in tourism development despite their varying capacity for action (See Fig. 2). By virtue of its mandate to introduce a new mode of territorial coordination, the LEADER programme has the greatest capacity to transform proximity relationships.

⁸ Popular name given to the area which includes all municipalities within the Historical Community's territory except Albarracín. This name is shared by all local stakeholders, used in opposition to the capital and built on solid identity foundations.

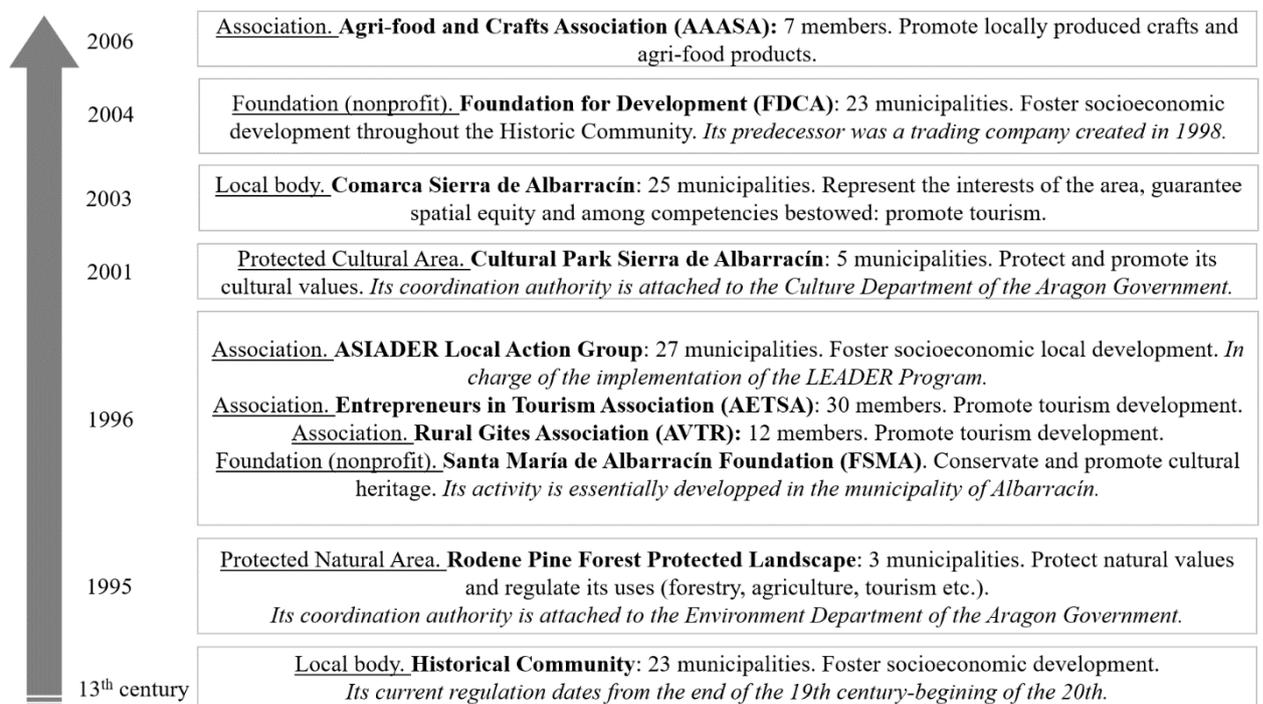


Fig 2. Local entities promoting tourism in the study area. (Type of body. Name: number of municipalities/members included. Scope. Additional information).

Sources: Latorre Ciria (coord.), J.M. (2003); local bodies updated information was checked at www.servicios.aragon.es/portalAALL/entidadesLocales.do; Association Statutes were gathered during the interviews; www.fundacionsantamariadealbarracin.com; Aragón Government regulation consulted: Ley 1/2003 de 11 de febrero de creación de la Comarca de la Sierra de Albarracín, BOE nº63 del 13 de marzo de 2003; Orden de 26 de agosto de 2004, del Departamento de Presidencia y Relaciones Institucionales, por la que se inscribe en el Registro de Fundaciones de la Comunidad Autónoma de Aragón la denominada «Fundación de Desarrollo de la Comunidad de Albarracín», BOE nº104 del 10 de septiembre de 2004; Decreto 91/1995, de 2 de mayo, de la Diputación General de Aragón, de declaración de Paisaje Protegido de los Pinares de Rodeno, BOA nº59 del 19 de mayo de 1995; Decreto 107/2001, de 22 de mayo, del Gobierno de Aragón, por el que se declara el Parque Cultural de Albarracín, BOA nº65 del 4 de junio de 2001.

The ASIADER LAG's conformation in 1996 (1) comes up against the existence of the Historical Community (2). Of medieval origin, headquartered in Tramacastilla and gathering all 23 mayors of the historical territory, this institution's continuity is guaranteed today on an exceptional basis by a law passed by the Government of Aragón⁹ to ensure the provision of services, mainly at supra-municipal level. The Historical Community's centrality, which has been in crisis for decades, is jeopardised by the LAG's appearance. However, its legitimacy to access the LAG's network is acknowledged on the basis of its seniority and infrastructure support. Thus, it is agreed that the Community chairman will, by right, chair ASIADER's Council, the LAG's decision-making body, and that its headquarters will be located in Tramacastilla, seat of the Community, as opposed to the city of Albarracín. A relationship of both geographical and organisational proximity is therefore created by imposing dependency on a pre-existing local power. The LAG provides a way for the Community to renew its legitimacy by allowing it to take part, and play a central role, in the new hotbeds of public action, including the management of tourism development, a sector on which its economic survival strategy lies (the Community runs some properties for that purpose, such as the El Batán hotel and restaurant complex, the Orihuela campsite and the Guadalaviar inn, among others).

Access to European funds drives the creation of a network of associations. Four associations have been set up, all in defence of economic interests: two around the farming and timber sector, and two others in the tourism sector: AETSA (Entrepreneurs in Tourism Association)

⁹ Ley 7/1999, de 9 de abril, de Administración Local de Aragón.

which has about 30 members (3) and AVTR (Rural Gites Association¹⁰), with a dozen members (4). AETSA and AVTR joined the LAG's Council at its inception and, in order to strengthen their participation, a clause requires that the beneficiaries of European funds must at least join AETSA. This reflects the mechanism that was created so that tourism development stakeholders may play an important part in territorial development. Finally, a newly-created association joined the LAG in 2006: the Agri-food and Crafts Association (AAASA). Actively seeking marketing channels within the tourism sector, it started shifting tourism activities offered by the LAG towards agri-food (5).

The LAG's leadership in the Sierra's tourism development (the group provided financial support for the development of accommodation facilities, created tourist routes, set up a supralocal tourist office and promoted tourism via a dedicated website) was questioned in 2003 when a new government entity, the Comarca de la Sierra de Albarracín (6), was established as part of a lengthy political process of decentralisation of Aragon. It is headquartered in the eponymous city. Following the transfer of tourism responsibilities¹¹, the shift in the balance of power regarding the management of tourism development took place in three stages. First, by taking over the direction and implementation of a Destination Plan in the 2004-2008 period, the Comarca made sure that the activity was realigned to its advantage. Although its scope was limited in terms of economic impetus, it actually helped launch the new institution's activities (creation of its website – the tourism section of which is the largest – and of the tourist office). Then in 2011, the Comarca initiated a debate on the institutionalisation of the "Mesa de Empleo"¹², an informal place providing advice and consultation on ways of boosting employment created in 2010 as part of a regional program for rural development conducted by the LAG. The recruitment by the Comarca of one of the Mesa's promoters (as a *local development officer*) made consultation difficult and, for a while, the Mesa seemed to be affected by the conflicting rationales imposed by the limits of institutional belonging. The conflict split in two. Ancient ties prevailed and the Mesa ended up carrying on without any legal format, without the presence of any locally elected representatives and with the participation of that employee who maintained a renewed margin of freedom from the Comarca that she represents, while the Comarca simultaneously launched a Tourism Sector Council¹³. Finally, a new cooperative path seems to emerge given that AETSA and the Comarca are two sources of funding who interact with third parties (such as promoters of tourism projects).

According to tourism technicians in Aragon's Comarcas, regional decentralisation creates a territorial and institutional space for municipalities to embrace the same tourism project (Grupo Sociológico de Investigación Científica, 2006). However, neither in the implementation of the Destination Plan nor in the creation of the Tourism Sector Council does the Comarca seem able to complete this project. The LAG plays a key role in the creation of areas of cooperation both around the "Mesa de empleo", considered by local stakeholders to be more efficient because it is less political, and around the local development strategy.

The arrival in 2003 of the new government entity, the Comarca de la Sierra de Albarracín, irrevocably disrupted the Historical Community's functions and occurred without any attempt to link it with the Historical Community (Latorre Ciria (Coord.), 2003). One year after the advent of the Comarca, the Historical Community promoted the creation of a Foundation for Development

¹⁰ The "*viviendas de turismo rural*", translated as "rural gites", are a form of tourist accommodation which is regulated by regional laws. In Spain, tourism in rural areas has developed on the basis of this kind of accommodation. In the Sierra de Albarracín, all rural gites are located outside the city of Albarracín.

¹¹ Responsibilities assigned revolve around the regulation of tourism companies (accommodation, catering and active tourism), signage, management of tourist offices and statistical data collection, planning through Destination Plans and cooperation with municipalities as well as private and social sectors (Decreto 4/2005 of 11 enero del Gobierno de Aragón).

¹² Council for employment, training and business stimulation (Mesa de Empleo, Formación y Dinamización Empresarial), whose overall aim is to provide a link between social, economic and institutional agents who work in this field of public action.

¹³ According to the approved regulation, this council is an advisory, deliberative and discussion body where major issues surrounding tourism are addressed. Its purpose is to channel the participation of citizens and associations involved in tourism at intermunicipality level. The Council has only met once and the negative assessment provided by all respondents is widely shared. One of the reasons put forward was the presence of local officials.

(FDCA) (7) based on an old limited company formed in 1998. The new foundation comprises the Regional Institute for Development and the 23 municipalities, which make up the Community. As a vehicle, the FDCA supports the Historical Community's economic activity in tourism: stated objectives relate to the benefits of its properties for tourism through requests for management contracts and the organisation of cultural promotion activities.

Year 1996 was a turning point for local public action in the tourism area, not only because of the advent of a network of associations related to the LAG, but also as a result of the creation of the Santa María de Albarracín Foundation (8). The FSMA was created out of the experience gathered through the implementation of state programmes aimed at promoting youth employment in the field of heritage rehabilitation. This program served as a prime channel for transferring regional funds (Almagro et al., 2005) and continues today through the FSMA¹⁴. By virtue of its mandate to disseminate recovered heritage, the FSMA holds the main responsibility for managing the city's cultural offering and was recently involved in the provision of tourism services. It manages twelve cultural facilities, the use of which was granted to it; for example, the Bishop's Palace houses the Diocesan Museum, two conference rooms, 4 accommodation rooms and an Information Centre for the activities offered by the FSMA (guided tours of the city, meetings, workshops and cultural seminars). The FSMA maintains an exceptional level of cultural activity in this rural area, but it remains independent and almost entirely restricted to the city of Albarracín. In fact, it never joined the LAG.

Lastly, two other stakeholders played a part in the territory's tourism development within confined and overlapping areas: the protected natural area of Rodene's Pine Forest in 1995 (9) and the Cultural Park created in 2001 (10). These two entities come under the Government of Aragon, the Department for the Environment and the Department for Culture respectively. Both are justified by the existence of a distinctive landscape consisting of a native variety of pine trees and cave paintings listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1998. Capacity for action is uneven: the protected natural area lies in Albarracín and its manager is the Environment Adviser to the Comarca, while the Cultural Park's office is located in Bezas, a town with poor access located to the south-east of the area which the manager visits once a week. Their tourism activity mainly revolves around regulating Rodene's rock climbing by mountaineers and managing facilities for the dissemination of the heritage in question (several interpretive centres, trails, car parks and viewpoints).

In this context of reorganised proximities, links between individual stakeholders regardless of their affiliation or not to any of the aforementioned structures emerge and build a particular action system at local level. Interactions between stakeholders collected in 2015 around tourism development convey the dynamics at work of a local order shaped in a context of loss of technical and financial capacity, as is the case in most rural areas of Spain (Martín & Martín, 2014).

4.2 Local tourism policy as a result of multiple interactions at the crossroads between cooperation and conflict

Relationships between a finite number of individuals (13) were observed. Only one individual appears independently, all the other ones represent all ten organisations. The resulting matrix is symmetrical and directed (70 directed links including 49 positive and 21 negative ones, thus implying cooperative as well as conflicting relationships respectively) and is represented as a graph (Box 2).

¹⁴ Technical and management experience as well as working relationships maintained during those programs provided the basis for the formation of a Board composed of the town hall, the Bishop of Teruel and Albarracín (owner of several of the relevant buildings), the regional government and the Ibercaja bank.

Descriptive box			
Legend: A: FSMA Manager; B: AETSA Manageress; C: LAG Manageress; D: Local Development Officer; E: independent individual; F: PN Manageress; G: CP Manager; H: AVTR Chairman; I: Historical Community Chairman; J: AAASA Chairman; K: Mayor of Albarracín; L: FDCA Manager; M: tourism technician for the Comarca.			
Members of the LAG's Board: B, C, H, I and J.			
Fig. 1, 2 and 3: node sizes depend on the in-degree, node colours depend on the cluster, link sizes depend on reciprocity, link colours depend on the quality of the relationship (green for cooperation, red for conflict).			
Fig. 5, 6 and 7: link sizes and colours depend on the number of individuals (Fig. 5) and organisations (Fig. 6 and 7) shared, node sizes depend on the degree.			
Table of centrality indicators			
Indicator	Result	Indicator	Result
Density	45%	Clustering coefficient	0.51
Max. geodesic distance	2	Max. Min. In-Degree	10 2
Average geodesic distance	1.3	Average In-Degree	5.3

The LTAS (see Fig. 3) seems specific to a territory of limited size, where local stakeholders are heavily involved in the tourism strategy. A rather dense system emerges, but with intense cooperative relationships pitted against conflicting ones.”

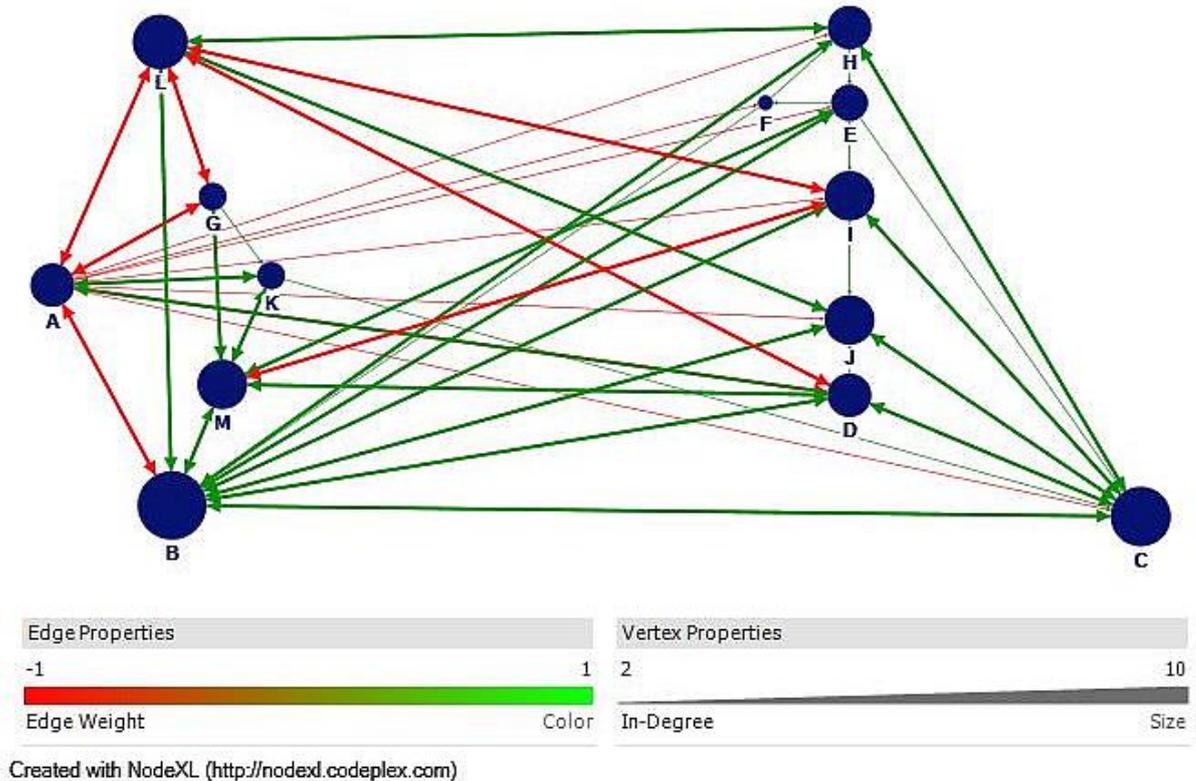


Fig 3. The local tourism action system (LTAS).

For a more detailed analysis of the organisational proximity, studying the relative position of each individual in the system enables us to identify stakeholders who play a more central role¹⁵. Among the better positioned individuals, the manageress of the Entrepreneurs in Tourism Association (AETSA) (B) is four times more prominent whereas the LAG's manageress (C) has a similar profile without being as sociable. The FSMA manager (A) seems well positioned on account of his sociability but in a negative sense, which already defines the *leaders* of two different networks: a network of cooperation and a network of conflict.

Within the LTAS cooperation network, two clusters are formed: the first one includes individuals who are primarily active in the Sierra, while the other involves individuals whose scope is restricted to or whose headquarters are located in the city of Albarracín. The presence of the tourism technician (M) in the second cluster helps foster relationships between both groups, which is explained by the role this individual plays in the exercise of the Comarca's responsibilities in tourism: this position is brought about by his financial capability, infrastructure and organisational centrality. Indeed, organic relationships, governed by regulations, account for much of this network of cooperation.

Other than the relationship functions attributed to the Comarca's technician, trade-offs achieved by belonging to the LAG structure translate into relationships between its manageress and the managers of the associations as well as between her and the Historical Community chairman (I). Also between the FSMA manager and one of his superiors: The Mayor of Albarracín (K). Funding plays an important part in such relationships, with contracting pertaining to funding helps to stabilise established relationships and structuring informal ones. In addition, a defined time for contractual relationships gives way to other logics of proximity based on trust, that remain even when the contractual relationship ends. In this regard, the 'mushroom picking' tourism project launched by AETSA went from being funded by the LAG to being supported by the Comarca, which helps foster relationships between the three individuals in charge of these organisations. However, those are not the only structuring relationships here: strategic cooperative work based on strong friendship and trust strengthens relationships between the LAG's manageress, the AETSA's manageress and the local development officer for the Comarca (D) as well as between the independent individual in charge of regulating the mushroom park project (E) and the Comarca's environment councillor (F) in whom he found a great supporter of the project.

At the same time, the local tourism action system is structured by conflict revolving mainly around four people: the FSMA manager, the manager of the other foundation, the Historical Community chairman and the tourism technician for the Comarca. Conflicting relationships stem from usage conflicts and lead to legitimacy conflicts. Usage conflicts involving individuals in charge of the foundations relate to a disconnect between public and private interests, all the more pronounced given the complex nature of the *foundation* category within the Spanish legal framework which is conducive to confrontation between public and private spheres (Lacruz Berdejo, 2004).

The FSMA manager's clash with the other individuals happens on two levels – supra-municipal and municipal – and revolves around his activity as a promoter of the city's built heritage, whose value is now recognised nationwide and which is the territory's most important tourist attraction asset. On the one hand, his ability to collaborate with the Sierra is heavily questioned: the cultural promotion model of the FSMA's heritage is considered elitist by most of the system's individuals with whom he has a conflicting relationship. "*The FSMA is an inward-looking oddity [...]. The villages of the Sierra are excluded from its superb programming [...]. Its classical music concerts are not intended for the area's inhabitants*" (06/03/2015 interview). A historical myth divides society between the city and the management of its heritage considered built by and for 'high-culture' and the expectations of the surrounding rural communities and their production of 'low culture'.

¹⁵ Centrality measurements selected here were popularity (in-degree centrality), sociability (out-degree centrality), in-betweenness (betweenness centrality) and proximity with well-connected individuals (eigenvector centrality).

On the other, the conflict is underpinned by the competitive approach in the delivery of tourism services and by the distance between the city's tourism development models sought internally. The FSMA's recently developed activity around tourism services is viewed with suspicion by the AETSA's manageress: "Promoted as artistic residencies, they are actually open to anyone" (06/03/2015b interview). Similarly, the FDCA's foray into the lucrative management of the Historical Community's infrastructure (in particular in accommodation and catering) is considered opaque and unfair, and its manager is the target of all discrediting views. The public source of their funds brings about confrontation, whether it is about explaining the positive starting point for development (09/04/2015 interview) or questioning the lucrative turning point (16/03/2015 interview). The myth that pits city against countryside takes a new form when materialising in the representations generated by business models for tourism goods and services. The FSMA's tourism activity is allegedly explained by the need for economic sustainability and to thwart the model used by some of the city's companies based on a physical and immaterial exploitation of the cultural heritage, which is both massive and trivialised (07/03/2015 interview).

Lastly, clashes between the Historical Community chairman and the rest of the people, and in particular the FDCA manager (who is of a different political allegiance) as well as the Comarca's technician, are eminently political. In the latter case, as seen above, it allegedly originates from the economic and political weakening of this historical institution.

4.3 Importance of affiliation with local and extralocal organisations in structuring the public action system

Here we examine in more detail the role played by multiple allegiances to networks of local or external stakeholders, at different levels and of different types, in structuring the system. To this end, the analysis is divided into two parts: the first one refers to relationships shared with the 'local universe' formed by the group of institutions, organisations and associations dotted around the local territory (See Figs. 4 and 5), whereas the second one refers to the relationships shared with other networks of stakeholders at different levels (See Fig. 6).

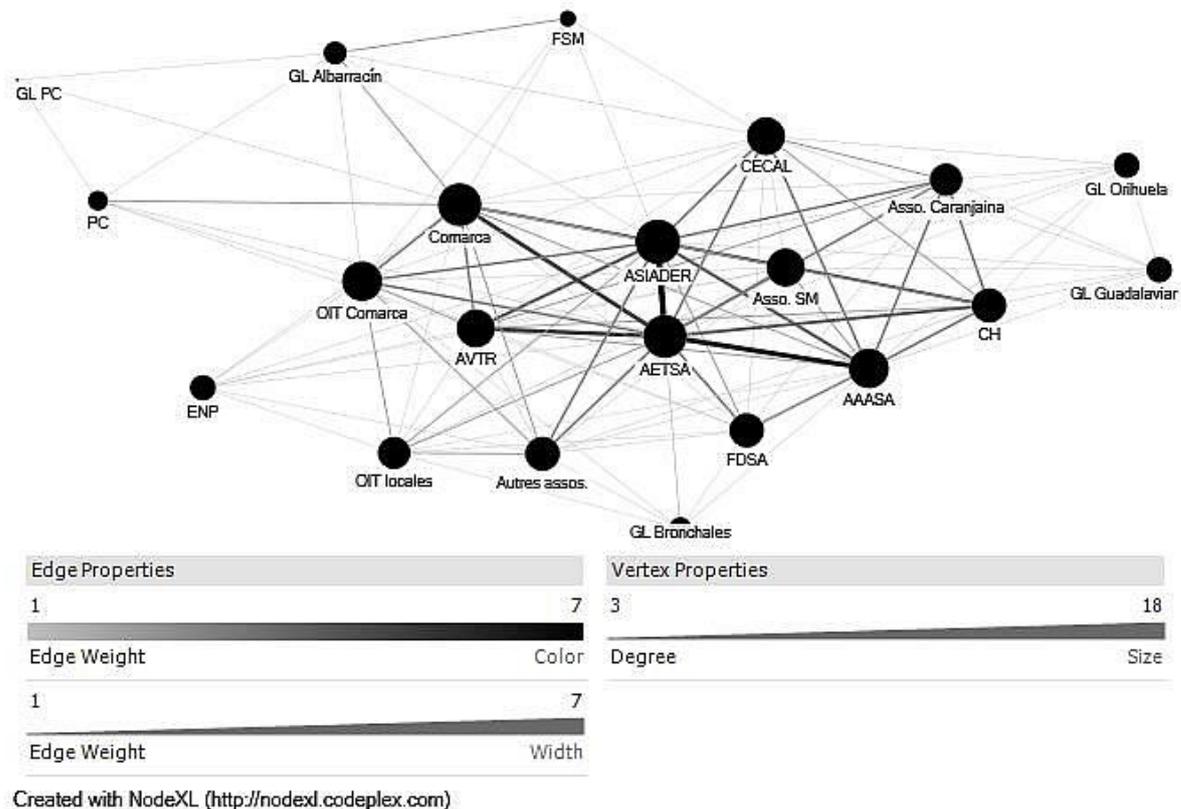


Fig 4. System structured by the number of individuals who maintain 'good relationships' with each pair of organisations.

Figure 4 shows how the most popular organisations, the LAG and AETSA, are also those with the largest number of individuals with whom they have good relationships. AETSA shares the largest number of reciprocal relationships with ancillary organisations such as employer's associations in agri-food and rural gites, and with the Comarca which includes the tourism technician and the local development officer. AETSA plays a major role in generating proximities within the cooperation system as shown in Fig 5. It is also confirmed that, more generally, relationships with this 'local universe' structure a large part of the system. There is only one exception: the ability to share the same kind of relationships with networks of local actors does not translate into proximity relationships within the system in the case of the Nature Reserve's manageress.

Identifying the interactions between individuals within the local system and the outside of the Sierra de Albarracín leads to this case study's multi-scale relationships. Very different in nature depending on the role each individual plays in tourism development, they occur both vertically (at different levels) and horizontally: different levels of government, professional associations, universities and research centres can hence be identified.

Relationships with the EU (mediated by the region), the State and the regional government are widespread among the organisations' managers (FSMA, LAG, Cultural Park) and the independent individual, and are driven by the search for funding aimed at developing their tourism activities. But their contacts with the outside world also extend towards other territories within the Aragon region as part of the search for and release of 'successful' recipes. For example, the Cultural Park's manager borrowed a telescope from the Gúdar Javalambre *comarca* to reproduce a night hiking activity. Similarly, the LAG's manageress turned to the Somontano de Barbastro *comarca* to find out about their local development project around the oil resource. Finally, the independent individual based his mushroom park project in Albarracín on a flagship project run by a *comarca* in the Navarre region.

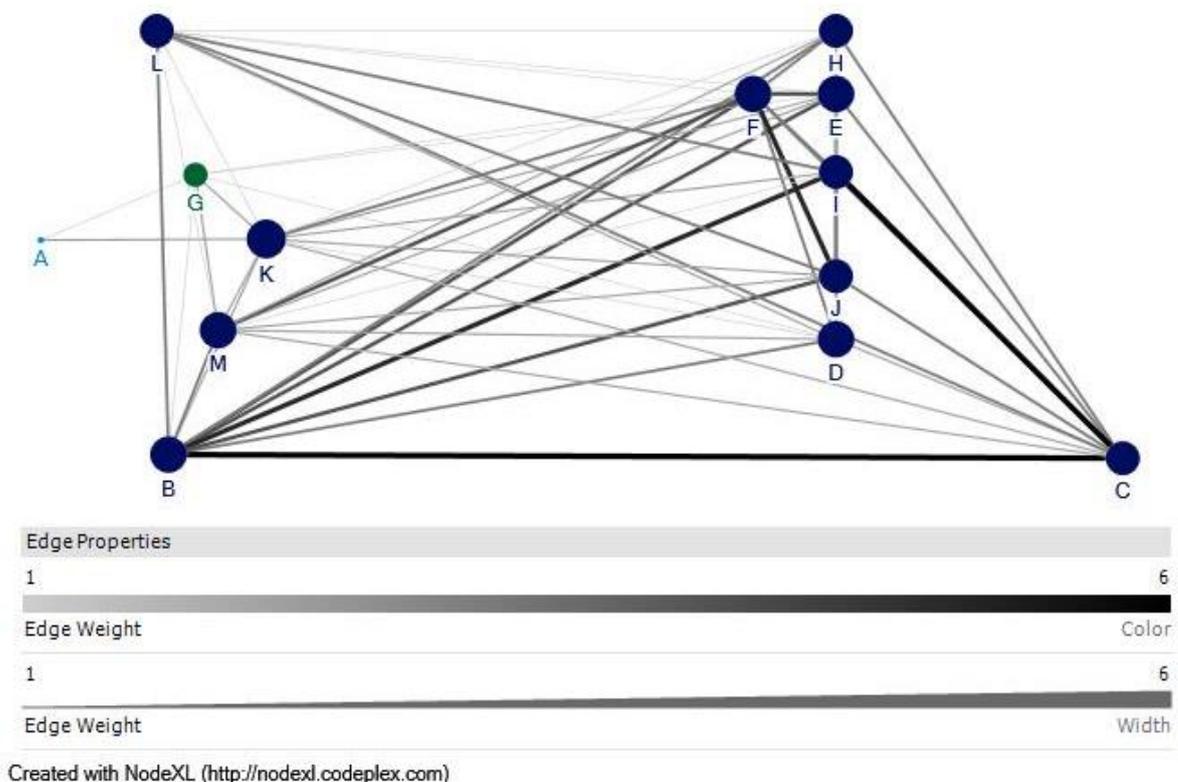
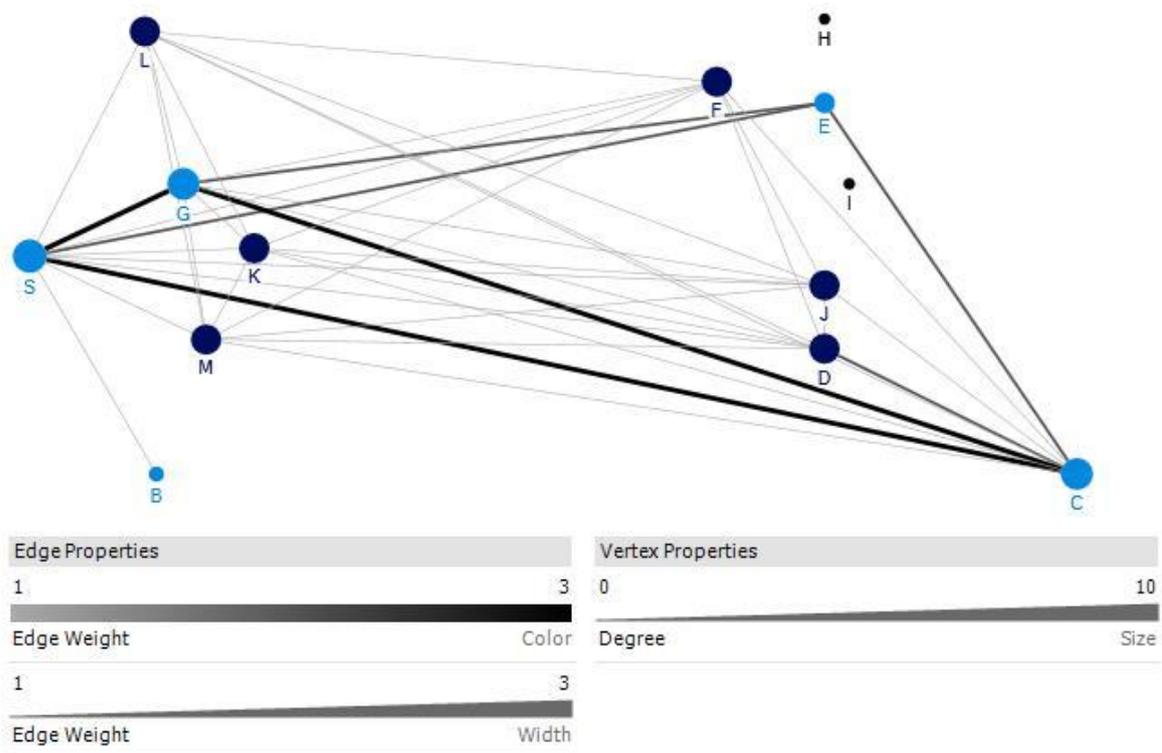


Fig 5. LTAS system structured by the number of organisations with which each pair of individual shares reciprocal relationships, whether positive or negative.

It is worth noting that the associative links maintained with the outside world are purely sector-based (rural gites, heritage, agri-food) and, as such, are not shared by the other members of the system. Therefore, the diagram (6) only shows the extra-local contacts with public institutions shared by pairs of individuals. The change in the structure is remarkable and centralities are re-enacted, with the exception of the LAG's manageress who, due to the role assigned to the LAG, remains a key player between territorial levels and whose mandate is inclusive and not sector-based. New centralities then appear because external links are perceived as a resource that will serve specific interests. In that sense, links are intensified by stakeholders who are more likely to turn towards the same higher political echelons. Lastly, some centralities disappear, as is the case for the associations' presidents (seen as too sector-based) and the Historical Community, which makes its position even more isolated from the wider political system. The change in the structure shows that relationships with the outside world do not greatly structure the LTAS.



Created with NodeXL (<http://nodexl.codeplex.com>)

Fig 6. System of relationships formed by the number of interactions that are shared with the same extra-local political institutions.

5. Conclusions and discussion

The proximity approach has enabled a reinterpretation of the territorialisation of public action instruments in light of the social relationships and the rearrangement of power at local level. The territorialisation of governance policy instruments such as LEADER implies that the existing geographical proximity within a historically and geographically coherent territory would be enough to develop an organised proximity able to guarantee a shared development project. Whilst some of the proximity relationships are built this way, from created opportunities, particularly in terms of funding, the social background of each territory plays an important role in structuring the networks upon receipt of the instruments. In other words, no public action system results solely from the normative organisation induced by public policy – the limiting and opportunity effects created around the building of proximities can be found at the heart of the territories.

The institutional project territory, represented by the Comarca and the LEADER area, seeks to expand as a tourist destination, therefore as a functional territory where, during their stays,

tourists would start visiting Albarracín before moving on to the surrounding area or vice versa. Yet the action system that emerges from the studied interactions among public action stakeholders involved in tourism is polarised. In the Sierra de Albarracín, where organised proximities are historically strong, the appropriation of governance policy instruments replicates the old divide between Albarracín and the Sierra.

In fact, disinterest and conflict seem to prevail against an attitude between stakeholders for cooperation due to the underlying ancient power structures and the inability to overcome them by means of tourism development for collective economic interest.

The action system illustrates the polarisation of productive relationships in the sharing of resources (informational, financial, infrastructure etc.) for tourism development. On the one hand, the action system that emerges in Albarracín is mainly formed by a single organisation and its proximity to the Mayor of the city, whose cultural resource management capacity (on which its existence is based) is almost absolute. It is also well connected at other levels outside the area. On the other, the action system that emerges in the Sierra is spatially larger and made up of several organisations (whose headquarters are even in Albarracín for some). The distance between Albarracín and the surrounding villages would be replicated today based on the competitive logic of tourism development. Indeed, it was found that action in the field of tourism was structured by a double tension between need (in times of economic crisis and decline in tourist arrivals) and rejection in a competitive environment without this double action system ever being questioned. The tourism strategy therefore induces coordination between stakeholders since they position themselves within these two poles.

The building of proximities at local level was observed from wider action systems, located at other levels and in other areas. We have thus identified non tourism-based local relationships as well as external relationships, which are valued in the development of tourism activities and have shown its role in the structuring of the local tourism action system. Membership of local organisations seems to structure it since they represent areas for building proximities 'on the periphery' of governance policy instruments. Then, although relationships with the outside do not determine the system's shape, the ability to switch levels is indeed an asset in terms of positioning within the action system, in this case a guarantee of autonomy and independence.

Considering the spatialisation of tourism development highlights the limits of this approach. Tourism infrastructure facilities are emerging around rock climbing (driven by sport associations located outside of the Sierra de Albarracín) and around a cultural tour called "Camino del Cid" (promoted by a public consortium from the local district), yet no individuals within the action system plan their relationships with these entities. Such shortcomings must be incorporated into a complete interpretation of the effects of the territorialisation of public policies also through their *inability* to create proximity relationships at local level.

Carrying out such a study leads us to question the relationship between the capacity for action and the development of tourism in the Sierra de Albarracín in the current context of increased inbound tourism. Today, such a system seems limited when attempting to cooperate at an intermunicipality level. If tourism flows reactivate, would it help decompartmentalising the public action system or strengthen the competitive rationale?

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