Competing Notions of Diversity in Archipelago Tourism: Transport Logistics, Official Rhetoric and Inter-Island Rivalry in the Azores

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Abstract: Contending and competing geographies are often implicitly involved in archipelagic spaces. Various small island states and territories with multi-island geographies have flourishing tourism industries that presuppose an archipelagic experience: visitors are encouraged to explore and sample different island constituents of the territory. This strategy taps into different tourism niche markets, improves local value added, and shares tourism revenue beyond key nodes and urban centers. The organization of such an important economic activity however often reflects a 'one-size-fits-all', tightly coordinated, frequently contrived process that does not necessarily speak to the cultural and biogeographical forms of diversity that reside in the archipelago. This paper offers the notion of archipelago as a new way of rethinking problems and challenges encountered in island tourism, and then assesses the implications of this conceptualization on the representation of 'the archipelago' in the Azores, Portugal, and reviews what this approach means and implies for sustainable tourism policy.

Keywords: archipelago; Azores; brand consolidation; hub-and-spoke; islands; pluralism; rivalry; tourism

Introduction

Imagine an island holiday that takes you to explore volcanic landscapes, watch whales, do adventure walks in tropical jungles, and sample cultural events in local village feasts. This is archipelago tourism: activities and events that take place on different islands sharing the same regional location, not necessarily belonging to the same country, and invariably incorporating inter-island travel by sea and/or air. It is a specific tourism experience not yet recognized as a specific policy area or field of academic inquiry. Indeed, "little has been written about the effects of geography on archipelagic nations" (Bethel, 2002, p. 240). "Islands and archipelagos pose unique challenges for tourism policy. While tourism development in islands is well studied, little attention has been given to archipelagos and their special challenges" (Bardolet and Sheldon, 2008, p. 900).

Various small island states and subnational island jurisdictions have opted for an enclave tourism policy that reduces or stems cultural pollution (think all-inclusive resorts); but, with their multi-island geographies, some have preferred a more even spread of tourists, and their economic benefits. The latter can involve archipelagic tourism strategies: visitors are encouraged to explore and sample different island constituents of the territory; there is often a deliberate attempt at product differentiation by the tourism authorities that seeks to appeal to different tourist types, and to suit different pockets. This strategy is intended mainly to boost the tourism experience, while maximizing visitations and length of stay, contributing to enhanced revenue generation. The focus here is on the management of diversity, and on how this condition can be expected to expand the impact, flavour and appeal of a particular tourist destination.

But the plurality of an archipelago can be elusive; it may not easily lend itself to control and profiling; it may not fit submissively into tight historical or cultural compartments; it could defy coordination and organization; and it could express itself via a cacophony of voices, aspirations and identities that clash with the 'official', smart logo, brand, *identity* and *history* – rather than *identities* and *histories* – of the island group. "Each island, however small, tends to have a distinct history, certain unique cultural characteristics, and often its own language or dialect" (Hamilton-Jones, 1992, p. 200). Nor is the differentiation that exists within an archipelago necessarily and inherently island based: we err by essentializing islands if we assume so. Difference could rather be region, theme or product based, involving sub-island and/or multi-island units of analysis, with clubs or clusters, each with their own specific marketing strategies, combining and separating islands at will (e.g. Edwards, 2004, contrasting the north and south of Tenerife).

Figure 1: An example of the visual representation of archipelagic tourism: the Islands of the Bahamas. Source: World Travel Market (2013).

These difficulties can be camouflaged in official narratives about these island spaces, including those presented in attractive visual tones (see Figure 1). Marketing agencies can do some aesthetically wonderful work in celebrating island differences in complementary tones. The signal is one of synergy, a pleasant bouquet of island experiences that beckon visitors to practise "island hopping" (Bahamas Promotion, 2010), and come and sample as many islands as possible. After all, "every island has its own character, its own atmosphere and subtle differences in culture" (ibid.).

And yet, to what extent are such discourses, and the harmony they infer, constructed and hyped versions of an altogether different practice: one driven by intense inter-island rivalries, one characterized by too similar island destinations competing for the same tourists, one where there are other differences between and within islands which may be socially and historically more relevant than what is officially portrayed, but which are dismissed as not appropriate or 'incorrect' for branding and marketing purposes?

In a recent seminal paper, it has been argued that an archipelago or 'island-island' relationality is a welcome alternative to both the 'land-sea' and 'mainland-island' approaches that have tended to dominate (in) island studies (Stratford, Baldacchino, McMahon, Farbotko, & Harwood, 2011). It is also suggested that there "is need ... to explore alternative cultural geographies and alternative performances, representations and experiences of islands" (ibid., p. 114). These alternative geographies and performances include the multiple ways in which 'diversity' can be represented, and managed in a particular archipelagic setting; and embrace the manner in which such representations align, or fail to align, with both techno-economic considerations of transport logistics as well as the socio-cultural understandings of islanders of their own internal status images, divisions and hierarchies. While diversity could be packaged as a form of comprehensive complementarity for branding purposes, it can clash rudely with both alternative home-grown conceptualizations of the life world, and with technoscapes deemed necessary to bring marketing strategies to fruition.

This paper

This paper developed after we had exchanged various e-mails in the run-up to a week-long international migration conference held in São Miguel, Azores, in September 2011. At that point, Godfrey Baldacchino (GB) was exploring the potential use of the concept of the archipelago as a heuristic device, offering an approach to island studies that privileged island-island relationalities. In the course of a week of conversations, this interest met the enthusiasm of Eduardo Costa Duarte Ferreira (ECDF): a PhD candidate looking at migration in the context of the Azorean archipelago. Together, they were quick to realize that this 'archipelagic turn' could help shed some critical light on tourism policy in the Azores. GB, who had twice been to the Azores before, was aware of some inter-island rivalries; thanks to ECDF, they were able to recognize these as symptomatic of a certain type of enduring inter-island difference: one that did not feature in the official positioning of the Azores as a diverse destination. The island identity was clearly significant: even the Azorean communities in the diaspora would tend to organize themselves around their island of origin, just as they would be most likely to return again to their island of origin should they decide to resettle home (*e.g.* Rocha *et al.*, 2011; Teixeira, 2006; Teixeira & Murdie, 2009).
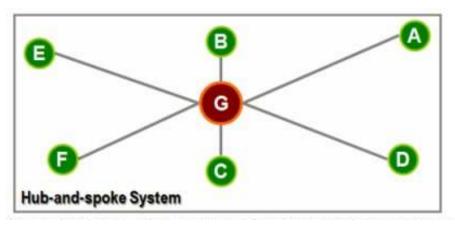
This paper emerged from various conversations between its two authors, a focused literature scan of archipelago tourism (practically all of it in relation to specific islands or jurisdictions), information solicited from other colleagues working or based on archipelagos that are tourism destinations, and a set of six semi-structured interviews that ECDF conducted with stakeholders in the Azorean tourism industry during 2012 (see Appendix 1). The interviews (conducted in Portuguese) elicited respondent opinions about tourism policy of the Azores, the extent to which this was sensitive to both inter-island differences and similarities, and how these sensitivities (or lack thereof) impacted on the long-term sustainability of the industry for the island region.

Forms of archipelago tourism

Organizing archipelago tourism is an important economic activity, and especially so for warm water islands which, unlike their cold water cousins, have a considerable economic dependence on tourism (e.g. Baldacchino, 2006; 2013). This dependence however often conceals a tightly coordinated, top-down, centre-periphery logistic relationship. The typical and simplest state of

affairs is the hub-and-spoke network model, found in several sectors of modern society, including road transportation, telecommunication, and aviation logistics (Horner & O'Kelly, 2011). In this scenario, as it applies to archipelagos, the central island (usually, the one with the location of the capital city and the bulk of the resident population) is often the only one with an international airport, or seaport: all visitors on commercial flights to 'offshore' islands must then transit through the main island or transit hub alongside. Inter-island links that do not involve the central hub are rare or non-existent, or rarely if ever advertised or communicated to visitors (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Schematic model of a hub-and-spoke systemic approach to transport management. Source: adapted from Coyle, Bardi, & Novack (1994, p. 402).

This model has inherent advantages: it concentrates traffic, grouping passengers with the same travel origin but possibly different final destinations in 'feeder flights'. It also concentrates the required infrastructure to/from one location, reaping economies of scale, and avoiding costly duplication. However, hubs potentially increase bottlenecks, such as arrival and departure delays and traffic congestion. Moreover, most visitors would then tend to spend their time, and money, in that same location, or use it as their base if and when they venture to other islands (*e.g.* Costa, Lohmann & Oliveira, 2010). Ironically, in this business model the branding of the offshore islands (and the vigorous affirmation of how different they are from the main island) is an exercise accomplished by *central* tourism agencies or state departments, and rarely by the offshore islands themselves or their representatives. Such is the general situation in the Seychelles (Indian Ocean) – where the international airport was opened in 1972; the Maldives (Indian Ocean) – airport opened in 1966; the Bahamas (Caribbean, in relation to its 'family islands'); and Malta (in the Mediterranean, in relation to Gozo and depopulated Comino). Thus, the self-evident logistical and infrastructural dominance of the centre *vis à vis* the outer island(s) suggests a similar but more nuanced imposition by the centre/main island of the grand narrative that plays out for tourists about the different islands in the group. Archipelagic diversity yes; but on whose terms, and in whose words? After all, "narrative *constructs* … language has the capacity to make politics" (Hajer, 2006, pp. 66-67, emphasis in original).

There is another set of pressures that tends to drive what may initially have been a classical 'hub and spoke' model into one where the different island constituents each develop their airport and/or seaport infrastructure. In democratic island societies, where representatives are elected from multiple island constituencies, and where the smallest islands may have a

disproportionately large influence on regional decision making, a series of policy decisions may come into play whose outcomes slowly but surely act to reproduce transport infrastructure, and develop direct flight and/or ferry connections to key national and international destinations, bypassing the erstwhile central island hub.

Below is a partial and schematic review of a two archipelago tourism destinations, Hawai'i and Canaries, where this process has occurred. The material is merely illustrative and is not meant to constitute a representative sample.

Hawai'i, USA

In the US state of Hawai'i (Pacific), there are seven populated islands. All have airports, and four are designated as 'international': the main one in the capital of Honolulu on Oahu (the most heavily populated island and seat of state government); one on Maui; and two on Big Island (Hilo and Kona). These four airports are the main conduits for tourist visitations, largely from the continental US. Inter-island sea or air transport is common.

Figure 3: Tourist Map of the US State of Hawai'i. Source: Go Hawaii (2012).

Interestingly, the official representation of an island archipelago can go so far as to thoroughly erase one or more of its constituent members: since tourists cannot visit, it does not exist. Thus, two of the central islands in the Hawaiian archipelago are omitted from the tourist map found on the state tourism portal (see Figure 3). One is the sacred and uninhabited island of Kaho'olawe; the US military used it for target practice for many years, and there is still a danger of unexploded ordnance on the island (Ollhoff, 2009, p. 25). The other is privately owned Ni`ihau, a haven for Niihau natives, who can have no contact with tourists, and a site for US military testing (e.g. Capos, 2012).
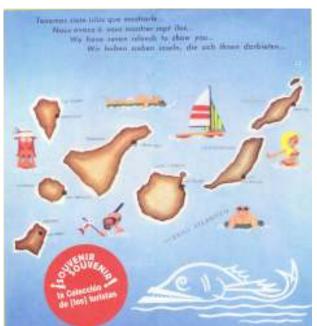
Canary Islands, Spain

Even more devolved is the Spanish Atlantic archipelago of the Canaries. The seven populated islands (with some two million residents) have different histories and benefit from very different physical geographies, sometimes with contrasts on the same island: this positions them towards different tourist market segments. There are currently four international airports: one on Fuerteventura, one on Gran Canaria, and two on Tenerife. A strategic plan recently commissioned by the Regional Government of the Canary Islands appeals for a greater respect

for, and stronger consolidation of, an overall Canary brand. Any exploitation of differences within the archipelago needs to be carefully managed within a simple but effective marketing strategy that puts the focus on the Canaries *as a whole*, and as the provider of a multiple tourism product. This strategy would require more resource consolidation at the hands of the regional government. The island councils (*los cabildos*), however, and perhaps not surprisingly, disagree: these have their own tourism strategic plans, and archipelago issues do not feature prominently (for example, for Tenerife, *Estrategia Tourista de Tenerife,* 2008).

The archipelago is also long subject to a historical rivalry between the two largest and most populated islands, Gran Canaria and Tenerife, each of which is now the seat of a distinct province (as well as two distinct universities). Nevertheless, visual and official cues reflect edits that are common across both official and tourism driven representations of archipelagos: the seven main islands are accorded equal status as members of the region on official maps; and they are often represented as being closer and less diverse in size than they actually are (see Figures 4a and 4b).

Figure 4a: 'We have seven islands to show you': tourism-driven representations of the Canarian archipelago. Source: Source: Exposition entitled: Souvenir! La Colección de[los] turistas, Tenerife and Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain, 2012. Figure 4b: Actual (to scale) map of the Canary Islands. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Enter the Azores

The Azores is a Portuguese subnational island jurisdiction in the mid-Atlantic Ocean with some 247,000 inhabitants, spread over 600 km of ocean along a general WNW-ESE strip (see Figures 5a & 5b); it presents itself as an even more diverse archipelagic configuration. The islands, an overseas region of the European Union, were ranked second out of 111 world island destinations for sustainable tourism. This report card states that "locals are very sophisticated"

(National Geographic, 2007: 110). We argue that the depth and sophistication of Azorean culture is more than meets the eye, and certainly more than the official narratives suggest.

Except for Bardolet and Sheldon (2008), we are not aware of any academic studies that have specifically adopted an archipelagic outlook towards the understanding of tourism among the several islands of the Azores: in fact, not a single entry for 'archipelago' appears in the keyword index for all 38 volumes of the *Annals of Tourism Research* – a leading scholarly tourism journal - published during 1973-2011 (Xiao, 2012).

Figures 5a (left) and 5b (right): The Azorean archipelago, and its location in the Atlantic Ocean (marked with a circle) and with respect to Portugal (in green) and the rest of the European Union (in blue) of which the Azores forms part. Source: Tour Azores (2010).

Figure 6: Nine Stars of Equal Size: Flag of the Azorean Autonomous Regional Government. Source: Autonomous Regional Government of the Azores.

All the Azorean 'great green ships' (after Updike, 1964), or the nine populated islands – each represented by an equally-sized star on the region's flag, and equidistant from one other (Figure 6) – have airports, but three are main international exemplars: the main one just outside Ponta Delgada, on the island of São Miguel; the other two at Lajes, on the island of Terceira, and at Horta, on the island of Faial. Explaining part of this different archipelagic character are long running tensions between the two main cities of the archipelago – Ponta Delgada, the capital, and, on Terceira, Angra do Heroísmo, a UNESCO world heritage city, closer to the centre of physical gravity of the scattered island group. In the Azores, Ponta Delgada may be the administrative capital, but the Regional Assembly and Regional Tourist Board are located in Horta; the judiciary and the Roman Catholic diocese are located in Angra do Heroísmo.
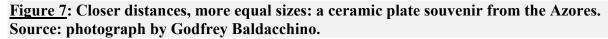
Lending weight to the decentralization that may be inferred from such an institutional fragmentation is the demographic data. Ponta Delgada only contains around 25% of the total resident population of the Azores, reflecting the region's scattered population. Compare this figure to 30% for Victoria, Mahé Island, in relation to the Seychelles; 30% for Honolulu in relation to the state of Hawai'i; 33% in Male in relation to the Maldives; 60% for Nassau/New Providence in relation to the Bahamas as a whole; and 92% for mainland Malta in relation to the Maltese archipelago (Malta, Gozo and Comino). The distribution of the population of the Azores by island (Table 1).

Table 1: Azorean Population Distribution by Island: 1981–2011.
Source: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, *Censos*, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011.

	1981	1991	2001	2011
Santa Maria	6,500	5,922	5,578	5,552
São Miguel	131,908	125,915	131,609	137,856
Terceira	53,570	55,706	55,833	56,437
Graciosa	5,377	5,189	4,780	4,391
Sao Jorge	10,361	10,219	9,674	9,171
Pico	15,483	15,202	14,806	14,148
Faial	15,489	14,920	15,063	14,994
Flores	4,352	4,329	3,995	3,793
Corvo	370	393	425	430
AZORES	**243,410**	**237,795**	**241,763**	**246,772**

The location of the three main international airports corresponds to the islands with the three largest capacity for tourist accommodation: Sao Miguel, Terceira and Faial (Moniz, 2009: 324). This pattern of unequal distribution of hotels and other accommodation facilities is further skewed by its urban bias: more than half of all beds in the Azores are to be found in Ponta Delgada (49%) and Angra do Heroísmo (11%) (Serviço Regional de Estatística dos Açores, 2011).

In any case, what is clear is that demographic statistics, hotel stock and tourism visitation numbers (about which more below) present a picture of diversity and inequality that official discourse seeks to camouflage and tone down. It is not just the flag that renders each of the nine islands of equal size; souvenirs can also represent the island group in a way that both reduces the relative difference in the size of the islands, and also shortens the physical distances between them (Figure 7; compare this to the map in Figure 5a).

Figure 7: Closer distances, more equal sizes: a ceramic plate souvenir from the Azores. Source: photograph by Godfrey Baldacchino.

Data and its challenges

Of course, one of the difficulties in undertaking any empirical studies to assess the nature and dynamics of archipelago tourism concerns the quality of available data. Island states (Bahamas, Malta, Seychelles) and subnational island jurisdictions (Azores, Canaries, Hawai'i) at least have a state or sub-state regional identity; this means that authorities regularly measure tourist arrivals (and departures), which are then reported in regional statistics. Visitation statistics per island may also be available. If the data collecting methodologies do not change over time, then such trend data is comparable across various years.

The main difficulties arise with the proper identification of who is the 'tourist'. First of all, not all passengers on international flights are tourists. Many could be local residents, which could include expatriates with non-Portuguese passports returning home from trips abroad. Second, and typical for small island territories, there is a significant overseas Azorean diaspora, which visits its homeland regularly – indeed, this is one of the main reasons that there are direct international flights to the Azores from Boston, Oakland and Providence (USA), Toronto (Canada), Frankfurt and Munich (Germany), London (United Kingdom) and Amsterdam (The Netherlands) (Azores Web, 2012). Many Azorean émigrés may live overseas and maintain a Portuguese/European Union passport: they would easily remain excluded from tourism statistics. Third, there are many international passengers travelling on domestic flights, arriving in the Azores from Porto or Lisbon, on the Portuguese mainland. Fourth, the Azores benefits from considerable domestic tourism: mainland Portuguese or Madeirans visit the islands. Fifth, various international flights transit in the Azores, coming, say, from Canada or the USA and heading on to Lisbon or to Porto as their final destination. Their passengers are not necessarily visiting the Azores. Finally, the status of passengers does not disclose the

purpose of their visit: not all may be tourists in the narrow sense of the word: some may be students, or workers, or traveling on business. Mainly for these reasons, we have decided against collating data based on airplane passenger arrival statistics.

We have instead looked more closely at the statistics pertaining to foreign visitors (non-nationals) staying in Azorean hotels (Table 2). This approach eliminates the inclusion of tourists who may have family and/or friends in the Azores, perhaps even a second home, and would therefore be tourists but not lodged in hotels. In any case, these visitors are much more likely to be Portuguese nationals or members of the Portuguese overseas diaspora. Moreover, anonymous accommodation statistics do not reveal if tourists are engaging in inter-island travel. Nevertheless, our approach likely provides a valid indicator of the spread of international tourist arrivals over time; and the extent to which this sheds light on the nature of Azorean tourism. The data presented as Table 2 allows some interesting observations. First, the 'hub-and-spoke' model remains dominant: international tourist traffic to São Miguel dwarfs that to all the other islands. Second, the situation in the four other 'gateway' islands suggests a vague convergence: but Pico has been steadily losing visitors until 2009; Terceira is only recently recovering after a peak in 2007; Faial has been doing well since 2003; and Santa Maria, because it is starting from a very low base, is gaining tourist visitors fastest of all.

Table 2: Number of foreign visitors (non-nationals) staying in Azorean hotels, by island with a gateway: 2001–2011. Source: Servicio Nacional de Estatística de Açores, http://estatistica.azores.gov.pt

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
São Miguel	56,329	53,820	58,671	74,751	103,886	104,403	99,784	96,442	93,099	98,835	100,382
Terceira	8,381	8,925	10,807	12,567	14,829	13,912	16,233	15,001	13,768	12,028	18,743
Faial	8,268	7,610	6,990	9,720	10,136	12,235	11,534	11,230	10,926	12,199	16,423
Pico	6,213	6,054	5,879	5,524	5,290	6,014	4,701	4,223	3,745	4,638	9,345
Santa Maria	1,199	910	1,035	1,545	1,474	1,890	1,778	2,064	2,349	2,701	3,974

Now, to what extent do these figures suggest that the Azorean archipelago is living up to its name and welcoming multi-island visitations? The Regional Government has certainly been making a pitch in favour of such a practice:

> One of the greatest assets is the archipelagic condition … a touristic experience ... on the basis of two or more islands is generally a richer and more satisfying experience than a tourist experience based on one island. Our mystique is more evident when we are understood in our insular plurality and archipelagic dimension (Regional Government of the Azores, 2008: 169).

Limited data is available; but a sample tourist satisfaction survey undertaken during two successive seasons – the summer of 2007 and the winter of 2007–8 – sheds some interesting light on the matter (Observatório Regional do Turismo, 2008a, 2008b). Thirty-three per cent of the respondents sampled were Portuguese. Despite a discernible seasonal variation, a large number of tourists to the Azores still visit only one island (Table 3):

Table 3: Number of islands visited by tourists in the Azores, during summer of 2007 (N=916) and the winter of 2007-8 (N=998) (by %). Source: Observatório Regional do Turismo (2008a, 2008b).

	Number of Azorean islands visited by tourists									
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**Total**
Winter 2007-2008	75.8	14.6	4.0	3.9	1.0	0.6	-	0.1	-	100% N=916
Summer 2007	63.8	14.1	10.9	8.8	1.7	0.2	-	0.1	0.4	100% N=998

What these figures suggest is that inter-island circulation in the Azores remains highly restricted. The 'gateway' island remains the locus and focus of the tourists' visit, more so in winter than in summer. This situation is partly a function of the geographical separation between the islands, and the financial and temporal costs of inter-island transport, specifics which are very unequal within the archipelago.

The weather is another major obstacle to timely inter-island connections, especially during the autumn and winter. An 'Azorean Circuit' package deal was being sold a few years ago to the main European markets, and including the Netherlands. This package offered tourists the possibility of visiting the three main islands (São Miguel, Terceira and Faial) during the same week; however, this offer proved most impractical since bad weather, and the cancellation and delay of inter-island flights, put at risk the tourists' ability to catch their flight back to the country of origin (e.g. Circuito Açores 8 Dias, 2007). During summer, when the weather is more favourable, tourists arriving in Faial have an easier opportunity to visit Pico and Sao Jorge by boat; for visitors arriving in São Miguel, it is similarly easier to visit Santa Maria.

Even so, these examples come across as the exceptions that justify the rule. It appears that Graciosa, Flores, and Corvo – all non-gateway islands – are the least visited: by less than 5 per cent of all visitors to the Azores. São Miguel stands out as the main island visited: four out of every five visitors to the Azores has been to this island, in summer as much as in winter; this is followed by Terceira, Faial, and Pico. Indeed, São Miguel is often the only island visited by tourists to the Azores (see Figure 8).
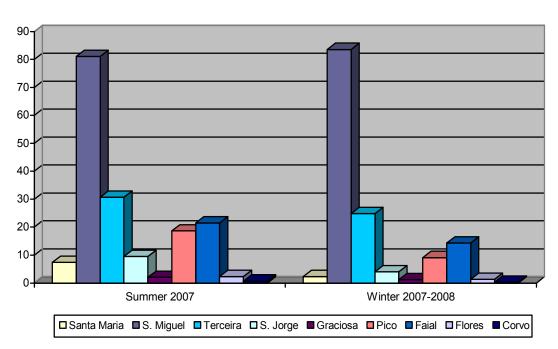
Figure 8: Percentage of visitors by island visited: summer 2007 and winter 2007-08 (%). Source: Observatório Regional do Turismo (2008a; 2008b); authors' calculations.

And so, this data begs two observations. First, the strategy to sell the diversity of the Azorean archipelago has so far not been very successful. The evidence suggests that most tourists who come to the Azores return to their country of origin having visited only one island (usually São Miguel). They remain unable to compare the specificities of that island to any other or with what is inferred or officially announced about them. The plurality and diversity of the Azorean archipelago – not only, but including, that diversity which is island based – thus remains a virtual and unfamiliar detail, to be glimpsed and consumed from a website, brochure or internet blog, if at all.

The second observation is a sober reflection on the extent to which it is worth continuing to drive the local economy of the less visited islands in the direction of a general type of (mass) tourism. Official encouragement for the construction of (even if small) hotel units, support for small businesses to sell arts and crafts and local products, and investment in the training of waiters needed to serve the 'regular tourist', are initiatives that end up not having the expected economic and social return within this framework. Presently, this official discourse may already be seen as a deception to many economic agents and stakeholders in the hospitality industries of the 'small five' (Santa Maia, São Jorge, Graciosa, Flores and Corvo); it may eventually even be interpreted by them as a kind of deliberate trick or deception coming from the authorities. Is São Miguel really committed to help other islands upgrade their tourist numbers, in what could be a zero sum game where São Miguel would stand to lose?

The nature of rivalry

In an archipelago, the temptation is always great, at worst, to secede, and at best to disregard the political jurisdiction of the center (Lewis, 1974: 136). As with other island territories (*e.g.* Baldacchino, 2000: 27), on the Azores relations between the various settlements – parishes,

municipalities, islands and/or groups of islands (the extinct *distritos*) – are affected by ancestral rivalries and 'parochial tensions' (*e.g.* Da Cunha, Raposo, Estevão, & Enes, 1970).

> The geography alone embodies isolation – and then the isolation delves farther into a bag of tricks. It surprises people that the nine islands … are not exactly cheek by jowl … Inter- and intra-island rivalries seem inherent (De Melo, 1991, p. iii).

Such rivalries have historically been manifest in the oral tradition of the Azorean people; they remain alive mainly in various forms of folklore, including a specific type of Azorean popular music (*cantorias ao desafio*). This style involves a repertoire of anecdotes about each place or island, and brings to light several stereotypes about the Azorean people distinguished by island or community of belonging (Almeida, 1991, 1992; Dias, 2011).

Here are some examples of these anecdotes, as elicited mainly by ECDF thanks to his status and knowledge as an Azorean insider, his various local contacts, and a resident of São Miguel. They are indicative of the main stereotypes that circulate among islanders of the Azores archipelago. They permit a brief analysis of how these inter-island tensions are socially constructed and articulated.

In general terms, the inhabitants of Terceira and Santa Maria have tended to look at the inhabitants of São Miguel as snobbish and pretentious because of the latter's geographical size, its relatively large population, or its relative degree of development. On the other hand, *Micaelenses,* the people of São Miguel, are likely to accept condescendingly the jokes coming from the neighbouring island of Santa Maria – the latter call the *Micaelenses* 'Japanese' because of their accent, and their rural folk *'faquistas'* (people who brandish knives during fights), because of their short temper. The *Micaelenses*, on their part, never miss an opportunity to respond to the jaunts and jibes of islanders from Terceira. Part of their retaliation repertoire has been to refer to the inhabitants of Terceira as lazy and envious, only interested in having fun, and coveting all that already exists in São Miguel: from hotels and marinas to car races. Meanwhile, São Miguel and neighbouring Santa Maria maintain a special relationship; but Santa Maria still looks to São Miguel with a feeling of suspicion. The reverse is not true; sitting on the top perch, São Miguel can afford not to feel threatened by any community.

The rivalry between Faial and Pico is historically based on a vertical and almost feudal relationship, involving the rich and landowner class from Horta, capital of Faial, and the poor peasants from Pico. The island of Pico is known for its traditional knowledge of viticulture and wine production. For more than two centuries, the moneyed class of Faial owned land and vineyards on Pico, employing many local peasants, and establishing a dependency relationship over time. The outcome: the inhabitants of Faial do not hide a fear of vendetta to be exacted on them by the people of Pico, whom they do not trust. On the other hand, the response of the islanders from Pico underlies two aspects: the fact that Faial always depended economically on Pico; and its 'geographical inferiority'. Pico may be a small island but it lies at the foot of a majestic volcanic peak, the highest mountain in Portugal (at an altitude of 2,341 metres). These tensions and strategies are well presented in some popular sayings from either of the two islands. A popular saying from Faial goes: 'We cannot trust those from Pico, whether by the spoken or the written word'. But then, in quick repartee, a witty and popular saying from Pico advises: 'The best thing on Faial is the boat that sails towards Pico'.

These tensions are part of a hierarchical system, where a relative preponderance of tourist traffic rides side by side with jurisdictional clout, whether the islands are considered either singly or each as a member of one of three sub-regional island groups. An island's 'ranking' would also depend on the size of its resident population, its land area, and geographical location, all of which are material criteria. Within this system, and at any one of these two levels, there are both *dominant islands* and *satellite islands*. Island inter-visibility helps to ensure that neighbouring islanders have strong, and not usually complimentary, opinions about each other. But ranking is also a function of the status that an island may have enjoyed during specific historical periods. The nine Azorean islands are a permeable and dynamic system, consisting of a core and internally hierarchical sub-system of three islands (São Miguel, Terceira and Faial) with political, economic, religious, and cultural dominance throughout a history of settlement of almost eight centuries (Martins, 1992; 1999). During this time, these three contenders for the top spot have jockeyed for position, brandishing different assets: economic muscle in the case of Sao Miguel; religious and cultural functions on the part of Terceira; or the intimate connection with the ocean and navigation in the case of Faial. Such descriptors have functioned as markers of difference between these three and the other islands, paradoxically helping to forge and ensure the rich mosaic of the whole archipelagic social system. There is a tendency for the intensity of rivalry to manifest unequally, being richer on those islands where there is a greater subjective sense of inferiority and peripherality (e.g. Da Cunha *et al*., 1970, p. 142); in contrast, in places like São Miguel today, a certain complacency in the face of such tensions suggests a position of comfortable dominance.
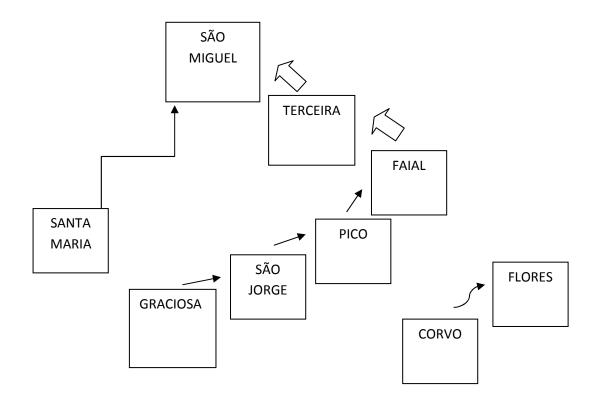
Following the last point, there is a tendency for the intensity of rivalry to also manifest unequally, being concentrated mainly on the island where there is a greater subjective sense of "inferiority", resulting from that perception, and after the evaluation and comparison between different statuses. Thus, and according to a system of binomial tensions proposed (ibid.), it is possible to structure the rivalries between the islands as a subconscious pecking order, as follows (see Figure 9). We do not think that these rivalries and tensions are either amusing social quirks or geographical pathologies. On the contrary, they are deep-seated political and emotional geographies, whose interrogation is essential to a more thorough understanding of the Azorean condition and its historical antecedents. And yet, ever since the region's autonomy status was put in place in 1976, successive governments have sought to remove the basis for such tensions. The political strategy followed has been to make every effort to level the playing field; carefully distribute the various functions of government between the main islands; build equally strong infrastructure across the archipelago; and equip every island with similar and adequate sources of revenue, particularly through tourism.

Why a multi-centric approach to tourism?

In the Azores, the distribution of tourist flows along five current 'centres of gravity' – five international airports to date, the latest ones being constructed on Santa Maria and Pico – is the result of a deliberate economic policy being pursued by successive regional governments, with different political persuasions, since the early 1990s, and at accelerated pace since 2004 (Moniz, 1996, p. 71). These political efforts are being carried out in accordance to what official sources refer to as a *policy of regional cohesion*; a political principle that strives to respond to the large demographic, social, and economic asymmetries and differences that exist between the different islands of the Azores by seeking to achieve a condition of convergence. The objective of the cohesion policy is to provide similar opportunities to each of the nine island

communities of the Azores, opening the way to the equable and harmonious development throughout the archipelago. Of course, what this policy also means is that any socio-economic or geographic differences must not stand in the way of 'development': all Azorean islands and islanders deserve the same (large scale) tourism infrastructure in order to benefit from the same, successful type of tourism.

Figure 9: Representing the social hierarchy of Azorean islands in the local imagination. Source: the authors.

There is a political sub-text to these development plans and their emphasis on parity. Each of the nine islands, irrespective of its size, is guaranteed the election of at least two deputies, plus additional ones for every 6,000 voters, on a 57–member Regional Assembly. This level of representation privileges the smallest islands, and exercises considerable pressure on elected deputies to accept and satisfy the desires and wishes (rather than needs) that are expressed and articulated primarily by the main lobbies of their specific island constituency, institutionalized in nine island advisory councils. These tend to dig up old rivalries and jealousies between the different islands. A 'one size fits all' economic policy, therefore, comes across as an effective response by the political centre to such competitive parochial grassroots, and improves the likelihood of re-election.

Recognizing the problems of a cohesion policy

And yet, this strategy of appeasement brings its own challenges. First, is the uncritical acceptance of the cohesion policy, and of its implications. After all, the nine islands may share some characteristics but not others: they differ in size, population, landscape, even history and

culture, as well as what can be described as 'tourism products': Graciosa has fabulous thermal springs; Santa Maria offers unique opportunities for diving and big game fishing activities; Flores presents exceptional natural conditions for birdwatchers and botanists; Pico has its volcano and its lava-fed vines and wines; and so on. Moreover, all six least-populated islands except Corvo (Flores, Graciosa, Pico, São Jorge, Santa Maria) face falling populations (Table 1) and all six have a serious shortage of young and qualified personnel with which to ensure the effective functioning of any infrastructure and services aligned to the tourism industry. Within this six-island sub-group, different types of service cultures come to play in dealing with visitors: this is largely a function of the historical experience of each island population in welcoming and socializing with the *estrangeiro*. Due to their proximity to Faial (long known for its international sailboat port), people in Pico and São Jorge have considerable experience playing hosts to visitors from all over the world. In contrast, islanders elsewhere among the six have remained more isolated, with fewer and less regular contacts with the outside world.

Encouraging people on each of the nine islands to improve their capacity to host more tourists may not necessarily foster development; it may even threaten their future viability and attractiveness. Such a gross model of economic growth predicated on convergence does not acknowledge or respect that a different set of physical and cultural attributes could be put to better use if they appeal to a different type of tourist and tourist niche. Such complementarity, should tourists be or become aware of its existence, offers a more likely form of sustainable tourism; is better aligned to local resources; encourages more visitors to visit more than one Azorean island; and is a much more robust strategy in the face of eventual tourism downturns and crises, as is the current fiscal situation in Portugal (e.g. Wise, 2012).

Second, the character of diversity of the constituents of the archipelago is constructed, driven, coordinated, and decided from the centre. Of course, 'brand consolidation' is important: potential tourists, tour operators, and travel agents need to receive uncompromising and non-conflicting market signals about specific places (e.g. Baldacchino, 2010). So, for example, in the Azores each of nine colours represents what each of the nine Azorean islands is purported to offer: green for São Miguel and its pastures; brown for São Jorge for its rocks, and so on (e.g. Metropolis Conference 2011, p. 116). But to what extent do these markers of difference and complementarity, constructed by marketing professionals and endorsed by politicians, dovetail with local sentiments and meet local approval? Or do they rather act as fabricated tourist bait, providing a very particular and peculiar rainbow of concocted diversity? In some cases, the contrived nature of the colour and its rationale is even more explicit, and verges on the ludicrous, the trite, and the banal: take Graciosa which, we are told, is known as the white island due to its landscape "… and the names given to certain places"; Terceira, with its world heritage city status, is supposed to be known as the purple island "due to its lilac grape bunches" (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: One distinct colour for each island: The official representation of Azorean diversity. Source: Metropolis Conference (2011, p. 116).

São Miguel known as the green island due to its green pastures and fields.

Flores known as the pink island due to a great profusion of wild flowers especially hydrangeas, which have large blue or pink petals.

Santa Maria known as the yellow island due to the abundance of yellow broom on the island.

Faial known as the blue island due to the different colours of blue that decorate the houses and that divide the fields and line the roadsides.

Corvo known as the black island due to the lava walls that divide its fields and pastures.

Graciosa known as the white island due to its landscape and names given to certain places like "Pedras Brancas" or White Stones, "Serra Branca" or White Mountain and "Barro Branco" or White Clay.

São Jorge known as the brown island due to its rocks.

Terceira known as the purple island due to its lilac grape bunches.

Pico known as the grey island due to its outstanding mountain, the highest point in Portugal.

What alternative narratives and dimensions of diversity are unacknowledged, stifled, or muted? Does it not make more sense to recover other, culturally engrained – dare one say more authentic – aspects of identity from the different islands and, at the very least, align these with the existing brand? As things stand, the brand is somewhat contrived: could it not, should it not, be aligned more closely to geographically, sociologically and historically actual features, traits and tensions?

We offered these key questions to six stakeholders from the Azorean travel and tourism industry (and who hail from different islands). Their responses largely confirm an alignment with the specific island brand; but at least two respondents are critical enough to recognize that the island characteristics showcased for tourist purposes are consequences of 'marketability' rather than 'authenticity': official concoctions created and based, for instance, on stereotypes

and seasonable events: as in the case of Santa Maria, known as the 'Island of the Sun' and where, during the summer, several music festivals are held. One respondent insightfully questions whether this very island–specific approach carries much merit, since it underplays the proximity of islands to each other:

> The authorities forget that, apart from any endogenous features and advantages of Santa Maria, the island is very close to São Miguel. This fact should be taken into account; it should be seen an advantage, but no one sees it from this angle.

Why not appreciate and acknowledge that an island may also be attractive based on its historic relations with another island or islands?

Conclusion

This paper has fleshed out some of the contending and competing geographies involved in archipelagic spaces. It has done so by probing into the cultural nuances of (albeit overly essentialized) Azorean island lives, as expressed in inter-island rivalries and tourism marketing pitches, and the all-too-glaring gaps, differences, and inconsistencies between these practices. We contend that this approach is an important tool with which to consider the plurality of archipelagic narratives and to explore more critically how these narratives intersect, align, or jar with any official rhetoric(s) of representation and of routings made available through transport logistics. Marketing strategies speak highly of brand consolidation; yet, the analysis of praxis, at least in the case of the Azores, suggests that brand consolidation may unfold at the expense of either showcasing diversity, or presenting its fake, fairy tale, rainbow rendition.

Inter-island rivalry does not seem to interfere with the proper promotion of the Azores as a tourist locale. The implicit understanding here is that rivalry is unattractive, shatters the more harmonious profile of the islands presented by tourism discourse and official representations of the islands – uncompromisingly united and equal, like the nine stars on the flag – and should anyway not feature in tourism promotion. We beg to differ: there is certainly scope and potential in recognizing other forms of inter (and intra) archipelagic diversity beyond the official paraphernalia and glossy brochures; especially those that resonate more closely with political history and socio-cultural praxis. The Azores may stand a better chance of holding on to, and even perhaps reinforcing, its reputation as a premier tourism destination if it integrates less sham and contrived, multiple voices into its representation.

Of course, *how* this integration could be effectively accomplished remains an interesting question for further consideration. Like Grydehøj (2008), we suggest that, if archipelagos wish to promote their diversity more faithfully and effectively, then the unity within that diversity needs to become more anthropologically sensitive to actual and historically valid forms of difference.

Such observations offer what may be a fresh perspective to tourism marketing in other archipelagos, and particularly for archipelagic states, often with centralized government agencies (including tourism departments) that venture and apply their own representation of the diversity of their territory, including the definition of that territory's diversity. This is a task that states may undertake with some urgency, especially in large archipelagic and decolonizing territories such as Indonesia or the Philippines, with a keen eye towards nation building and the enhancing of the polity's credentials as a unitary state, in control of its own representation.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1:

Interviews were conducted by ECDF with the following:

Catarina Cymbron, travel agent, Melo Travel Agency (São Miguel Island).

Humberto Pavão, owner of Plátano Hotels (São Miguel), and regional delegate for Hotels Association of Portugal in the Azores.

José Pacheco de Almeida, former Regional Secretary for Transport and Tourism, and former Chief Executive Officer of SATA Airlines.

Laurinda Sousa, director and board member of the Association for Tourism in Rural Areas, and owner of a cottage/house for rent (Santa Maria and São Miguel).

Lizete Albuquerque, tour guide (Graciosa).

Pierluigi Bragaglia, owner and manager of a private lodging unit, and author of several Azorean tourist guide books (Flores).