

**LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE AS STRATEGIC RESOURCES FOR RURAL
DEVELOPMENT.
THE EXAMPLE OF THE LOUSÃ MOUNTAIN (CENTRAL PORTUGUESE
MOUNTAIN RANGE).**

PAULO CARVALHO

*Centro de Estudos Geográficos
Universidade de Coimbra*

3000-447 Coimbra - Portugal; Fax: 351 239 836733; E-Mail: ohmega@clix.pt

Abstract

To accept that societies and geographical spaces are heterogeneous, fluid and complex, perhaps the principal feature identifying post-modernity, is to acknowledge that no unique and uniform ways of reading, organizing and operating with regard to territories are emerging.

The integration of rural spaces into global competitive dynamics, the achievement of social and territorial equity, the sustainable use of natural resources, innovation and creativity are the strategic guidelines that indicate a new view of these territories.

Heritage and landscape are part of the affirmation of cultural values in the development process.

After identifying the “Serra da Lousã” (Lousã Mountain) problems and potentialities, we shall present the news strategies includes actions and intervention projects for all the agents involved in development at local level, focusing particularly on enhancing heritage resources (in the broad spectrum of both natural and cultural dimensions). These should aim to rationalize the financial resources entailed, to reconcile the economic, social, cultural and environmental facets, to strengthen the image and identity of the rural territories, to affirm sustainable tourist activity and to improve the living conditions of the mountain-dwelling population.

Keywords: Landscape, heritage, population, rural development

1. The challenges and opportunities for the rural world in the context of new development philosophies

In recent years, there has been a growing reassessment of the importance of the rural world (in which new focuses based on quality have been rediscovered) and of the values of rural life (which are also changing) for the balance and cohesion of the system itself. In Europe, each territory has been discovering its specific potentialities and grounds are sought for the new philosophies of territorial development of rural areas in concepts such as multifunctionality, sustainability and subsidiarity (Carvalho and Fernandes, 2001).

This revaluation of the rural does not ignore the central role of agriculture (in all its components: biological, environmental, and not just in its productivist version). The farmer is therefore reserved a role as an important participant in the task of preserving the heritage and landscape values of the rural world. Indeed, agriculture can even be considered the heart of the multifunctionality that is intended for European rural areas, without which other functionalities, such as Rural Tourism, will be unfeasible.

With this in mind, the rural landscape, which has become more monotonous as a consequence of its inclusion in the productivist system (Dewailly, 1998), is (re)situated in the centre of

aesthetic and existential concerns of the populations of the post-modern age, revealing itself increasingly as a quality of life factor to be preserved (Beaudet, 1999). The involvement of populations with the landscape occurs either on the basis of material elements, or on the basis of immaterial symbols of this same landscape. For this reason, investment should be made in the revaluation of both the particular material cultures of each place, and their symbolic cultures, important for affirming the self-concept of local populations (Reis, 1998).

In this respect, in an open competitive context, the affirmation of a territory or place occurs also through the construction and dissemination of an image of distinction and quality, clearly focused on the identities and symbolic resources of each place (Fernandes and Carvalho, 1998), the question of geographic scale being irrelevant here.

Values such as landscape, aesthetics, well-being and quality of life interact (Donadieu, 1999); geography, even in rural areas, becomes more complex and cultural.

Indeed the landscape it is a strategic theme for the sustainability and development of territories and populations, as indeed is reflected in some of the most important instruments and doctrines of land-use management and planning: the “World Heritage Convention” (Unesco, 1972); the “European Spatial Planning Charter” (Council of Europe, 1983); “Local Agenda XXI” (1992); the “European Landscape Convention” (Council of Europe, 2000) and the “Natura 2000 Network” (European Union). On the other hand, education should continue to be considered an essential factor to stimulate participative citizenship. The geographies of success will also be based on the sustainability with which each population, or each individual, uses, consumes and organises his everyday territory (Gaspar, 1996).

This is how education, territorialities and development interact. Distant are the times when we believed in (and accepted) the exclusive primacy of the economy.

For the particular case of Portugal, the *Regional Development Programme 2000-2006*, under Community Support Framework III, also suggests an alternative path for development. Indeed, this document envisages a model of development oriented by principles, in the first place, of economic sustainability, and secondly, of environmental sustainability, as the way for Portugal to confront, united, the extreme competitiveness of an increasingly open international system, which, for this reason, demands new factors for the affirmation of territories. Rural development is therefore established as one of the fundamental and priority vectors of the global development and cohesion of the national territory: this can be seen in the commitment to the “Natura 2000 Network” and to forestry activities; the development of agricultural products and agro-rural services; and the strategic importance of agriculture, in a multifunctional geo-economic system. The value of “landscapes” and of “natural heritage” and the affirmation of the “added value of the territory” complete this strategic orientation that thus takes on a structural role.

The LEADER Community Initiative Program, launched in this atmosphere of change, is an unequivocal expression of this new concept of development: shared, individualized and contextualized, introduced vertically and horizontally, in a network of co-operation and solidarity. The “chief goal” of the LEADER I and LEADER II Initiatives, applied in the Objective 1 regions (backward in development terms), Objective 5b zones (fragile rural), and 6 (Scandinavian, with very low population density) has been “the promotion of local development in rural environments, on the basis of valorization and diversification of their potential in resources and initiative” (Barros, 1998). They provide an innovative approach to rural development.

Their innovative character lies, in part, in the fact that planning and management are done at the level of the territory concerned (sub-regional intervention zones), through partnerships involving several local development agents. A “Local Action Group” (LAG) unifies the whole, although in a public regulatory framework and with public co-funding (community and national). The new LEADER+ Initiative for the period 2000-2006, has been designed on

the basis of the experience of LEADER I and II. It seems to be a more ambitious initiative aimed at stimulating and supporting high quality integrated strategies, with a view to ensuring sustainable rural development, and bestowing a high degree of importance on the co-operation and constitution of networks among rural “zones”.

The success of the territorial and participative approach to development, as proposed by LEADER, implies the creation of real partnerships at local level, a broad participation by citizens and a training of people’s capacities in the domain of local development (Mannion, 1999).

After this brief theoretical reflection, we will now discuss a case study that serves to demonstrate how local responses to global change and challenges are different, and to affirm the importance of heritage and landscape in rural development policies and initiatives.

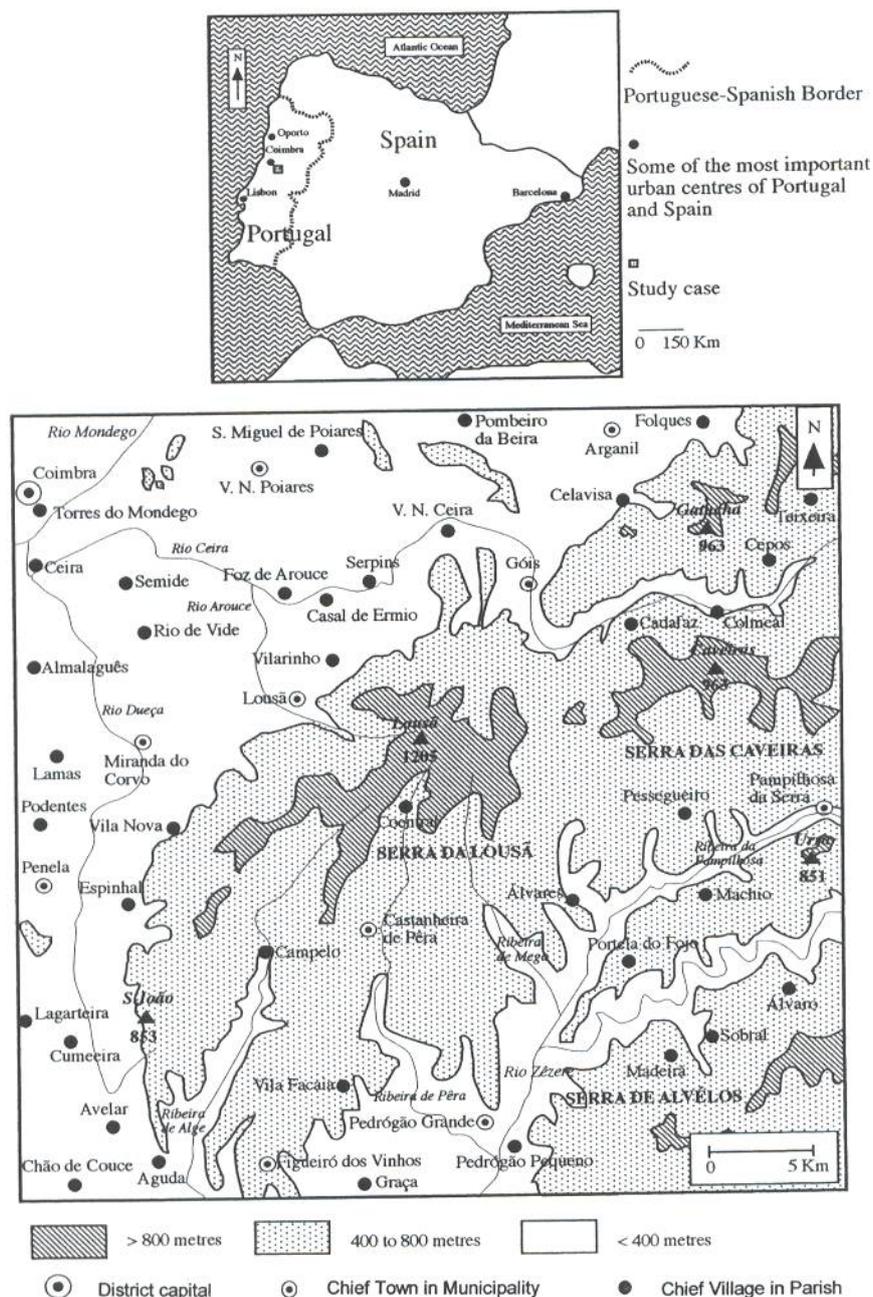


Figure 1: Simplified hypsometric map localizing the Lousã Mountain.

2. The Lousã Mountain: from heritage and landscape resources to development initiatives

2.1. Reading and interpretation of territories and their dynamics

Contemporary Geography of Portugal reveals an asymmetric, heterogeneous country. The contrasting images of occupation and organization of the territory are divided between territorial polarizations and centralities reinforced by public policies, with high expression on the Atlantic coast, on the one hand, and, on the other, deprived areas, almost always excentric and marginal (Jacinto, 1998). Vast areas of the interior of the country are in the latter situation, since they have suffered actual loss, over a period of many years, through migratory movements and natural negative balance. The Lousã Mountain (Figure 1), in “Pinhal Interior Norte” (Central Portugal), is a mirror of such trajectories and contrasting images of development. The interior of the range of hills (the southern sector) is a repellant area, deeply marked by the cumulative effect of several problems (Table 1).

Table 1: Selected indicators for the municipalities from de “Pinhal Interior Norte” (Central Portugal)

Geographical Distribution	A	B	C	D	E			F	G
					E1	E2	E3		
Alvaiázere	8433	-9,4	52,4	602	29	38	34	152,6	21,5
Ansião	13751	-2	76,4	2560	18	46	35	110	17,5
Arganil	13596	-2,5	40,9	3175	16	49	35	136,8	17
Castanheira de Pêra	3739	-15,8	55,9	1401	5	64	31	122,5	14,3
Figueiró dos Vinhos	7343	-8,3	42,7	1521	20	37	43	127,4	18,8
Góis	4862	-9,5	18,4	757	18	42	40	185,7	21,6
Lousã	15872	18	114	4865	5	48	48	96	10,1
Miranda do Corvo	13115	12,3	103,3	2976	11	36	53	93	13,4
Oliveira do Hospital	22079	-2,2	94,1	2318	17	49	35	99,3	15,4
Pampilhosa da Serra	5228	-9,8	13,2	454	23	35	42	191,9	31
Pedrógão Grande	4412	-5	34,3	948	27	28	45	198,8	24,4
Penela	6574	-5	49,6	593	22	38	40	161,3	15,4
Tábua	12611	-3,7	63,1	1050	25	42	34	114,6	15,2
Vila Nova de Poiares	7037	14,2	83,9	477	12	37	51	96,6	12,5
Pinhal Interior Norte	138652	-0,5	53	4865	17	43	40	121,8	16,7
Região Centro	1779672	3,4	75,2	89639	17	39	44	87,2	14
Portugal	10318084	4,6	112,3	663315	10	38	51	70	11

A - Resident population in 2001.

B - Rate of change in the resident population in 1991-2001 (%).

C - Population density in 2001 (inhab./sq km).

D - Resident population in most important locality (1991).

E - Structure of active population in 1991 (%) : E1 - primary; E2 - secondary; E3 - tertiary.

F - Aging index (in 1991) = (Pop.>64 years / Pop.<15 years) x 100.

G - Illiteracy rate in 1991.

 - Lousã Mountain

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estatística (Portugal).

These included: irregular orography; poor access by road (low density and mediocre quality of communication routes), and to sundry services and facilities; fragilities arising from the productive base; low density of formal organizational structures; weak settlement structure (dominated by small hamlets) and fragile urban network (low hierarchical level); accentuated demographic decline; widespread loss of rural population and abandonment of the hills; progressive degrading of the forest (from oak and chestnut to pine woods, to eucalyptus, to patches of brushwood and barren areas); high rate of sensitivity to forest fires; scattered farmland in dispersed plots and small-scale; high rate of owner absenteeism; under-utilization of natural resources (hydric, forest, wind).

This is a space that is running the risk of becoming marginalized and excluded from the transformation dynamics of the region, where development must continue to take public voluntarism into account (Baptista, 1999).

In these territories, tucked away in the hills, at the very limits defined by local levels of desertion and remoteness from the main axes of circulation and more dynamic towns and villages, the strategic lines of intervention should consider the following: job creation and vocational training of working population; restructuring the system for settling the urban network so as to create small systems / viable territorial urban axes; stimulating co-operation and co-ordination between the public and private actors, and defining a multi-activity, multi-functionality and multi-income base. Equally important aspects to bear in mind include: promoting traditional arts and crafts; valorizing authentic products (indicating place of origin and bearing a certificate of quality); scientific input in forestry, with environmental and social concerns. Importance should also be ascribed to protecting, preserving and valorizing natural and cultural heritage, within the broad spectrum of their ethnographic, architectural and archaeological dimensions, while it is also crucial to develop projects for the basic infrastructure and amenities appropriate to a good quality of life and suitable for welcoming visitors (Cavaco, 1996).

In the case of the chief towns of municipalities, especially those with greater urban dynamism (such as the towns of Lousã and “Miranda do Corvo”), it is absolutely essential that the rate of growth over the past few years is framed in a clear and unequivocal strategy of sustainable development, soundly based on the capacity of the local labour force and the fixing of the population, as well as on the core directives of modern urban planning. The importance of the urban image, urbanistic quality and environmental characterization, and accessibility are regarded as obstacles to / problems with organizing and improving the urban system (CCRC, 1999).

After this territorial portrait of the Lousã Mountain, identifying its problems, potentials and opportunities, it is time to consider the most important initiatives of development focusing particularly on enhancing landscape and heritage resources, and also to reflect concerning importance of territories and the quality of life of populations in sustainable development policies and initiatives.

We feel it is pertinent to highlight three initiatives, covering the end of the 1970s to the present day, which express the contexts and philosophies of development in which they are immersed.

2.2. Some “paradises” in the mountain: landscape as heritage

The Lousã mountain villages - as part of a more encompassing and complex territorial: the Lousã Mountain - are an expressive example of an original and even eccentric change in identity and in original pathway (Rodrigues, 1994).

An ancient rural community, with an agro-pastoral economy with its own identity whose productive space was the mountains themselves, underwent a profound transformation in the

last century, particularly in the last 50 years, and at the culmination of the process of rural exodus new operators emerge - contrasting social groups - who perceive, appropriate, consume and value the mountains in a different way.

As the sociologist P. Monteiro (1985) noted, the (natural) growth of the population - which occurred from the end of the eighteenth century until the mid-20th century - was not accompanied by an increase in production and income, forcing progressive mobility of the population and, in the end, announcing the irreversible decline of the mountain settlements. The eight hundred inhabitants that animated the heart of the mountain in 1940, have become, today, little more than two dozen permanent residents.

The geographic reading of the Lousã mountain villages, at the dawn of a new millennium, involves the discrimination of at least four situations, reflecting different territorial dynamics:

1. Cases of abandon and complete ruin: Bemposta, Franco and Silveira.
2. "Refuges" created in the mountains, on the initiative of neo-rurals escaping urban environments, mainly from Central Europe but also some Portuguese, who carry out agricultural activities (biological farming), cattle-raising and crafts - Catarredor, Vaqueirinho and Cerdeira.
3. Physical rehabilitation and seasonal occupation arising from the phenomenon of secondary residences, involving urban populations that in general do not have roots in the mountain - Casal Novo and Talasnal (Cravidão, 1989).
4. Permanence and changes of old mountain inhabitants who have resisted the appeal of escape or have returned to their birthplace, and situations of "cohabitation" (such as the small nucleus of resident population and second homes - particularly from the town of Lousã itself - in the village of Candal, or as occurred with two or three old mountain residents and the neo-rurals in Catarredor throughout the 1980s and most of the following decade).

The physical rehabilitation of the Lousã mountain villages - which involves a certain aesthetic enhancement of the landscape - is the result of individual private initiative, spontaneous in nature, un-organised and without any support or public funding (national or EU).

It is our opinion that the importance of the Lousã mountain villages arises above all from the expression and projection of their landscape as a "whole", which leads us to think of the possibility of creating a consistent and rigorous scientific project with a view to the application of the Lousã Mountain to the "Portuguese Network of Protected Areas". This would have more modest territorial limits than the current "Natura 2000 Network" "site", but still be on an intermunicipal basis. With the consequent establishment on site of a technical and scientific team capable of integrating and driving the different operators and projects or initiatives that interact in the Mountains or with the Mountains - without forgetting the strategic importance of the respective Working Plan.

The difficulties will result more from political and social breaches and from historical inertia, than from the actual existence of increased pressure from economic or other lobbies, since it is not a space marked by clear conflicts arising from the existence of a strategic material resource. Quite to the contrary, the Lousã Mountain are marked by a level of peripherality, typical of weak functional appropriation, although with material (forestry, water and wind) and immaterial (landscape) resources and less conflict between the operators.

The management of forestry resources, the redefinition of the role and organisation of the operators, and of the intervention initiatives in mountains areas, according to the principles and objectives introduced by the "Plan for Sustainable Development of the Portuguese Forests" (1999), the use of wind resources and the development of heritage and landscape resources represent great challenges and, at the same time, opportunities for the affirmation of the Lousã Mountain in the perspective of reconciling interests capable of overcoming irreconcilable and utopian lines of thought (and of action): idyllic conservation *versus* economicist exploitation of resources.

Although the idea of "sustainability" in the construction of landscapes focused on mountain villages is questionable, we recognise in them the expression of a special relationship between man and nature, to the point that today they constitute a material heritage (of five centuries) and a symbolic mark that we can easily appropriate and recognise as geographically important. For this reason, the development and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage is fundamental in the rehabilitation of territories, in the reconstruction of identities and principally in the area of environmental and heritage education, so that (the new) generations can understand and perceive the meaning and the cultural dimension of the Lousã Mountain.

It is in this context that we believe it opportune and urgent to study and record information (on various different supports) about the Lousã mountain villages, in order to begin preparing global or localised intervention. This intervention will depend on the strategic guidelines, the dimension and the capacity to fund the investments to be carried out (public and private), idealised and structured by a multidisciplinary technical and scientific team (responsible for preparing and justifying proposals for intervention and also following-up and supporting implementation). But only after an initial period of preparation of guidelines, objectives and work methodologies, which would involve the organisation of a range of scientific initiatives (including colloquies and debates) to oversee the project and to encourage public participation to support an innovative process of involvement of populations with political power and its decisions, before, during and afterwards - and this means that permanent assessment is essential for the success or failure of the initiatives.

Financial and technical support for this project is provided by the "Operational Programme for the Centre Region - 2000/2006", an instrument that establishes investment strategies and provides resources for regional development, under the Community Support Framework III for Portugal. From this Framework, we would like to draw attention to measure II.6 "Integrated Territorially Based Measure for "Pinhal Interior"", regarding the lines of action aimed at "Infrastructures and equipment for promotion of potentialities" and "Local and transverse road access" (CCRC, 2001). LEADER +, whose national applications are in a final stage of approval, represents another possibility, although more modest.

2.3. "LEADER ELOZ": an innovative initiative

In Portugal, LEADER II covers a total of 48 local entities (theoretically 84% of the territory and 1/3 of the population) which manage global grants, on the basis of a "Local Action Plan" (LAP) that these same entities draw up, as their own interpretation of a series of community directives and national guidelines ("National Framework Plan") and according to a reading, also their own, of certain problem-dimensions of the respective intervention zones (Geoideia, 1999).

The local application of the LEADER II Community initiative program is a landmark in the development of the Lousã Mountain.

The major local innovation regarding the program is the active co-operation between two development associations: "Dueceira", which integrates the municipalities of the northern sector of the Mountain, and "Pinhais do Zêzere", which involves the municipalities at the heart of the Lousã Mountain, an exemplary process, given the national panorama as a whole.

The ELOZ Intervention Zone ("Entre Lousã e Zêzere" - Between Lousã Mountain and Zêzere River), with the municipalities of Miranda do Corvo, Lousã, Vila Nova de Poiares, Figueiró dos Vinhos, Castanheira de Pêra and Pedrógão Grande), virtually corresponds to the geographic framework of the "Serra da Lousã". This sub-region has a resident population of almost 50 thousand (0.49% of the total population of the country) and an area of over 700 sq km (0,78% of the total area of Portugal), has promoted its predominant, bipartite, colouring

green (mountain) and blue (river) as its brand image, symbolising its principal resources and potentials.

The preservation of the culture and heritage of the rural world, both in its traditional characteristic aspects and in its evolutionary and innovative process have been the foundation of the LAP for the ELOZ Intervention Zone.

The underlying methodology of the intervention strategy was the following: knowledge of the territory and of the development needs of its inhabitants; awareness of the rhythms of development of the population; publicising and presentation of the Programme; permanent adjustment of the Programme to the development needs of the population and the potentialities of the territory; stimulation of investment; follow-up of approved projects; information transfer in local, regional, national, and EU LEADER network.

A brief critical analysis of the LEADER ELOZ Initiative, is useful in order to understand the projects, their territorial expression and in the improvement of the quality of life of the mountain populations and, at the same time, to contribute to reflection on the challenges and changes that the near future will bring.

From a geographical reading of the initiative (Carvalho and Fernandes, *op. cit.*) we may pick out two significant groups of projects, essentially for the material or immaterial nature of the actions:

1. Projects of an immaterial nature, focusing on actions to promote and publicise the region, raising awareness and educating people, fostered by the municipalities and local bodies.

2. Material projects, which generally absorb the greater part of investment and are divided into two sub-groups:

- 2.1 Actions seeking to improve localities, by preserving and valorizing landscapes and the natural environment (e.g. river-side swimming pools); a range of urbanistic interventions (creating parks and gardens, illuminating buildings in the historic centre, restoring and rehabilitating building heritage), and improving cultural and sports facilities, instigated by municipalities and by cultural and social associations;

- 2.2 Interventions in the domain of supporting the diversification of economic activities, with 54% of projects approved and 45% of the total investment made, across the broad spectrum of tourism in the countryside, modernising small- and medium-sized industries, crafts and proximity services, to which private and individual enterprise has responded in a really positive manner.

Total investment is in excess of 3.5 million euros, with the European Union contributing 64%. The evaluation of the effects of LEADER ELOZ is positive and it would be difficult to ignore the qualitative dimension of the assessment of the results.

An assessment limited to the indicator of number of jobs maintained and/or created (70) or even focusing on the total amount of the approved investment, would only diminish the importance of the programme. The examples of the participation of craftsmen in international fairs, an essential part of the process of conquering new markets (internationalisation of the local economy) based on crafts (essentially pottery and tapestry), the promotion of certified Lousã Mountain honey in hotels and restaurants, the support for fitting out the Serpins Training Centre of the National Scouts Organisation (which every year receives thousands of young people who carry out civic and environmental activities in the Lousã Mountain and, also, carry out the important task of relaying images of the region) and for the rural campsite, go far beyond the insignificant economic expression of the investments made.

On the other hand, we believe that it is also very positive for there to be the type of management of the Programme that, involving Local Action Groups formed almost always by graduate technicians, “contributed to reinforcing the capacity to diagnose needs, to draw up projects, to support local promoters in applying for different programmes, taking on a

significant role in establishing other investments not directly related to the programme” (Jordão, 1998, p. 4).

The implementation of the cooperation projects demonstrated the desire and capacity of the Local Action Group in initiating contacts with similar groups in Europe, undertaking common projects to exchange ideas and experiences, the results of which were of significant importance.

In the case of the project "Crafts in Network" - designed by “Dueceira” and developed in partnership with two other local development associations, accredited under LEADER II: “Adices” (Portuguese) and “Montañas del Teleno” (Spanish, incorporating municipalities in the southwest of León province) - it received recognition from the European Commission and the European Observatory/AEIDL which approved it under Technical Assistance for Transnational Cooperation Measures in phases 1 and 2, that is "from the idea to the project" and "from the project to the measure". The home-page created on the Internet, besides being a fundamental promotional vehicle for relaunching this economic activity, enabled links to be established with other similar entities and accomplished a process of genuine partnership and transfer of know-how. The impact on craftsmen was also important, with some 72 craftsmen from the ELOZ region joining the initiative and benefiting directly from its different aspects (electronic and promotional). At the same time, it was possible to build up an up-to-date and accurate Database of Crafts and Craftsmen from the whole region.

Assess the work designed and developed over the 7 year period, it's also recognise the capacity for work and commitment of the LAG, the innovative character of the Initiative, encouragement for the reinvention of the rural or the new ways of living rurality, with dignity and quality of life.

The development model and strategy, designed for implementing the (new) LEADER+ELOZ Programme, involves two challenges for the region: 1. The originality(ies) of the territory as a factor for affirmation and strengthening of self-esteem of local communities with a view to their settling and promotion; 2. Promotion of the originality of the territory developing, rehabilitating and reinventing the image and unity of the mountains.

The general strategy of the Local Development Plan (construction of a positive, renewed and attractive image of the rural world), in response to the specific objective of LEADER+ (improvement of quality of life in rural zones), involves the idea of competitiveness: social (promotion of socio-cultural “agitation”); environmental (promoting measures aimed at understanding and promoting the environment); economic (affirming and rehabilitating local economies); global (adapting local mentalities and processes to global transformations).

The definition of the Local Development Plan involves the following measures and sub-measures: 1. Investments (Investments in collective infrastructures; Support for productivist activities; Other practical activities); 2. Immaterial activities (Vocational training; Other immaterial activities); 3. Acquisition of skills; 4. Operating expenditure.

The total values of the global financial plan by measures and sub-measures exceeds 4 million euros, of which 59.7% are subsidised by the EU; national expenditure is shared between public expenditure (of central administration: 12.4%, plus 6.9% for regional and local administration) and private expenditure (21.1%).

The Local Development Plan was drawn up with the participation of civil society, through a survey conducted with the resident community in the Intervention Zone.

The population is aware of the state of development of the municipalities and the region where it is resident. Although the local community has not expressed opposition to the work carried out - essentially by local authorities and by entities with specific skills in the development areas - a need has been observed for intervention to promote an increase in the quality of life of populations, besides the mere satisfaction of their basic needs.

2.4. From the “Lousã Ecomuseum” to the “Lousã Mountain Ecomuseum”?

The “Ecomuseu da Serra da Lousã” (Lousã Mountain Ecomuseum) is a local development initiative, planned by the municipality of Lousã and has been in progress since October, 2000. It is basically intended to be an interconnected network of spaces, with their own peculiarities, but all contributing to the construction of just one cultural identity – the Lousã Mountain.

The function of the Ecomuseum is to “ensure the permanent and continued functions of research, conservation, valorization of local heritage and development within the territory in which the municipality of Lousã is defined, from the perspective of its development and with the participation of the people” (CML, 2000).

The lines of action for developing the project are based on establishing a network, supported by partnerships with public bodies and local associations.

The strategic lines inspiring and underpinning it reveal the characteristics of an open, living, space, with a multi-nuclear structure (the Lousã mountain villages; the painting nucleus; the gastronomic and regional sweetmeats nucleus; the base, and research, nucleus; lime and tile kilns, water-mills, olive press and a restored hill cottage), functioning in a way that is articulated and decentralized.

The activities and interventions to be developed are extended to other areas, namely: creating routes for themed walks; establishing partnership protocols at national level and within the European Community, with similar Ecomuseums. Opportunities would thus be provided for experiences and know-how to be exchanged, publications about the heritage of the Lousã Mountain published, and the traditional products of the Lousã Mountain promoted.

Although we can recognise conceptual and programmatic weaknesses (the scientific and technical team, and the museum programme) we should, at the same time, underline the strategic value of environmental and heritage education, with the involvement of the community, particularly schools, and the research perspective (and publications) that accompany the project, as well as the recognition of the importance of local memories and identities for the self-esteem of the populations.

Would an understanding of the Ecomuseum in a broader territorial perspective (from the municipality to the "sub-region"), with a coordinated network of notable “sites”, based on partnerships between municipalities and the "mountain" operators , and with the necessary involvement of the population, not be another valid (and possible) perspective for the “Lousã Mountain Ecomuseum”?

Conclusion

The new values and paradigms of land-use planning and of development affirm the participation of operators and the population in general, the contextualisation of policies, the new forms of local government , the networks of cooperation and solidarity, it being accepted that each territory should follow its own path, without the imposition and reproduction of a single model imposed from above.

The LEADER Initiative and the measures it developed, in particular in the areas of partnership, integrated territorial approach, the organisation of projects and territorial promotion, undoubtedly to be increased under the new phase of the LEADER, represents an excellent example to be followed by public and private local operators in working together in teams motivated by similar problems and the need for affirmation or simply the integration of territories and an improvement in the quality of life of their populations.

Indeed development is achieved through the quality of life of populations and this also depends on the quality and sustainability of the geographic space. Not only due to its direct

consequences on the life of each citizen, but also because of the well-being that a balanced landscape implies.

Commitment to a territorial policy of quality can be worthwhile for the direct benefits in the daily life of the citizen, but will benefit above all, if it is well orientated, the self-esteem of the populations - so that they can feel the Lousã Mountain as a geographically important place.

The challenge of sustainable development, besides attempts to reconcile different interests (economic, social, cultural and environmental), is also the opportunity it provides for participation by citizens in decisions and for qualitative improvement of institutional relationships.

For this reason, the time “spent” on education and raising the awareness of the community towards issues of sustainable development is essential.

The heritage and landscape resources and their organisation and development, will play a decisive role in the affirmation of territories and in the dimension of exercising citizenship.

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