

LOCAL PROTECTED LANDSCAPE OF THE SOCORRO AND ARCHEIRA MOUNTAINS

CATEGORY: Best of Nature

1. Issues faced

The Municipality of Torres Vedras promoted the classification of the Local Protected Landscape of the Socorro and Archeira Mountains, in accordance with national legislation, with the objective of following the municipality's sustainable development policy that aims to protect and enhance the existing natural and cultural heritage, effectively manage resources in a threatened or fragile situation, ensure their recovery and re-qualification, organize and manage the landscape according to new features, promote the provision of local products and services and foster local identity. This initiative represents an opportunity to adopt the guidelines of the European Landscape Convention to qualify and value a landscape that over the years has been subjected to various transformations resulting from local socio-economic development, which have resulted in an area of low ecological value (uncultivated areas and increase of forest areas) and increasing degradation of existing elements with patrimonial value in natural, historical, cultural and landscape terms.

2. Methods / Steps / tools used

The classification of PPLSSA and its management is an example of good practice that must be followed to improve protection, management and landscape organization. The initiative follows the concepts and guidelines of the European Landscape Convention, as well as best practices in this matter, noting the importance of ensuring public participation at all stages of the process.

Between 2008 and 2011, a study was developed to create the PPLSSA, where the landscape characteristics were identified and evaluated, the landscape units were defined and guidelines for protection, management and planning were developed. During the elaboration of the study, a participatory workshop was held (09/10/2009), where it was intended to transmit the preliminary results to the main local actors and to listen to them in relation to the present values, to the transformation that has taken place in the landscape, the pressures and threats and their vision for a 20-year horizon. Later, at the beginning of 2012, the PPLSSA Draft Regulation was submitted for public discussion and, in this context, a public session was held for the population in the Parish Council of Turcifal. The recommendations and suggestions made during the public discussion were considered in the preparation of the version of the Regulation submitted for approval by the Municipal Assembly on May 4, 2012.

Based on this study, PPLSSA was classified in 2012 and, with the approval of its Regulation, a management model was established, conducted by three management bodies and ensured by the municipality. In this context, a multidisciplinary work group of the municipality was set up to accompany the management, carry out the supervision and proceed to the monitoring of the territory according to the 20 indicators of the Landscape Observatory created to evaluate the management and the dynamics of the territory. It should be noted that the PPLSSA Landscape Observatory is currently the only one in Portugal that is part of the European Network of Landscape Observatories.

In addition, since the classification of PPLSSA, different actions have been developed to raise the awareness of civil society, private organizations and public authorities about the value of the landscape, its role and its transformations. As an example, we should mention reforestation actions together with schools, pedestrian walks and the distribution of the code of conduct and good practices of PPLSSA visitors.

A PPLSSA Interpretive Center was also created as the main support infrastructure for the management activities and for the visitors, containing several information about the existing natural and cultural heritage and complemented with a shop where local products are promoted.

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More recently, the Municipality of Torres Vedras organized the International Workshop - "Innovative Methods for the Management of Protected Areas in a Mediterranean Context", in an attempt to value the importance of exchanging experiences and knowledge for the elaboration of an innovative management plan. In this workshop the participants were involved in the preparation of proposals for planning and sustainable management of PPLSSA for the next 10 years.

3. Specific/measurable results, benefits and recognitions (e.g. awards)

It can be considered that the main result of the classification of PPLSSA as a local protected area was its integration into the National Network of Protected Areas, communicated by the Institute of Nature Conservation and Forests, on March 6, 2017. This integration is the recognition that, in addition to complying with the Portuguese conservation of nature and biodiversity legislation, an investment was made by the municipality to ensure the protection, enhancement and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of this area, as well as to ensure the management of resources, with a view to recovering the main functions of landscape and territory.

This protection effort of existing natural and cultural values and simultaneously to promote economic and social development through initiatives that generate benefits for local communities, has also been recognized by local actors. For this purpose, the incorporation of several public and private entities in the Advisory Council proved to be fundamental. Its active participation in all meetings of the PPLSSA management bodies guarantees a platform for dialogue and collaboration with local actors and, through them, with the population. On the other hand, this dynamic created around the PPLSSA has resulted in the creation of partnership agreements with different entities with the aim of managing and developing the territory in question, as well as the progressive development of school activities related to the landscape which the municipality educational services have carried out in conjunction with school groups. Other results are related to the recognition of PPLSSA in international certification programs, mentioning that it has been awarded with the QualityCoast Nature Award (2014), from the ECCC-Coastal & Marine Union and Top 100 World of Sustainable Destinations, promoted by Green Destinations in the four editions (2014, 2016, 2017 and 2018).

4. Lessons learned

The participation and collaboration of citizens and other local / regional actors is an essential aspect of PPLSSA's classification and management process. This involvement contributes to the shaping of a landscape with identity, that the local community is identified with. The management of PPLSSA followed a participatory and collaborative model with the aim of informing, consulting and promoting the consultation of all relevant actors, in particular by conducting public meetings and promoting the dialogue with land owners of the protected landscape. In this context, it has always been remembered that the perception, experience and action of local and regional actors is fundamental for the management, protection and planning of the landscape. Thus, since the creation of PPLSSA, the exchange of experiences and reflection through frequent conferences, debates and workshops on PPLSSA has also been promoted.

5. Specific/additional (web)references

<http://www.cm-tvedras.pt/turismo/visitar/paisagem-protegida/>

<http://www.natural.pt/portal/pt/AreaProtegida/Item/47>

<http://www2.icnf.pt/portal/ap/p-prot/pplssa>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xXZnEwkX_M