Protected Areas, Actors and Local Development. Case study – *Veiga de São Simão* (Viana do Castelo, Northwest Portugal)[1]

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ABSTRACT: this article is based on a study that aimed to analyse activities, perceptions and aspirations of a set of individual and institutional players. These players are identified as potentially relevant in the creation and management of a protected area, in order to enable social diagnosis and understand how implementing a protected space can contribute to local development and to what extent it is possible to involve and mobilize local players. For this purpose, *Veiga de São Simão,* located on the Lima estuary in Viana do Castelo (Portugal), was selected as a case study. This study shows that the creation of protected areas cannot be done in an isolated and punctual manner, being its insertion necessary in development policies which are susceptible to providing populations with governability conditions and means, when seeking a sustainable development.

Keywords: Local Development, Protected Areas, Spatial Planning, *Veiga de S. Simão* (Viana do Castelo, Portugal).

INTRODUCTION

1. *Introduction, problem and methodology*

The creation of protected areas in Europe and in the United States dates back to the 20th or even to the 19th century[4]. The appearance of natural parks, in the beginning of the 20th century[5], was due not only to the concerns regarding biodiversity and the preservation of species, but also due to interests and representations, whether from some aristocracy or some bourgeoisie, who aimed to establish an ideal relationship with Nature and with the symbolic meaning inherent to this "natural" and non-mercantilist conception of field and forest (Mormont 1987:5).

There are several advanced perspectives on space: (*i*) the functionalist one (Durkheim 2002), on which space makes up the first reference of individual life; (*ii*) the Marxist one (Castells 1975), on which space is variable dependent on social structure; (*iii*) and the symbolic interactionist one (Goffman 1993), according to which space makes up a place of representation and interaction among social actors. According to Giddens (1984) and Silva (2012), we should not only avoid the physical deterministic vision of space, but also go beyond the dualistic conceptions between structure and action, and, above all, take into account the environmental and social-cultural component when assessing spaces, mainly rural ones.

Local rural communities, with their specific activities, as users and traditional direct owners of property and land, are located in a modern ecological perspective, between the level of individual agricultural exploration and the new logics and interests of the socio-political conjecture, within a national and even international scope, becoming, in many cases, within the globalization framework, situations of rural abandonment.

Thus, these communities tend to be considered of residual importance in the decision-making process regarding the use of rural space, as well as in the aspects linked to collective identities[6] and ways of life. It is important to reconstitute such process, due to its relevance and explanatory potential, in a way of understanding the present

different logics and dynamics and, increasingly, the relative loss or even absence of capacity and decision-making power at the community's own level (cf. O'Neill 1984; Pinto 1985; Almeida 1986; Silva 1998 and 2012; Sobral 1999).

With the appearance of new agricultural policies, generally implying globalised and centralised decisions, rural communities realise that territories have entered an progressive ecological deterioration and that, nowadays, they cannot reach sustainable rentability levels. It is within this scope that people, making up the fundamental element of ecological balance for centuries, have abandoned the territory and (e)migrated, disconnecting themselves, temporarily or definitely, from their environment.

It was in that context of environmental degradation, in the development of the present research work, that we investigated the development state of the communities that neighbour *Veiga de São Simão*, next to the River Lima estuary[7], mainly aiming to know which perceptions and aspirations of local and regional players could potentially be relevant for eventually creating a protected area, within the logic of a local development process.

Based on a logic of multifunctional territories and the development of public policies and state interventions in them, we can question: what is the role of protected areas and to what extent can these areas contribute to local development?

In methodical-technical terms we used face-to-face interview and also resorted to a questionnaire. Gathering information, through the application of the above-mentioned techniques, was mainly done resorting to owners, but nonetheless without interviewing the general population, local associations and institutions, technicians and tourists, as inhabitants of the considered area. We have taken as reference Weber's (1993) comprehensive sociology and the application of the typological method, namely his concept of *ideal type* from the social action of the actor, in this case, from full acceptance to total rejection of a protected area, in the sense of understanding the group of actors involved in processes of developing parishes and in the possible "construction" of *Veiga de São Simão* as a protected area.

Bringing to management space the knowledge, aspirations, suggestions and even eventual contradictions in the core of local communities can add value in the development of projects. On the other hand, the bond which is established between a certain project and the commitment of local communities can be a generator of synergies of support to territory management.

2. Society, Nature and territorial development

Since Humankind socialises in sedentary cores, it has been confronted with the best way of developing means of interaction with Nature and preserving its diversity to enable a temporal continuity in the efficiency of obtaining natural resources (Davenport e Rao 2002).

The appropriation of the natural spawned from the construction of symbols, establishing webs of relations in their material, spiritual and cultural dimensions (Gonçalves 1989) among themselves and with other societies, as referred by Silva (1991) according to whom the "social place is in itself and as a social place for another", i.e., societies create, develop and consolidate a natural ideal, adapting it to its own cultural and temporal reality.

Nature and human societies, as well as Nature and culture, are not opposing realities, but interdependent (Elias 1980, Cardoso 2002), making Nature a web of interconnected relations (on which attributing content to 'Nature' depends on ways of appropriation and understanding of a certain society) according to dominant ideals and interests of those of a certain specific period (Horkheimer 2008; Gorz 2007).

In the dichotomy between the exploration and preservation of natural resources, the concept of sustainable development has represented a breakthrough in understanding that human beings determine their growth and consolidation perspectives of the several aspects of their own human societies.

Decades of experiences and application of models mainly economically based have led to situations of economic and social stagnation, deepening of regional asymmetry and predatory misappropriation of endogenous resources. Such situations have raised awareness in finding new relationship forms between Man and environment.

If sustainability and the concept of development inherent in it are expressions of a historically and spatially identified state of a particular human society, the territorial realization of its own concept is assumed as an ambiguous perspective within the paradoxical character of the conceptual scope of the notion of sustainable development.

However, territory, allowing appropriation relations, makes up a dynamic element, since territories where human activities are developed result from a long development of consolidation of processes, contexts and dynamics, variable in space and time[8]. Territory as a concept in its several analytical dimensions, with potentialities and boundaries in the relationship development between players, resident individuals and participants of that space, cannot be seen as "passive agents or receivers" or "victims of planned change", nor "Customary" who limits a series of rules and conventions (Long and Van der Ploeg 1994: 69). I.e., natural environment has now relevance in this context by making possible the explanation of strategies of sustainable development in territorial plans perceived by

societies as repositories of the cultural and natural inheritance, and potentialization of the action and involvement, whether from local communities, whether from other players direct and indirectly involved (Azevedo 2012).

In a local development process with certain goals, it is obviously pertinent to question ourselves on the reasons and purposes of that action or intervention, and to whom is aimed such project.

The creation of protected areas cannot be done in an isolated and timely manner, being its insertion necessary in development politics, which are susceptible to providing populations with governability conditions and means. These spaces, translating themselves into object of planning of endogenous, finite and changeable resources, can eventually be represented as "condensation cores" (Azevedo 2012) in the perspective of being able to bring together around their project strategies and other projects, aiming at a perspective of sustainable development and taking into account the participation through its basis and the satisfaction of population needs.

The search for immutability in landscape scenery and lasting environmental features has led to the disregard that those spaces might have been, in many cases, in the genesis of centuries of influence and action of local communities, which normally have kept balanced relationships with the surrounding environment.

This assumption has generated conflict in several occasions between local communities' perspectives and territorial management models, mainly when dealing with foreign agents, as Elias and Scotson (1965) have analysed. For a long time, spatial planning politics have referred to the technocratic-legal model without taking into account the potential of the share capital in a certain region, that is, at the same time, promoting other forms of social development. To achieve an effective local development from this, it is fundamental the interaction, within the framework of a mixed structure, between players and/or partners with common goals, who interact in the same environment and territorial action radius. The involvement of the population is therefore a preponderant element when searching for convergences, on which the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts, promoting a collective co-responsibility and the safeguarding of interests, whether individual or collective.

It is important to refer interests and behaviours of the different players directly involved in the process of transforming the territory where they interact into an area of environmental protection, enabling the understanding that such preservation project can induce sustainable results.

Changing or limiting a certain type of activities, that are traditionally practiced in a certain territory, is a generator of conflict that can be minimised if there is a proper connection with the populations that interact with that same space. Therefore, it is fundamental the elucidation of a project incorporated in a local development strategy.

3.   Veiga de São Simão[9] and its multiple players – a case study

For this study, there was a concern with identifying not only local players, but also foreign entities that promote politics or actions with local incidence, seeking to reach the fullest extent regarding non-institutional local players when understanding ways of appropriating Veiga de São Simão's territorial space (Figure 1).
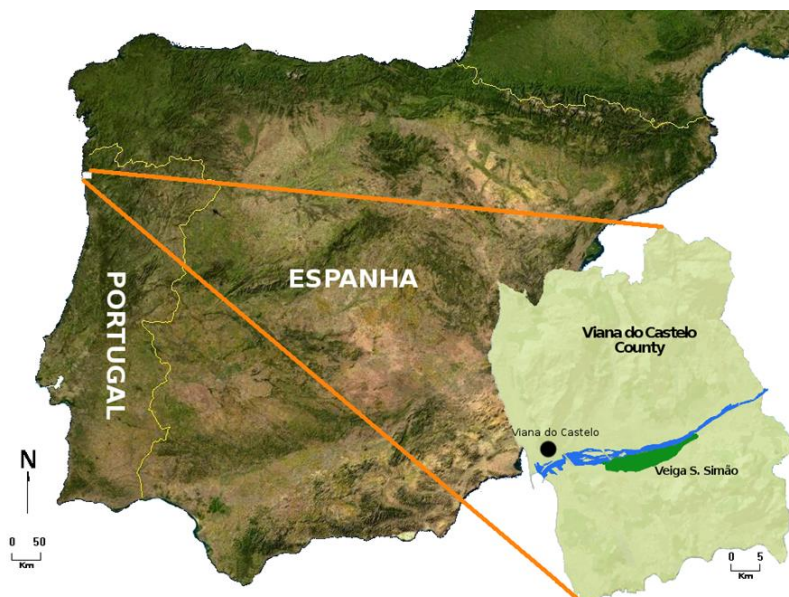

Figure 1. Map showing the location of Veiga de S. Simão (in NUTS Lima)

In that sense, when performing questionnaires, such deliberation encompassed the inclusion of inhabitants of the surrounding parishes of the study area, namely Mazarefes, Vila Franca and Subportela, besides inhabitants of the space and visitors from several regions, technicians linked to planning and environment, individuals who directly use such space without economic profitability purposes, and, at last, individuals who use such space within a profitability perspective.

The 267 applied questionnaires were carried out in a way of encompassing a sample superior to 5% of the resident population[10], (which would be translated in 10% when taking into account individuals over 18 years old), on which practically 52% are native from one of the three above-mentioned parishes.

Therefore, there was the need to proceed their characterization in groups, according to their similarities and differences, based on Fernandes (2004). According to the Weber's comprehensive perspective (1993), players were grouped as seen in Figure 2:

Categories / Attributes	Full support involved players	Support players	Rejection players	Total rejection players	Disintegrated and total rejection players
Population characterization	Population with average or superior academic education. Generally, with a participation and mobilization culture in civic or individual movements.	Population with average education, students and workers of the tertiary sector.	Non-specialized assets, professionally linked to industry and agriculture. With space ownership interests.	Non-specialized assets. They integrate activities opposed to the protected areas' purposes, such as hunting or fishing. Owners of important areas on such space.	Older population. Generally, with low or no academic education.
Level of knowledge of Veiga de S. Simão's characteristics	High.	Medium. Acknowledges some environmental and landscape value.		Low. Acknowledges some importance but without clearly defining it.	Very low or inexistent.
Involvement with Veiga de S. Simão	Knowledge of the space and similar areas, having participated in activities as guided tours and conferences.	Do not participate in activities, although they know the space and similar areas.		No involvement in Veiga de S. Simão's activities and no knowledge of other similar areas.	
Consideration of the type of equipment that should exist in Veiga de S. Simão	Mainly those associated to interest by natural aspects.	Acknowledge the importance of the existence of certain equipment linked to natural aspects, but also sports and leisure.			Prefer the absence of equipment rather than internal accessibility.
Consideration of the main actions of benefiting the space	Environmental and landscape valuing. Prohibition of activities that degrade the space.	Landscape, infrastructures and leisure valuing.		Cleaning paths and woods in a essentially agricultural perspective.	
Perspectives of Veiga de S. Simão as a protected area	Space can have an important role on regional development.	The park has been having a positive role, especially protecting the environment.	The park has a negative role.	The park has a very negative role.	
Attitude	+ Support				Rejection -

Figure 2. Characterization of the population inquired regarding the way of perceiving *Veiga de São Simão*
Source: Azevedo (2012)

Taking into account characterization attributes (education, activity or profession, age), knowledge and/or information level, involvement, infrastructures and perspectives of using the considered territorial space, there were considered five types of categories.

The first two groups, mainly referred to as "*involved and full support players*" and "*support players*", unequivocally make up the sectors that recognize the importance that *Veiga de São Simão* has on its several perspectives: environmentally, landscape, culturally and as an important element for developing the region. Usually with a higher education level, they master technical terminologies and acknowledge the space's symbolic aspects, having mainly the environmental issue as background. It is a group formed by individuals that tend to involve themselves and

participate on local development issues and that might play an important role when grouping individuals that normally adopt a rejection attitude.

As contrast, the group made up by "*rejection players*" stands out, although as a third category that, by being permeable in assuming its positions, involves itself more with the majority of tendency than with its own ideological attitude. They weave mistrust regarding projects from state entities, recognising the value of the space and some of its potential, but always in a reductive vision of using such space with more of a productive than a protective purpose.

The last two categories assume a position of disagreement with the creation of a protected space. They are made up by individuals with lower academic education levels or with strong pretensions regarding ownership and use of land, or yet, they belong to associations that take on activities potentially contrastive with the space's protection purposes, such as, for example, hunting, and extracting aggregates and timber.

On this diversity of players and identified agents on this study, we seek to know which ideas or visions the respondents have on what is local development and on how it can be achieved.

From the issue regarding the process of territorial management planning, on the existence of a model that promotes public participation in a context of cooperative management, there was almost unanimity when answering "yes". Regarding its justification, 83% of the respondents refer that it is necessary to include citizens in projects in a way of raising awareness for environmental issues and consequently making them value the space, while promoting a spirit of appropriation and support. Therefore, there are several interviewed players that prefer the development of projects on which are promoted aspects such as culture and tradition, to the extent on which is verified a growing lack of identity of the populations with the region's resources, symbols and values.

It is equally mentioned on the interviews that gathering a set of symbologies around *Veiga de São Simão* can join several populations towards achieving a common goal. With this in mind, we cannot continue to bet on foreign agents that don't know neither the populations nor their social and territorial dynamics. Thus, it is important to have a holistic vision of the space, integrating that vision on development perspectives and working with the space and not on the space.

In this sense, there were also questionnaires regarding the way populations see themselves on the lands they inhabit. Therefore, and consequently to the current economic and social conjecture, there is reference to, firstly, issues related to employment and prospecting of investments, followed by symbolic aspects of territorial appropriation, mainly the requalification of urban spaces and the valuing of natural and cultural heritage and, thereafter, everything that can promote better living conditions.

It is also important to refer that the creation of a natural park gathered 7,4% of answers. On the other hand, aspects related to population mentality (expressed on the significance of changing mentalities and behaviours and population participation) on its group gathered approximately 11%of answers.

Wanting to know the opinion on who should promote or have greater responsibility in local development, answers indicate that it is mainly local administrative institutions that should have that role.

The choice of this elements is related to the fact that local management figures are rooted in town halls and parish councils, being these two entities the ones that are closer and assume greater visibility within the population at a level of its projection regarding local reach politics and projects.

The Diocese, in the figure of the vicar, is, similarly, one of the favourite figures in the local development issue by the same reasons pointed out for local bodies. On the other hand, the European Union is referred, as it is seen as convenient within the scope of investment and regional financial support programs, although distant from populations.

It is also pressing to analyse tensions created by territory appropriation. For this study, it is important to consider in what way local communities perceive *Veiga de São Simão* as a space of value and natural qualification, and what is the attitude before the hypothetical creation of a protected area for the referred territorial space.

If we consider some of the formulated issues, we understand that *Veiga de São Simão* is the element considered as one of the spaces with the greatest natural value and recognized as one of the most distinct elements of the local populations.

To know people's attitude regarding the preservation of that space as a protected area, we have elaborated some issues in a way of assessing the idealization of natural park, and the communities' individual and collective awareness on the implementation of a similar project on the region.

When questioned on if they had ever visited a natural park, the large majority of respondents gave a positive reply. However, we cannot miss the opportunity of referring that 18% of respondents, even with their proximity (evident even in a context of low geographical mobility) to parks or protected areas such as, for example, Lagoas de Bertiandos or Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês, replied negatively,. There are several reasons for this situation, but while analysing the profile of the respondents who answered to these questions, we verified that we are before a profile corresponding to the «Total rejection players» and/or «Disintegrated and total rejection players» group. This population parcel may not easily understand and assimilate the proposal for the creation of a protected natural area,

and this fact has a tremendous importance regarding the possibility of realizing a natural park, regardless of the status that it may assume.

By 'bringing' to the respondents' territorial space the idea of implementing a protected area space, we have raised the question regarding the importance that such process could represent to the community. From the total number of answers, we have reached the conclusion that most respondents would agree with creating a protected area in their region (73%), as opposed to a reduced number of respondents (4%) that do not recognise any reason to consider that as an important factor (without that meaning that they would be against having said protected area). A considerable number of respondents (23%) that don't have any opinion on the matter or did not know how to answer to this question also stand out. This fact can be related to these respondents not knowing the formal and institutional status of a protected area and/or which are the advantages that it can bring to their region.

From the result of the interviews, we understand that these types of doubts are present in some of the respondents, which can be seen in answers such as "*if something like a park would be built, it wouldn't bring many advantages, (…), since there are ulterior motives on these projects".* However, for others, a protected area in the region *"could represent an incentive for local economy";* or *"would promote direct profit"* or even "*would give a greater visibility in terms of preserving Nature and Tourism*".

Regarding the reasons for given answers, the main concern (29%) is with the preservation of the region's more relevant natural spaces. The next concerns are related with employment issues, attracting tourists and /or visitors (23%) and with creating jobs and generating profit (18%).

On the set of answers, 16% of the respondents refer to the perspective of creating a space that does not exist in the region. This factor is quite relevant to the extent on which a significant part of the population would be in favour of creating a protected area, within a perspective of preserving Nature, induced by seeking quality of life and local development (expressed on 14% of answers).

On the performed interviews, we found similar considerations in the sense that population has a "*greater motivation for those [spaces] that already exist, which are part of their life experience, than seeing something new that doesn't exist appearing and with a larger investment around*".

Between the 4% of answers against creating a protected area, the main reason for opposing is due to the fact that the respondents consider that space as purely for agricultural purposes. This idea, which represents approximately a total of 2% of respondents, comes mainly from respondents with a profile that matches the «total rejection players» and «disintegrated and total rejection players» group.

Within the framework of this research, there were also interviewed the leaders of associations/institutions in the sense of knowing if creating a space of natural preservation/valuing could have an important role in the region's development, being verified an unanimity in the given answers. By analysing the reasons for affirmative answers, we verify that the main reason (23,5%) is the possibility of attracting tourists to that space in the perspective of direct and indirect profit for parishes.

As mentioned before, in the existing conflict game or territorial developing perspectives for *Veiga de São Simão*, each player's vision of the considered territorial space comes from owned symbolic appropriations, which make each individual have considerations in function of a preservation or exploration perspective in an either supporting or rejecting context.

Figure 3 reflects the strength balance between players to whom *Veiga de São Simão* is subject of agreement, since they support the perspectives expressed through the performed interviews and questionnaires. This duality is clear but not always completely perceptible, since we find individuals who are in favour of protecting that natural space but, at the same time, acknowledge that the space must be explored either for leisure or for full agricultural production. On the contrary, we verify that there are individuals who immediately acknowledge *Veiga de São Simão* as an ideal space for exploration, but that, at the same time, it should exist some protection status.
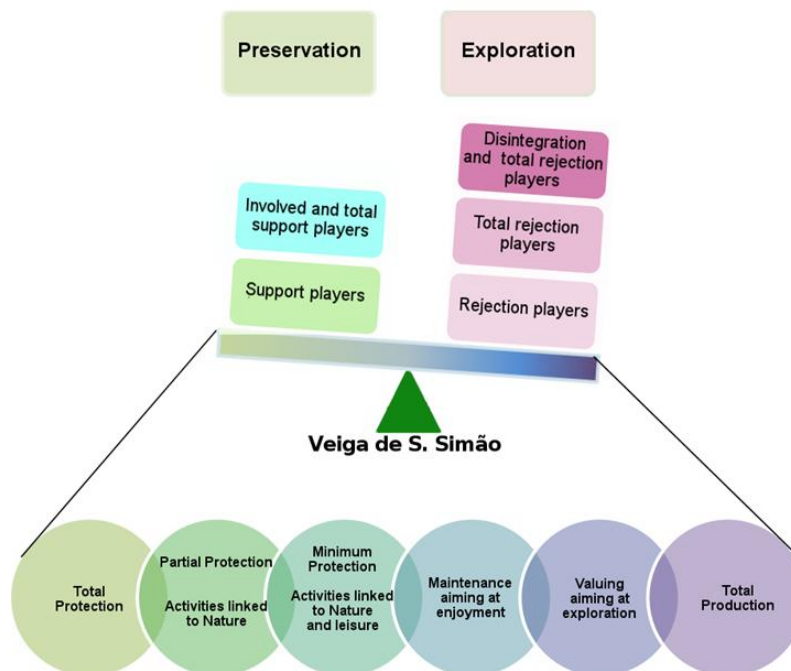
Figure 3. Functional perspectives by player type
Source: Azevedo (2012)

Regarding the set of aspects acknowledged by respondents, we have identified some functional perspectives for *Veiga de São Simão* according to the typology of the involved player, as it can be seen in the above figure. On it, it is equally represented the weight of motivations in favour of creating a natural park in the region, where 29% of the respondents refer issues regarding the preservation of Nature as main motivation, against the nearly 71% who indicate reasons associated to exploring a similar space[11].

"Support players" are divided in their opinion regarding the performed intervention model, with a greater predisposition for an intervention that meets a natural park (34%) rather than creating a protected landscape area (23%). "Total rejection" players are part of the last answer, considering that *Veiga de São Simão* does not need any intervention (4%).

The aspects of the preservation scope, as well as the exploration ones, are quite divided on the options identified by respondents. However, we verify that functional maintenance perspectives, aiming at fruition, are those that gathered the largest number of choices, as it can be confirmed by analysing figure 2, where it is perceptible the weight that exploration perspectives assume in the respondents' opinions.

It must be referred that for 22% of answers, a project that involves creating a protected area would be seen, above all, as a factor of local development, regardless of, within the respondents group, the majority of answers indicating that such project would only be advantageous to the region. Only 4,1% of the population indicates that a project within that scope would only bring disadvantages. Conversely, 11% of the respondents consider that a protected area could create jobs and generate wealth, in a viewpoint evidently framed within a functional vision of exploring the space[12]. Again, and following the previous question, only "rejection and disintegrated players" and "total rejection players" stated that they do not have an opinion on the matter (11%).

Questioning later regarding other indirect advantages that could result from implementing a protected area, the main motivations are related to exploring the space. We verify that the main motivation is attracting several investments or parishes (30%), followed right after by the perspective of touristic use (22%). Reasons linked to development only appear after being stated that a protected area can locally benefit populations, promoting joint projects between parishes (both with 17% of answers) and, lastly, about 4% refers that it could make up a place of research and leisure, as mentioned in some interviews.

The large majority of inquired owners (84%) is in favour of a project that passes by considering a protected area mostly with a preservation character, dividing 33% for the «involved and full support» players group and 51% for the «support players» group. On the other hand, a little more of 15% fits in the «rejection players» (8,8%), «total rejection» (3,5%) and «disintegrated and total rejection» (3,5%) group.

4. Conclusion

We acknowledge that protected areas can, above all, make up an epitome between environmental assumptions and local community's development issues. In that sense, it is a mean capable of inducing changes within the social and economic spheres, as a key element of a new development model (Pasquis 2009).

Being, therefore, an aggregate element of advantages in territorial development, it is understandable that the perspective of seeking to achieve a long-term idealist progress is not easily perceptible and assimilated by local communities, particularly by those affected by the implementation of a protection status.

Hence, among the universe of actors who may have a concrete influence on the definition of a protected space in a given territory, the recognition of their aspirations, longings, doubts, wills and expressions is of paramount importance for the convergence of interests between promoter and the affected local communities throughout this process.

We then consider that creating a protected area in *Veiga de São Simão* might contribute for local sustainable development. We observe in the region a large set of environmentally qualified and relatively well-preserved landscapes and natural territories. This scale factor is very important from the structuration and touristic promotion point of view, having been, however, widely considered that the inexistence of a protected place at a local level is a factor of reduced notoriety for the municipality.

In assuming the creation of a protected area, several possibilities are configured as development vectors, with the region benefiting with the extent of the autochthonous offering type, enabling the appearance of business opportunities, as well as the creation of local jobs. In the same manner, issues related with teaching, education and environmental awareness are vectors that the region can take advantage of. Even some economic activities that still subsist in *Veiga de São Simão*, mainly agricultural ones, would benefit with knowledge and technical support that could be made available, enabling greater income sources for farmers.

We deduce that local populations agree with the creation of a protected area. Although the type of classification isn't the most concerning aspect for these communities, its typology can have attraction or repulsive effects for an ongoing project. The type of support or rejection varies with each subject's characteristics, being dependent of aspects such as social-economic conditions, education level, place of residence, age and activities performed. These aspects will influence each individual's attitude and one's availability to accept conditionings justified by preservation strategies that will be the basis for that action.

The greater scepticism appears regarding the availability to change certain habits, whether in direct use of the land (mainly agriculture and forestry), whether in enjoying the space (pedestrianism, hunting, fishing, camping, leisure activities, etc). The first case is essentially related with changing agricultural practices while the second case is about defining the carrying capacity of the system, translated into a territory´s planning in order to zone the activities that have some impact on the same territory according to policies of preservation.

The truth is that *Veiga de São Simão* is a space with natural and landscape quality that has been under severe pressures translated in deep scars, in a more and more evident degrading process. Time is short and, in that manner, opportunities may be lost if we continue to "cling" at political scales and agendas completely mismatched of a development model really adapted to the local and regional reality.

NOTES

[1] This article presents the results of a research with an analytic and interpretative perspective, based on original observations.

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[4] In an environmental protection logic, the Yellow Stone and Yosemite National Parks stand out, (that inaugurated in 1872 and the latter in 1880), both located in the United States of America. http://jus.com.br/revista/texto/19774/parques-nacionais-nos-estados-unidos-parque-nacional-de-yellowstone-e-parque-nacional-de-yosemite viewed on October 30th 2016.

[5] In Portugal, such concerns appear in a much later stage, in the late 60s of the last century.

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[6] According to Levi-Strauss (1979), quoted by Silvano (2010:25) in the social and spatial organisation, there is an inseparable bond between the space structure and small dimension collective identities.

[7] Since 1990's the local authorities seek the classification of this natural space as a protected landscape area (according to the Portuguese national law), being however, covered in *2000 natura network* with the code PTCON0020, classified in 28th august 1997 by Resolution nr 142/97 of the Ministers Council, adapting the Directive 92/43/EEC. However, this process has always been characterized by an excessive technocratic approach without any involvement of local players and populations. Hence the need created in the ausculation of all potential actors in the possible classification of this space and in the creation of a protected area.

[8] These variables are pre-requirements of social structures, of organisational contexts, as well as they are also of the development of interactions and transactions of daily life, whether it is in the sense of nearness or inclusion, whether, even, in the sense of distance or social exclusion (Luhman 1970; Silva 1998 and 2012; Cardoso 2012).

[9] *Veiga de São Simão* stands out because of its features as a wet area. With about 450 hectares of waterlogged terrain and approximately 200 hectares of fields and scattered surrounding woods, it is located in the Lima's river estuary on its left bank. Easily flooded in the Winter as a consequence of the flow rise of the river and/or in situations of flooding, we find in this area the presence of arboreal spots made up by alders, oaks and willows and the "coexistence" of this biotope with the rural and forest environment in the slopes of the surrounding terrains, framing itself in a set of high scenic and landscape value, and biological diversity and richness. It is thus possible to find in the same place completely different species regarding their "ecological appetences", such as, for example, the *Silene alba*, mainly found in uncultivated terrain and in the banks of crop fields, the *Linariatriornithophora* and even species of the *Rannunculus* type in waterlogged areas, standing out for its rarity as a floristic specie the Orchid (*Serapiascordigera*) and animals as the Otter (*Lutralutra*).

[10] According to Censuses 2011, we verified that the total resident population of the surrounding parishes of *Veiga de São Simão* reached 4557 individuals (Source: www.ine.pt/Censos_2011).

[11] The set of motivations that represent 29% of respondents are from the support players and Involved and total support players group, whereas the motivations for exploring come from 41% of respondents of the players group that are part of the rejection players set.

[12] This aspect has even more importance due to the fact that 78% of answers given on that matter are from respondents of the rejection players group. Thus, this group is pronouncedly marked by an economic perspective, including survival reasons, prevailing over a perspective of preserving Nature.

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