

## Local heritage for neo-endogenous rural development.

Valorization, participation, local government and  
governance in Andalusia

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Cultural and natural heritage has become an essential asset for territorial development, especially in the European rural world affected by strong depopulation processes (Cejudo et al 2020). This is mainly carried out by local and public promoters, local governments, relying on the initial philosophy and support of the LEADER approach: valorisation of local assets, local decision-making, governance and participation (Esparcia et al, 2015), creation of local public-private partnerships (Local Action Groups - LAGs), creative and innovative framework, etc. However, this type of initiatives have sometimes failed or have been closed, due to the lack of an initial management and business plan, the lack of involvement of local inhabitants, the reduced dynamising effect towards other activities, or even the reduced territorial scale and design of this type of projects (Cañizares, 2020). Thus, our main objective is to study the role of local governments and local governance in the valorisation of local rural heritage as a mechanism to promote neo-endogenous development (Cejudo et al, 2020), taking as a main source some projects implemented in rural areas of the Andalusia region (Spain).

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From this perspective, the total number of projects implemented in Andalusia between 2000-2015 financed through LEADER related to natural and cultural heritage was 1,848 (12.8% of the total) with an overall investment of 100.4 million € (7% of the total) of which 62.3 million € were public aid (11.1% of the total). In addition, these heritage projects generated 1,399 jobs (3.1% of the total) of which 27.2% were new jobs; 514 were occupied by women (36.7% of the total) and 152 were occupied by young people (10.7% of the total).

In the period 2007-2015 the funds allocated to these heritage projects were considerably reduced compared to the period 2000-06. The financial and economic crisis hit this type of project with an average investment of €54,376, which is 56.7% of the overall average investment of almost €100,000.

Local authorities and associations, including the Local Action Groups, are the patrons of rural heritage, as they implement more than 80% of the projects, investment and employment. Private promoters have a minimal participation in this type of projects linked to the recovery and enhancement of heritage.

In short, the heritage actions linked to LEADER have helped to tackle the depopulation processes suffered by the European rural world in general and Andalusia in particular. This is so insofar as it offers investment opportunities for social agents (Folgado-Fernández, et al, 2020) that allow not only the maintenance and/or recovery of heritage and identity elements of the different territories (Molinero and Tort, 2018) for their transmission to future generations, but also, and synchronically, business opportunities after their enhancement, becoming a powerful pillar on which to build the permanence of rural areas. This is demonstrated by the volume of investment made and the employment generated, which has significantly affected groups that deserve special attention in these areas, such as women and young people.

However, for this productive dimension to be fully coherent and appropriate with the conservation of cultural and natural assets, it needs to incorporate some basic requirements or limitations derived from the values and characteristics that make up this heritage (Silva and Fernández, 2020).

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