

The Rural Matters Project *an overview of the main results* *regarding the Meanings and* *Consumptions of the Rural in* *Portugal*

Elisabete Figueiredo – elisa@ua.pt

University of Aveiro, Portugal



Aims

- To understand, through a multidisciplinary approach, based on the various theoretical and methodological skills of the team, **the articulation between representations, consumptions and development strategies**, in order to assess the Portuguese imaginary about the rural and its possible territorial effects.
- Therefore, the project aimed to produce and disseminate knowledge about the rural in Portugal, particularly concerning its (re)configurations and futures, and to contribute to the design and implementation of informed and more effective development strategies to meet the (diverse) rural new functions.

Aims

- To achieve these goals, the project analyzed, at a national scale:
 - The core aspects shaping different social representations on the rural;
 - the diversity of agents who appropriate rural territories and convey their images through different angles, pursuing different purposes, and using different means;
 - the motivations and contents underlying demands and consumptions of rural areas and products, particularly associated with tourism and leisure;
 - the way in which rural development strategies integrate and convey different needs, desires, representations and lifestyles currently present in rural territories;
 - the connections, interrelations and mutual influences of the previous aspects.

Aims

- The project dealt with four main concepts – **social representations, demands, consumptions and development policies and strategies** regarding rural territories.
- Each of these concepts is intrinsically complex and multidimensional and so is the way in which their multiple dimensions interact.
- This complexity and multidimensionality clearly required a variety of theoretical inputs and methodologies which were used in a combined manner.

Team



universidade de aveiro

Elisabete Figueiredo
Celeste Eusébio
Diogo Soares da Silva
Elisabeth Kastenholtz
M^a João Carneiro
Catarina Capela
Cândido Pinto
Vítor Brandão
Daniel Amaral
José Ribeiro



Hinc patriam sustinet

Instituto Superior de Agronomia
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa

Isabel Rodrigo
Rita Azevedo



Artur Cristóvão
Lívia Madureira



João Luís Fernandes
Ana Sofia Duque

And the Consultants:

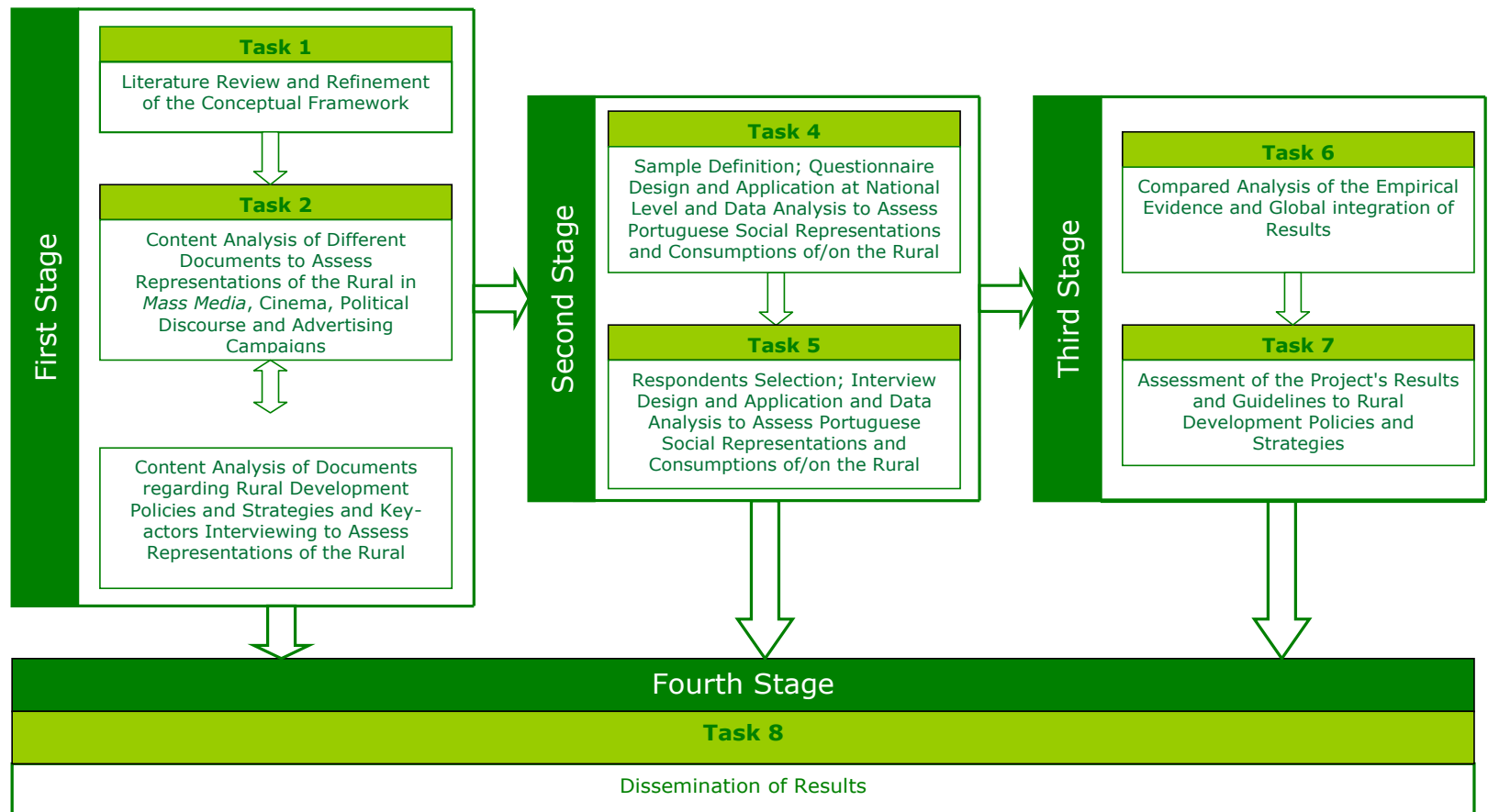
Fernando Oliveira Baptista – ISA-UTL
Keith Halfacree – Swansea University

Methodology

Project Reference: PTDC/CS-GEO/117967/2010

Project title: Rural Matters - Meanings of the Rural in Portugal: between social representations, consumptions and development strategies

Methodological Plan



Methodology

- **1st Task** - Theoretical framework; operationalization of concepts to perform content analysis of documents (tasks 2 and 3) and questionnaires (task 4) and interviews (task 5) design
 - A Content Analysis framework was designed and applied to all documents analysed in tasks 2 and 3 and issued during the last 25 years (1986 – 2011).
- **2nd Task** - **over 40 000 pages were analysed using NVivo 10**
 - Content Analysis of
 - a random sample of news about rural issues – 276 numbers in two National Newspapers (Público and Correio da Manhã) were analysed
 - 6 Portuguese Movies
 - 10 Government Programmes
 - 874 documents issued by Turismo de Portugal (brochures, videos, pictures, etc)
 - 1548 documents issued by entities related to rural tourism (Privetur, TuriHab, Networks of villages) (brochures, websites, pictures, videos)

Methodology

- **3rd Task – over 35 000 pages were analysed using NVivo 10**
 - Content Analysis of
 - 88 documents related to rural tourism legislation, planning and financial mechanisms
 - 67 documents related to rural development policies and strategies
 - 17 in depth interviews to relevant actors in the design of rural development strategies (former and current ministers and secretaries of State related with rural development, agriculture, environment and territorial planning and tourism).
- **4th task – Sample of Portuguese population design and Questionnaire**
 - A multilevel sample was designed:
 - 35 municipalities were randomly chosen considering its type – rural, urban, intermediate
 - In each municipality selected a quota sample was designed, considering the parish of residence (rural/urban accordingly with the INE definition), age, and gender

Methodology

- **4th Task** – Questionnaire structure
 - The individuals' characterization, which included, among others, socioeconomic data, place of birth and residence, life and work trajectories.
 - Representations about the rural and rurality - images, narratives and perceptions, as well as the evaluation of rural contexts, products and public development policies and strategies.
 - Demands and consumptions concerning rural areas - motivations and contents of various types of consumptions (e.g. tourism and leisure activities, agro-alimentary products, other rural productions).
 - Representations on the future development of rural areas and correspondingly valued aspects.

Methodology

■ 4th Task – Survey

- Our first intention was to apply 2000 questionnaires, combining personal with online interviews.
- We obtained 1853 valid questionnaires - 59.8% through personal interviews and 40.2% via an online form
- The data collected was analysed using SPSS v21

■ 5th Task – In depth interviews

- From the questionnaire results, 26 interviews were applied based on a random selection of respondents within 5 different groups identified earlier
- Interviews were recorded and analysed using Content Analysis / NVivo 10
- 10 interviews were filmed in order to produce the Rural Matters Documentary film – ***Voices and Visions on the Rural***, directed by Daniel Amaral

Results: Representations of the Rural in the Newspapers

- Continuous declining interest on the rural **since the middle of the 90s until 2009** where a slight increase of news seems to be related to the emergence of a 'ruralist' political discourse, mainly associated with the economic crisis
- The larger reference to the rural until the middle of the 90s is related to the Portuguese **adherence to the European Union** and to the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy in the country, which motivated numerous debates
- There is a **clear overlap between the news and the political discourse**, emphasising the association rural – agriculture.
- The rural portrayed in the news is still, mainly, a **productive space**
- The new functions and the multifunctional character of rural areas **seem to be neglected** by both the newspapers analysed
- **Forest fires** are a major topic in both newspapers

Results: Representations of the Rural in the movies

- The analysis reveals a representation of the rural as a territory (or a set of territories) between preservation and change, between a legacy and a modernity.

- Some prevalent and common themes are:

- Abandonment
- Return (memoirist)
- Return
- Isolation

Deconstruction of the traditional matrix and the construction of a hybrid modernity (e.g. [Dot.com](#))

Gloomy and anti-idyllic rural – the rural of mystical narratives (e.g. [Bad Boy](#))

Religious rural

Multifunctional rural

Neo-rurals

Rural empowerment

The Rural
(representations)

Opposition to the urban
Difficult balance between tradition and modernity
Rural multifunctionality

Results: Representations of the Rural in the Government Programs

- **Until 1995:**
 - Sectorial and productivist vision, with the RD profoundly related to agriculture and its modernization
- **After 1995:**
 - A territorial and multifunctional post-productivist vision. However, agriculture is still considered as the structuring activity of rural areas.
- **Right-wing governments**
 - Vision of the rural, mainly, as a productive space
- **Left-wing governments**
 - Rural development beyond agriculture and a more post-productivist vision.

Results: Representations of the Rural in Rural Development Policies and Relevant Actors

- An evident emphasis until the 90s in agriculture as synonym of rural territories and, motivated by the implementation of CAP after 1986, in the need to modernize agricultural infrastructures and activity
- After 1995:
 - Contradictions within ProDeR : the rhetoric (post productivism and Environmental Conservation) and the priorities when distributing the RD budget.
 - Agreement between ProDeR & the narratives of political actors .Both convey a rural based upon the traditional activities (e.g. agriculture) and forestry functions (e.g. productive functions)
 - Even in the RD Programme, Portugal still continues to drive its main goal, when it adhered to the EEC in 1986 (to modernize its agricultural structures in order to “catch up” with its Central and Northern European counterparts)
- **In short:** there is a contradiction between the willingness to implement rural development, that is rhetoric, and the reality (how RD budget was really distributed).

Results: Representations of the Rural in Rural/National Tourism Planning

- **There was a decrease in the relevance attributed to rural areas and to the rural tourism products in the documents**, particularly in the National Plans for Tourism and mainly after 2007
- **Before 2007** references to rural areas were focused on the relevance rural areas may have had in Portuguese tourism offer, mainly due to:
 - Natural and cultural patrimony
 - Agriculture
 - Landscape
 - Architecture
 - Protected areas
- **After 2007** the term 'rural tourism' is scarcely used, but some references to tourism practices related with rural areas may be found: cultural and landscape touring; nature tourism; wellness tourism; gastronomic and enotourism.
- During the period analysed there was a shift from regulation (until 2007) to promotion of tourism activities in rural areas (after 2007) with a major emphasis on the diversification of tourism products and services.

Results: Representations of the Rural in Tourism Promotion Materials – National Tourism Office

- From the analysis it becomes evident that the **discourses and images are based in metaphors and symbols with a great degree of 'globality'**, which intend to make tourists familiar with the 'rural Portugal' destination, corresponding to their needs for an alternative to daily routine and, simultaneously, commodifying Portuguese rurality and rural elements.
- All in all, national tourism promotional campaigns seem to have undergone a shift
 - from the **representation of the rural as *ancient and unchanged*** (prior to 1995)
 - to a **countryside that is presented no longer as the place for *old people*, but is rather the context for *new people*, activities and experiences** (from 1995 onwards)
- From 1995, the rural is represented as a space that is **no longer rural** (despite the features of rurality it encompasses) but increasingly urban in its conception, promotion and experience.

Results: Representations of the Rural in Tourism Promotion Materials – Rural Tourism related entities and networks

- Empirical data has evidenced in a clear manner the **'touristification', 'patrimonialization' and 're-naturalization'** processes of the Portuguese countryside during the last decades.
- Data shows a progressive construction of the countryside as **increasingly open to 'external' consumptions**, in which all the elements and dimensions (natural, cultural, architectonic, economic, and social) may be constituted as commodities and amenities.
- In the analysed promotional materials, **tourists** are the current **protagonists** of Portuguese rural areas, while the **inhabitants seem to progressively fade out**

Results: Representations of the Rural by the Portuguese Population (Representations)

- In the case of Portugal, the idyllic notion – although important – is not the dominant one.
- 5 clusters were identified:
 - The Anti-Idyllic (30,6%)
 - The Defeatist (28,8%)
 - The Confident (9,5%)
 - The Idealistic (15,6%)
 - The Nature Lovers (15,6%)
- The five clusters identified clearly demonstrate the lack of homogeneity concerning social representations on the rural in Portugal
- Furthermore they have also evidenced some contradictions inside (and between) each cluster
- Social representations of the rural in Portugal very often place two dimensions together:
 - on the one hand the rural as an abandoned, neglected and 'pre-modernity' space and,
 - on the other hand, the rural valued as an idyllic place precisely because of the persistence of the signs of its 'pre-modernity'.

Results: Representations of the Rural by the Portuguese Population (Consumptions)

■ Tourism-related consumptions

- 46.7% of the sample declared they had travelled to the Portuguese countryside with tourism and leisure purposes in the last three years
- Regarding motivations and travel behaviour, 4 clusters were identified:
 - The Active Visitors (21,1%)
 - The Passive Nature Observers (21,2%)
 - The Inactive (26,8%)
 - The Summer Family Vacationers (30,8%)
- The four clusters demonstrate heterogeneity of sociodemographic characteristics, as well as a variety of motivations and purposes to visit rural areas as well as travel behaviours

■ Food-related consumptions

- More than three quarters of the respondents consume small-scale, rural produced foodstuffs
- They consider those products to be healthier, better flavoured and more reliable than other products
- The respondents' attachment to rural areas, including the frequency of visits to these areas, their images of rural areas, and their sociodemographic profile are the factors that have most impact on the consumption of these products

Results: Representations of the Rural by the Portuguese Population (Development)

- More than half of the respondents **have classified the level of socioeconomic development of rural areas as low**
- The attention given to forests and local populations' socioeconomic conditions are the aspects that respondents think the governments' action was more negative during last decades, although they rated negatively all the governments' intervention regarding rural areas
- **76.3%** of respondents think the national government should be responsible for financing rural areas development and **62.1%** say the government is the main responsible for its current and future development.
- Despite rating the **development of rural areas as poor and the governments' actions' even worse**, the vast majority of respondents defend that rural territories are very important to the Portuguese economy, society and tourism
- For more than half of the respondents, **the future looks bleak** for most rural areas, taking into account the past and present situation of rural territories in Portugal

Results in further detail

O Campo é onde não estamos
Significados Sociais e Institucionais do Rural em Portugal

O Campo é onde não estamos
Significados Sociais e Institucionais do Rural em Portugal



Projeto de Investigação Científica e Desenvolvimento Tecnológico, financiado pela FCT e com cofinanciamento comunitário (COMPETE/ QREN/ FEDER)



universidade de aveiro
theoria poiesis praxis

Coordenação:
Elisabete Figueiredo
Diogo Soares da Silva
Maria João Carneiro
Celeste Eusébio
Elisabeth Kastenholz

universidade de aveiro
theoria poiesis praxis

<http://ruralmatters.web.ua.pt>

Thank You
Muito Obrigada

Elisabete Figueiredo – elisa@ua.pt

University of Aveiro, Portugal

