

Chapter 4

The Power of Monsanto's Stone: Contribution to the Study of the Sustainable Adaptive Strategies

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ABSTRACT

There is no point in rushing because, in fact, people are going nowhere in particular. No matter how arduous the observation, in a slow and difficult sequence, people are always in the same place: in the countryside. There, people were yesterday and will be tomorrow. The landscape is a singularity with no limits: each tree, each granite boulder, each course presents infinite perspectives indistinguishable from each other. Sustainable landscape will be a mandatory topic in the twenty-first century and will influence the interventions in open spaces. These new paradigms will allow a healthier environment, where the relation of architecture and environmental comfort is present. In this sense, the chapter addresses aspects of the environment in its relationship with living culture; studies construction techniques with a lower environmental impact; and develops adaptive strategies of “sustainable project” for ordering and appropriation of habitable space according to the principles of cultural, economic, and environmental preservation.

INTRODUCTION

The best solutions for landscape interventions are people-centered. This means involving the users, landscape design and other relevant stakeholders in the process of creating value. Methods and principles based on design thinking create participatory processes and solutions that are tangible for everyone involved.

The Portuguese countryside is changing rapidly. Traditional agricultural production is being pressured by global market policies, which leads to migrations that leads to the abandonment of farms, the practice of intensive agriculture that saturates the soil, and to the disappearance of traditional rural architecture heritage.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8054-6.ch004

Rem Koolhaas says that provoking these rapid migrations and our obsession with the city has led the countryside to a kind of “vacuum”: rural labor is being carried out by immigrants, agriculture is subjected to genetic modification experiments, and rural buildings are transformed into a nostalgic tourist scenario. The field is now a mysterious territory ready to be rediscovered and investigated.

The research of this study points to the hypothesis of creating a rural landscape transformation, creating a development platform based on a theoretical model. This will improve the quality of life for its inhabitants, with a diversity of ecosystems, trying to be sustainable, pleasant, and attractive with the use of a maximum of sustainability indicators (see Figure 1).

The regional under-development, the desertification of the interior of Portugal, detailed in the article “Birth, Interior, Municipalities, Desertification - A Fatality?” written by professor João Manso (2017), especially in Beira Baixa, will undoubtedly create a social bottleneck (Neves, 2016).

There may be an opportunity, for environment makers who are responsible for the technical part, to illustrate in a convincing way utopian or realistic solutions.

Defined in a broad perspective in the intervention of a vast territory within the limits of the Quinta dos Ciprestes near the village of Monsanto (Figure 2), promoting an environmental richness in the “ser-rana” (mountain) landscape.

Knowing that economic conditions generate the speed of these intentions, one has to do a reading from the middle of the 21st century the restructuring of the landscape and the prevention of the ecological changes that lie ahead.

In this solution there are spaces for the conservation and regeneration of natural forest cover, assuming a low human use. In these lands, actions should be encouraged to accelerate the evolution of natural succession, with the exclusive use of native plant species and not use deep soil mobilizations.

The agro-forest areas are those who, having a predominantly forest vocation, should be ordered regarding multiple uses, admitting traditional agricultural, pastoral and agro-forestry uses, or be subjected to land conversion measures.

Figure 1. Monsanto by the moon



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