



Initiatives in Rural Galicia

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The experience

It is the life project of a family from the city of Vigo who decides to move to a village in the Ribeira Sacra. It influences a change of values and self-esteem related to rural identity.

In the family's surrounding environment, the mainstream opinion was that the future is in the city, therefore, this experience breaks down this general idea.

Another example of this change can be taken from the house rehabilitation: contractors and construction builders strongly advise to demolish the house and rebuild it. Nevertheless, they now show people how the house was rehabilitated.

In rural tourism, the focus is not in business, but in an experience and in a welcoming land (Galicia, the Ribeira Sacra); the house functions as a gate that connects visitors to the land. It represents a way of life people want to know.

We are a rural development element for people in our environment. More than six thousand people stayed in the house, generating income and life expectations for many people. As an experience, it transmits that there is a future outside the village, but there is a future also here.



Its Origins

It is the family house of Francisco's ancestors. Eight of the ten siblings went to Buenos Aires (Argentina), and two to Santiago de Compostela (Galicia). The house remains for its housekeepers. But Francisco was very fond of the house. He wanted the house to become the place for the Almuíña family to get together. In the eighties he got in touch with the Rural Tourism experience in Catalonia.

Years later, after an occupational accident, his family encouraged him not to let the project just for his parents, but to be himself the one to develop it. The family made the decision to embark on the new project.

Bearing in mind that the house is a support to a family income, it was a big investment and it was supported by the Leader II project. Nevertheless, beyond economics there are values that cannot quote, but move this project. His aim is that the house activity allows them to depreciate the investment.

Its growth was sustained since its beginnings until 2011, when an important decrease in consult numbers and stays is started to be noticed. Visits to the house declined from half to 2009 and 2010 visits. It is now needed to diversify economy by diversifying services.



Agents

The house functions as a business element, as well as neighbouring element. They are the founders of the Rural Tourism in Ribeira Sacra.

They attempt to collaborate with other initiatives: butchers, bakers wine producers, farms...It is another rural development element which adds value to the area.

In addition, they also collaborate to promote cultural elements, to showcase identity and natural, cultural, and religious patrimony...And especially *the most outstanding patrimony are people, more than stones, more than nature and architecture. People who used to live in Ribeira Sacra and knew the river before dams. They are a generation that is disappearing and that we should value.*



Learnings

Training, when starting this type of project, comes from an urban life and employee experience. The lack of training concerning administrative and business issues was important. It was an unknown field for us. We were also lacking training concerning marketing and publicity.

Administrations, from town or the autonomous community, do not seem able of collaboration. They are used to deal with "clients". It is needed to learn to collaborate and to improve progressively the present situation.

In addition, it is needed from Administrations to hear people who are working and who know what is demanded in services. What can be observed in "Casa do Romualdo's" satisfaction survey is that people are displeased concerning information about Ribeira Sacra. Town Council administration puts signs that are taken away by the Autonomous Community's Government. There is no agreement and no coordination. Each Administration carry out their own strategy, but neither of them speaks to people.

Then, there is also the problem of municipalities (there used to be two Ribeiras Sacras, and now there is just one).

Impacts

Intelligent Territory

The main impact is on self-esteem, and on the recovery of identity and rural patrimony value.

Inclusive Territory

It is an employment alternative which has a positive impact on other business of the area.

Sustainable Territory

Conservation is an important factor of the project, from the house rehabilitation to the recovery of traditional knowledge.

