



Initiatives in Rural Galicia

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The Experience

A Cova da Terra (The World's Cave) is a pioneering fair trade and responsible consumption initiative in Galicia. Placed in the city of Lugo, it covers three main working areas: the shop (a responsible consumption tool), a social centre (where activities related to ethical bank, feminism, renewable energy sources, international cooperation, etc. are organised), Kandahaira resource centre (used as library and documentation centre), and an educational project.

Under this last working area, A Cova da terra attempts to train and create awareness to promote fairer economic relations. An instance of one of its projects is 'As mulleres alimentan o mundo' (Women Feed the World). In this project, workshops for women in rural areas are organised, and it also promotes encounters with women from other countries around the concept of food sovereignty.

Through the initiative 'De aquí, xusto e ecolóxico' (From Here, Fair and Ecological), A Cova da Terra encourages the idea of rural areas as places for opportunity to change economic and nature relations. It encourages ecological and sustainable initiatives, and it seeks to promote local food production under ethical and fair criteria.

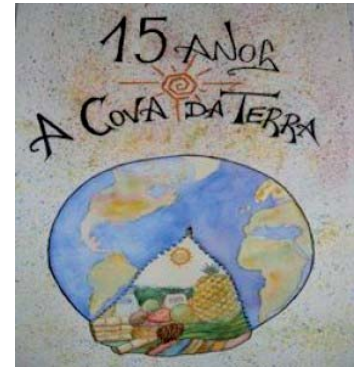
This project's main tool is the guide 'How to Make Fairer and Ecological Rural Areas'. In this guide, different initiatives and examples of rural development are shown: ecological production, processing, and distribution, basic rules, assessing, economic sustainability, funding, etc. In addition to the guide, which is available online, different workshops were organised throughout Galicia.



Origins

A Cova da Terra was created in 1995 and was the first shop in Galicia dedicated to promote fair trade. It's opening was during the time of the 0.7 target campaign (to commit 0.7% of rich countries' gross national product to Official Development Assistance). Its main objective is to improve one of the origins of poverty: trade relations. This is a consequence of the 0.7 target campaign and of the aim to create awareness on development challenges.

Therefore, a small 30m² shop was opened. This shop sold mainly coffee, chocolate and craftwork. It has always maintained a straight relation with other initiatives, and it participated in the founding of the Spanish coordination for fair trade.



Activity



Nowadays, A Cova da Terra works on responsible consumption and its encouragement in addition to traditional fair trade, which focusses on the relations between North and South hemisphere.

Thus, agro-ecologic products from Lugo's area are commercialised, and, in this way, A Cova da Terra supports these sustainable rural initiatives.

The base for these fair trade relations has four main directions of development. Its main fair trade asset is the shop itself. A Cova da Terra also works as a social centre in which different activities on consumption, food sovereignty, women, sustainable energy, ethical banking, or international cooperation, among others, are developed. A resource centre is its third asset: Kandaharia, a library specialized on these matters. Lastly, A Cova da Terra carries out an awareness increasing and educational job on all these matters, by activities in educational centres, workshops in different rural areas, etc.





Participation

A Cova da Terra is a non-profit voluntary association. It functions democratically and develops its own initiatives. Its responsible consumption activities are self-financed. Through public support obtains funding for other activities. For instance, in the case of the Guide and talks on 'How to make rural areas just and ecological' it obtain funding from Cooperación ao desenvolvemento of the Xunta de Galicia, although the association took on 10% of the expenses.

Women's Role



A Cova da Terra pays especial attention to women's role. One instance of this is the project 'Women Fed the World', which has been carried out together with other NGOs. In this project workshops were organised, and women from different rural areas participated in them. They worked on the concept of food sovereignty and Galician women from rural areas were related to rural women from Africa, Asia, and South America.



Impacts

Intelligent Territory

A Cova da Terra is an example of the potential of networking, and of how very small or isolated micro-projects can develop through their interrelation and through a strategy of bond and direct commitment with consumers. One of the relevant aspects of networking is the sharing of knowledge, in this case, knowledge on promoting agro-ecology.

Inclusive Territory

To promote entrepreneurialship in rural areas, as a way of employment, is one of the objectives aimed particularly towards the younger generation. This rural area is an opportunity space to carry out ecological production, as well as an ecological and people friendly way of life.

Sustainable Territory

The ecological dimension, together with seeking of more just economic models, is the model that is promoted by A Cova da Terra.