

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF REGIONS AS A CHALLENGE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION - THE PROBLEM-SOLVING METHODOLOGY IN TEACHING CULTURAL MANAGEMENT. THE CASE OF THE 'PORTO COMERCIAL DE CAMBRES'

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Abstract

Teaching in higher education is a constant challenge, as it requires not only permanent updating, but also the search for and implementation of the most appropriate methodologies that enable the transmission of scientific and technical knowledge to students and their training to apply abstract knowledge to concrete situations in the future profession.

The project proposal we present in our paper, was developed as part of the Cultural Management unit's assessment. Its main objective was to challenge the students to apply the knowledge they had acquired and to develop feasible proposals for the sustainability of the territory and profitability of all the available resources.

Therefore, in this paper we present not only the learning path taken throughout the semester, but also the results achieved. The cultural management project proposal for the Commercial Port of Cambres that we intend to present succeeds in transforming this facility into a driving force for the development of the entire surrounding area and, through the action proposal, it will also contribute to tourism sustainability itself, creating synergies between the built cultural heritage and the natural heritage of the municipality of Lamego, located in the Douro demarcated wine region, a world heritage site, since 2001, in Portugal.

We also intend to demonstrate how the construction of the cultural management project contributed to consolidating the students' knowledge of the content covered and to increasing their confidence in preparing them for the labour market.

Keywords: Problem-solving, Cultural management, higher education.

1 INTRODUCTION

Regions know that cultural and/or natural heritage is one of their main assets in terms of differentiating themselves at regional, national and international level; so, they seek to develop policies and projects that make the most of this heritage as a factor to promote social and economic sustainability. Local efforts in this sector are still weak in Portugal, but there are already a number of successful initiatives, such as the Coa Museum or the Caretos of Podence, which highlight the importance of defining ongoing cultural strategies that enable effective partnerships between the public sector, the private sector and the local community.

From the second half of the 20th century onwards, there was widespread agreement about the importance of housing for the history of architecture and construction. In 1964, in the Venice Charter, the concept of "monuments and sites" came to include, not only architectural creations in isolation, but also sites, urban or rural, in which the testimonies of a particular civilization, a significant phase of evolution and progress, or some historical event are evident [1]. The Recommendations concerning the safeguarding of Historic buildings and sites, of UNESCO [2] or the European Convention for the Safeguarding of the Architectural Heritage [3], add to the historical, artistic and scientific interest, the social and technical interest, considering the human dimension of residential buildings, since they are part of the daily life of human beings, constituting the living presence of the past that has shaped them [2].

This consolidates the importance of safeguarding historic buildings and sites and their "integration into contemporary life" [2], as "an irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of Europe's cultural heritage, an invaluable testimony to our past and a common good for all Europeans" [3].

Alongside a growing interest in the housing heritage that makes up historic centers and sites, there is a greater awareness of the dangers of the consumer society, not only in economic terms, but also in terms

of the environment. In 1987, the Brundtland Report defined sustainable development as "development that meets current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [4]. Like the concept of Heritage, the concept of Sustainability also refers to the legacy left to future generations, not only in environmental terms, but also in economic and social terms. Despite this relationship between the two concepts, only in 2011 the Principles of La Valletta articulate the issue of sustainable development with the principles of safeguarding historic heritage, in recommendations that are widely accepted internationally. This document recognizes that "sustainable development has gained such importance that several directives on architectural planning are now based on policies designed to limit urban sprawl and preserve urban heritage" [5].

In this sense, interventions in the historic sites are opportunities to improve the quality of urban life, based on respect for environmental balance. It encourages the reuse and recycling of non-renewable resources and the implementation of strategies to improve energy efficiency. In 2013, UNESCO also affirms the need to consider culture as an essential pillar of sustainable development, "as a system of values, a resource and a framework for building truly sustainable development, learning from the experiences of past generations" [6]. It also recognizes that safeguarding historic areas, together with traditional knowledge and practices, reduces the environmental footprint of societies, promotes greener consumption and production patterns and more sustainable urban and architectural solutions [7].

Urban management and rehabilitation involve a series of practices and policies aimed at revitalizing degraded urban areas (making cities more liveable, sustainable, inclusive and economically viable), promoting the conservation of historical and cultural heritage, improving urban infrastructure and ensuring accessibility, among other objectives.

Urban management and rehabilitation therefore create more pleasant and functional urban environments for residents (better housing, transport, public services and leisure facilities); create the necessary conditions to revitalize areas where cultural and architectural heritage is found; attract investment, generate employment and stimulate economic growth; create the necessary conditions for the sustainable management of natural and material resources, reducing environmental impact (energy efficiency, reduction in car use, etc.); improve urban mobility, creating more jobs and economic growth.); improve urban mobility by strengthening sustainable public transport infrastructure; promote the expansion of public spaces dedicated to culture (facilities, theaters, green spaces, etc.); and also strengthen social cohesion and reduce crime by making urban spaces safer and more inviting [8] [9].

Management and rehabilitation include interventions that include restoring historic buildings, creating green areas, improving road and transportation infrastructure and upgrading public spaces. Given the complexity that most interventions require, extra care must be taken in their planning so that rehabilitation benefits all sections of the population and presents integrated solutions between the areas of housing, transportation, the environment and available infrastructure [8] [9] [10].

2 METHODOLOGY

The Cultural Management unit of the Tourism, Cultural and Heritage Management degree, due to its multidisciplinary nature, requires the use of teaching methodologies that are capable of involving students in problem-solving and enabling them to intervene in the different areas of cultural management, namely: urban management and rehabilitation; management of built heritage; and management of cultural tourism.

This is why this unit was taught (2023-2024) using the problem-solving and project-building methods, promoting collaborative learning and action research. The choice of this methodology sought to: increase students' critical thinking; foster creativity; apply scientific knowledge to real-world situations; and build students' confidence in their scientific and technical skills.

In fact, living and socializing are fostered via collaborative learning and this kind of methodology enhances academic performance of students [11]. Collaborative learning structures allow more interaction and dialogue among learners and help to create a feeling of connectedness and belonging among learners, which is crucial for learners. This perception of belonging to a group, a team, or a community avoids the perception of isolation, increasing enthusiasm and motivation and decreasing failure and drop-out rates [12] [13], i.e., learners are more actively involved in the learning process, leading to a more profound understanding of the lesson that influences their school performance [11].

Within collaborative methodology, we used the problem-solving and project methods. In concrete terms, the following path was followed during the unit's practical sessions: 1) presentation of real cases of heritage, which are abandoned or are not being monetized, risking cultural and economic loss for the region; 2)

identification of the problems that needed to be tackled; 3) gathering of information (on the regional environment) through the PESTEL analysis; 4) identification of the key issues and objectives of the proposal; 5) and construction of a viable intervention project (at infrastructures, human resources, and budget level).

To gather and organize all the information, we used the PESTEL and SWOT analysis, in order to understand all the obstacles that would influence any project proposal that we could develop. Regarding the construction of the project proposal, we defined the following topics/areas: project summary; goals; project justification; accessibility; action plan; technical specifications and milestones; human resources; budget; communication and dissemination; impact and evaluation.

3 RESULTS

At the beginning of the unit, students were presented with a set of real-life situations related to cultural heritage, challenging them to come up with a project proposal that could turn that cultural facility into an asset for territorial development, at an economic and socio-cultural level. The cultural facility chosen was the Commercial Port of Cambres (Lamego), by revitalising this space for tourism, economic and cultural purposes.

According to the PESTEL and SWOT analysis of Lamego municipality, the legal requirements in terms of the urban management and rehabilitation, as well as the opportunities in terms of funding and support for the tourism sector, a project was developed that proposes the rehabilitation of the entire area, next to the River Douro, turning it into an asset for the economic and tourist sustainability of the entire region.

3.1 Project proposal

The aim of this project is to make use of and invigorate the Commercial Port of Cambres, with the aim of making the space economically profitable, creating the infrastructure and initiatives capable of promoting and increasing the cultural and tourist attractiveness of the municipality of Lamego and, consequently, boosting revenue for all the economic agents and the population of the same territory.

3.1.1 Project summary

The project will be called "Cultural Management Project in the Commercial Port of Cambres". The aim of this project is to make use of and revitalise the Commercial Port of Cambres, by making the space economically profitable, creating the infrastructures and initiatives capable of promoting and increasing the cultural and tourist attractiveness of the municipality of Lamego and, consequently, boosting revenue for all the economic agents and the population of the same territory.

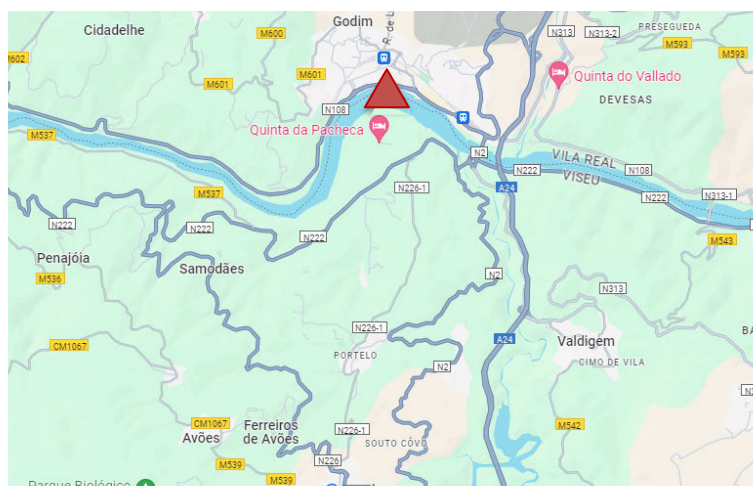


Figure 1. Commercial Port of Cambres (Lamego) (GoogleMaps)

3.1.2 Project justification and main goals

As well as preserving the space and its surroundings, the central aim of our project will be to improve the infrastructure of the commercial port of Cambres, either by improving access to the site and building the necessary infrastructures; or by preserving our traditions, involving the local population in safeguarding their history and culture, giving value to the local cultural heritage and the natural heritage of the Douro region.

Our cultural management project therefore aims to satisfy the needs of both visitors and residents. From the outset, by identifying problems and possible responses, we want the project to be sustainable in the long term, presenting ways of resolving any setbacks that arise in order to achieve success and the proposed goals.

Based on the defined objectives and with the collaboration of the public and private organisations that we believe have an interest in the process of revitalising this facility, the conditions will thus be created for the implementation and development of a revitalisation strategy for the supply port of Cambres that benefits all stakeholders.

Bearing in mind that we will have to create a social and economic development exchange in which the tourism sector has increasingly taken on an important role in society, assuming itself as one of the strategic areas responsible for economic and social growth, improving the quality of life of communities, and given that the city of Lamego's cultural resources, namely monuments, gastronomy and its geographical location constitute added value, we have created the main conditions for achieving our objectives. If the revitalisation of the port can develop supply and tourism, it can also contribute to consumption (demand) based on these factors. In other words, by revitalising the port we are proposing solutions for cultural, tourist and urban articulation.

Our revitalisation strategies involve creating better economic and social conditions that directly influence people's quality of life, turning uninhabited/isolated areas into attractive areas for visitors and tourists.

Thus, our strategy will contribute to: enhancing "free" spaces for the reuse of economic and cultural activities; publicising a positive image of the city and the entire municipality of Lamego, attracting visitors, residents and investors; and increasing employment opportunities and promoting varied commerce, maintaining cultural diversification and encouraging mobility and accessibility to the city. Knowing that cities or places are only attractive if they offer activities and products, such as services, commerce and entertainment, our project will contribute to employability, as it will be able to bring together all these factors and solutions, such as adopting mobility plans that include means of transport (boats, minibuses, buses or even a tourist train).

As well as using the space to link the port area to the city, we intend to organise specialised events, encourage activities, reuse spaces for cultural activities and create diversified goods and services and products.

Our project will ultimately contribute to increasing quality of life, creating jobs and creating an interpretive centre on the site itself (in facilities that will be created), making the whole surrounding region known, the history of the city of Lamego and increasing the use of tourist facilities and services.

3.1.3 Accessibility

In terms of accessibility for people with reduced mobility, we propose implementing measures in our project such as:

- Pedestrian access routes that allow wheelchair access with wide pavements that are duly signposted, either by differentiated paint on the floor itself or with different, rougher paving material;
- Access to all services with the installation of access ramps and handrails on both sides;
- Car parks with spaces reserved for people with reduced mobility, with signs on the ground and clearly visible identification plates, as well as signs on the pavement for spaces for pregnant women and people accompanied by children;
- Regular pavements with lifts to help wheelchair users;
- Lifts that can assist in entering and exiting the means of transport to be used;
- Creation of sanitary facilities large enough to manoeuvre a wheelchair or other means of transport used by people with reduced mobility, bearing in mind that the toilets themselves should be suitable, such as higher toilets with fixed or folding supports, folding washbasins and supports, as well as hospital-style taps with a long handle; - Wide automatic doors with sensors.

We also intend to create a tactile map for people with visual impairments (total or partial):

- A tactile map to help the visually impaired or visually impaired person find their way along a route, combining Braille with high relief and non-tactile information based on colours and contrasts;
- Floors with differentiated colours and textures;

- Signs with large letters and reflective colours;
- Creation of audio guide services, with interpretation in several languages;
- Use of videos with sign language reproduction, as well as employees for this purpose.

3.1.4 Action plan and milestones

Our project proposal is to be developed by the Municipality of Lamego, as the local public administration entity, that owns the commercial port of Cambres. In this sense, we need to observe the legal requirements for public contracts and constructions. Regarding the concrete results, we intend to build a building that will house the sales shop (merchandising), the information point (selling various activities) and the interpretive centre. The construction of infrastructures that allow accessibility and recreation of the surrounding areas is another goal we intend to achieve.

There are planned walks that will take place at least three times a week between June and October, gastronomic tours that will be organised no more than three times a week from June until the end of the year and cultural tours by boat or bus that will take place three times a week between June and October. Lastly, it is crucial that a team of qualified professionals be set up to form the basis of the whole project from the outset.

Table 1. Action Plan

	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Initiatives</i>	<i>Milestone / timetable</i>
Measure 1 – Construction works	Public contest	To publicize the contest To analyse the submitted proposals To publicize the winning proposal	Until March 2024
	Award of the contract	Negotiation of specifications	Until September 2024
	Construction monitoring	Specification chart	
Measure 2 – Leisure activities	Itineraries	Guided walks	At least, 3 times a week, from June to October Minimum of participants: 15
	Cultural experiences	Cultural routes, in the world heritage site of Douro, including, different types of transport, like boat and buses.	At least, 3 times a week, from June to October Minimum of participants: 50
	Gastronomy experiences	Negotiation with different restaurants, for gastronomy experiences, with local products and typical dishes	At least, once a month, every month Minimum of participants: 20
Measure 3 – Qualified team	HR hiring	Public publicising of vacancies HR selection	1 project manager 1 cultural manager 2 tourist entertainers
	Training	Communication, tourism management, cultural management, etc., according to the partnership with Higher education institutions	1 training per year, at least
Measure 4 – Transports	Bus	Establishing a regular daily timetable between the commercial port and the city centre	From September 2024
Measure 5 - Interpretative centre	Exhibition	Douro Region storytelling Customs and traditions exhibition	From September 2024
	Merchandising	Definition of the best objects and souvenirs for the shop	From September 2024
Measure 6 – Monitoring and evaluation	Monitoring	Definition of those responsible for monitoring each activity / initiative Monitoring indicators by analysing registration documents	Quarterly
	Assessment	Annual report	Annually

3.1.5 Budget

Table 2. Budget (1st year)

<i>Description</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Subtotal</i>
Human resources			
Project Manager	1	1300€ x 14 months	18.200€
Managing Director	1	1600€ x 14 months	22.400€
Tourism Guide	2	870€ x 14 months	24.360€
Interpretative Centre helpers	2	870€ x 14 months	24.360€
Tourism entertainers	2	15€ x 3 activities x 5 months x 2 HR	3.600€
Equipments			
Vehicles: 1 passenger vehicle (hybrid)	1	38.000€	38.000€
Office equipment	---	25.000€	25.000€
Photovoltaic panels	10	50.000€	50.000€
Construction materials	---	45.000€	45.000€
External services Supply			
Communication	1	3.000€	3.000€
Equipment rental - boats	---	5.000€	5.000€
Maintenance	1	1.000€	12.000€
Security guard	1	1.000€	12.000€
Total			282.920€

3.1.6 Communication and dissemination

Initially, this project could be publicised mainly through social networks and a professional website (in addition to the municipality's own communication channels). However, given the target audience established for this project, capital will later be invested in publicising and promoting it through broader media, such as radio, television and local newspapers.

3.1.7 Impact and evaluation

To ensure the project's viability, we will apply for public funding at the start of the project and, after that, our strategy will be to find various ways of achieving liquidity, either by selling our products or by providing services. We intend to create products related to our project, such as souvenirs, small objects, regional products, all with our logo (merchandising).

In addition to our physical products, we also intend to monetise our services (guided tours, hikes, etc.) and other forms of entertainment, such as holding events, from exhibitions to shows.

We also intend to look for other sources of funding, through sponsorship with companies that are directly or indirectly involved in our project (accommodation, catering, etc.), as well as public institutions, or even municipalities, all with the aim of increasing the project's sustainability. Finally, in the future we also propose to invest in the installation of photovoltaic panels, which will not only help support the sustainability of our infrastructure, but will also be a source of income.

During the project, periodic evaluations will be carried out through quarterly progress reports to ensure that the project achieves the objectives set, adapts to changes and has a significant impact on the community. To this end, the documents needed to prove the works that have been carried out are the public tender notice, the application selection process, the signed contract and the accounting documents. With regard to the leisure activities, proof will be provided by the registration list, the promotional material used to publicise the activities, the satisfaction surveys completed by visitors, photographic and audio-visual records and the accounting documents. In the case of subcontracting two tourist entertainers, the documents that will be used to evaluate the activity are the public tender notice, the application selection process, the contracts signed by those selected and the accounting documents.

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In terms of the final evaluation of the project, a report will be drawn up containing all the evidence of what has been achieved up to the end of the project's action plan, with the corresponding documents.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Teaching cultural management requires identifying the most appropriate methodologies, which can alert students to the demands of working in this area, but also help them solve real problems.

Collaborative teaching enabled students to work in groups and develop a project proposal that was appropriate to the problem presented.

In this way, they not only improved their ability to communicate and find solutions together, respecting each other's opinions, but also consolidated their scientific and technical skills, required in the field of cultural management, by presenting a viable proposal that was appropriate to the local context.

Competitiveness and sustainability are two key words in the development of tourism in the Douro region (Portugal) and this must always be combined with the efficient use of the existing cultural and natural heritage, as well as the monetisation of any facilities that enhance the tourist attractiveness of this destination.

We therefore believe that the qualification of future professionals should always be guided by demands, by adapting to market needs and by the choice of teaching-learning methodologies capable of simulating real situations.

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