The “IDENTERRA-Stakeholders” Research Project - 2004 Progress Report

Introduction

The “IDENTERRA-Stakeholders” project is intended to develop a set of conceptual and methodological frameworks for the empirical studies of the role of development stakeholders in changing socio-economic and other features of territorial identities. “Territorial identity” is conceived as a set of biophysical, cultural, social, economic and other specificities of places and regions that make them distinguishable from the other, neighbouring or more distant ones. “Development stakeholders” are all individuals or groups of people and institutions that directly or indirectly stand to gain or lose given a particular development course or activity. Pilot empirical recordings of the traditional and emerging identity features and of the role of development stakeholders in producing and consuming territorial identities will be carried out in selected localities/regions. The exploratory nature of the “IDENTERRA-Stakeholders” should enable laying grounds for future in-depth studies of the importance of territorial identity in the context of globalized economy and culture. The project is funded in the framework of the Pluriannual Financing Programme of the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), Ministry of Higher Education and Science, Portugal.

Project Activities in 2004

A conceptual-methodological framework in the form of a double step-wise model, entitled IDENTERRA Model, was developed in order to enable transformation of the concept of identity into an analytical category, which, in turn should facilitate empirical recordings of the relations between the territorial identity and socio-economic development at local and regional levels. The first step consists in disaggregating the three key concepts, i.e., “territorial identity”, “development stakeholders” and “local/global nexus”, into discernible and measurable components. The second step consists in integrating the top-down and bottom-up approaches to development, based on complementarities between macroscopic (“desk”) and grassroots (“field”) research methods and tools. A Glossary of technical terms used in the IDENTERRA Model was also produced.

In order to identify, appraise and categorize stakeholders’ perceptions of local/regional identity features, a survey was carried out on the knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) of the social, economic, environmental and cultural attractiveness of the counties in the Oeste Region. The survey was carried out during a conference devoted to the public lunching of the IDENTERRA-Oeste Project, Organized in cooperation with the ADRO – Regional Development Agency of the Oeste and the ComUrb-Oeste - Community of Urban Areas of the Oeste Region, with the participation of over 60 representatives of local government structures.

Guidelines and instruments for two types of participatory KAP Methods were
developed: first, the Focus Group Stakeholder Analysis on Development Dynamics, aimed recording KAP among political, economic and other development stakeholders regarding past and future development issues and prospects on a specific territory; second, the Topofilia Workshop, aimed at recording development stakeholders’ sense of place, as well as their propensity to intervene in local identity components of specific territories.

At the national level, a network of local and regional development stakeholders was initiated by inviting secondary school teachers (geographers, economists and sociologists and anthropologists) responsible for the subject “Introduction in Economic and Social Development” in all parts of the country, to participate in the IDENTERRA-Stakeholders project, by collecting images of the landscapes and lifestyles in the same places now and before 25 of April, 1994.

At the international level, the members of the IDENTERRA-Stakeholders research team carried out networking activities (joint research, conferences, publications, etc.) such as those in the framework of the PECSRL – Permanent European Conference for The Study of the Rural Landscape, the Aga Khan Foundation, the IASTE - International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments, University of California at Berkley, and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

Publications and conference papers in 2004


