

PART 1: BASIC DATA

Title of the experience: Moledo ConVida		
Name of the city/region: Moledo Lourinhã		
Country: Portugal		
Institution presenting the candidacy: Lourinhã Municipality		
Start date of the experience: 2006		
End date of the experience:		
Type of candidacy	Innovation on an existing experience	x
Type of experience	Urban planning	x
	Citizen initiative	x
	Other (specify): Development of a sustainable development project for the village	x
Objective of the experience	Community empowerment	x
	To empower non-organised citizens	x
	To empower non-organised citizens	x
	To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy	x
Territorial area	District	x
Thematic area	Governance	x
	Education	x
	Urban management	x
	Security	x
	Environment and/or urban agriculture	x
	Culture	x
	Local development	x
	Training/learning	x
	Social inclusion	x

PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Objectives

Main objective of the innovative experience:

The main objective was and is to empower the community to promote the development of the village in a perspective of sustainability, involving environmental, economic and social aspects.

The project, developed by a growing group of non-organized citizens, has as its value the active participation, in a context of shared assumption of responsibility, with the local authorities at the level of thinking, doing and seeking solutions that make possible what is considered that should be done.

From the beginning, the intention was to develop a relationship of trust and mutual help between the municipality, the citizens and the parish council.

How have you achieved this objective?

For the development of the village, the project, which included the requalification of the public space, valuation of the heritage, education, environmental protection and economic development, among others, was developed using several partnerships established by the Citizenship Group with different entities that, whenever necessary, were facilitated by the Municipality.

With regard to empowerment, there were forums to consult the population, actions of the theatre of the oppressed with adults, theatre with children, calls for participation in concrete moments, pedagogical actions programmed with the Municipality, such as, for example, making a petition so that the cleanliness of the village could be improved.

In parallel, the Municipality held meetings with the Citizenship Group in order to consult them regarding what they considered to be best for the village, within the scope of the Municipality's Strategic Development Plan.

In 2020, it was established by the Municipality a communication dynamic that involves quarterly meetings with the Citizens' Group and in which the Junta de Freguesia also participates so that together strategies are defined, actions programmed and forms of mutual support.

To what extent has this objective been achieved?

Through the direct initiative of this group of non-organised citizens and always with the support of the Municipality and the Junta de Freguesia it has already been possible

Requalify a large part of the village

To differentiate the village through art (more than 10 sculptures, 20 ceramics, morals)

Valorisation of the intangible heritage, the common culture, the shared histories were highlights assumed as identity and helped to build the project.

From a social point of view, and there is an improvement in the self-esteem of the people of the village, appropriation of what has been achieved (is ours), they claim more.

Indirectly and as a function of the work carried out, new businesses have appeared in the village that allow the settlement of the population

Currently, the project continues in development being in phase of requalification a public space for leisure and, in function of the will of the population, and with new partnerships, there is a focus on the economic, and environmental side, that passes for rethinking the agricultural production and to study the possibility of creating products with the stamp of the village and of the citizenship project.

Dimensions of the experience

Which is the most innovative aspect of the experience?

We consider that the most innovative aspect of the practice is the informality, the fact that for 15 years the group has remained as a non-organised structure, with the support of the Municipality whenever necessary, for example, in the formalisation of a partnership, in total trust.

We also consider innovation to be co-responsibility, the ability of citizens to move forward in carrying out tasks that could be considered within the scope of the Municipality, but which they decide to take on.

Co-evolution, the change that, as a result of the project's development, has taken place both on the Municipality's side and on the citizens' side, in their way of relating to each other.

The project of this village was chosen in the scope of the mapping of 80 local initiatives of change in Portugal, being, within them, one of the 4 that were the object of a deeper study, documented in a film (see annex)

In some way, this project is part of a new model of public management, based on the empowerment of a new citizenship, on the emergence of an organised and active civil society, alongside the municipality, capable of producing development and change.

To what extent is the procedure transferable?

Like all people-based projects, this is a project that is difficult to replicate as such. There are, however, some factors that we consider to have been critical for success and that can be replicated:

The harnessing of the social capital of each partner.

The search for different ways of listening to people - people often have difficulty expressing themselves - the incorporation of methodologies such as the Theatre of the Oppressed was key.

different forms of participation and inclusion

The search for valuing the other (person or entity). In each action the Municipality valued citizenship group.

Openness to listen and trust in the group's decision-making capacity

The acceptance of imperfection, that at first citizenship is not as representative as one would like it to be, but that it will grow.

Why do you consider that the experience is feasible?

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development and the axes defined for rural development were taken into account and this helped the group to define the strategy for the village.

The group started by making a survey of the village situation from an economic, environmental and social point of view, including a survey of its heritage, the number of people residing and their professions. Afterwards the group reflected on how they would like the village to be in the future, also from a global point of view (where we are going) and a strategy was designed to achieve this goal (how we are going to get there).

It was this strategy that in 2007 was presented to the municipality and that was an important factor for the credibility of the project and for the establishment of a relationship of trust, which allowed the relationship to be established and the project to develop.

How has the experience been coordinated with other actors and processes?

There were many actors who made this project possible. Besides the ever present partnership between the Municipality, the Citizenship Group and the Parish Council, several entities were involved, always with the coordination of the citizenship group:

- Lisbon School of Fine Arts
- António Arroio School of Arts
- Lisbon School of Agronomy
- ISPA (Theatre of the Oppressed)
- Various companies which supplied material and services and took part in awareness-raising activities
- Various individual artists
- Various people, professionals from different areas
- Citizens of the village

What has been the level of co-responsibility?

The level of co-responsibility between the Citizenship Group, the municipality and the parish council has been total and is even one of the innovation factors of the project and a critical factor for its success.

Which evaluation and accountability mechanisms were used?

Although the project did not carry out formal evaluation actions, there were several "state of play" moments, whenever a revision of the strategy was made or when, by request of the Municipality, presentations of results were made in the context of municipal congresses (Congress of Planalto das Cesaredas, for which most of the stakeholders were interviewed; Congress of the Associative Movement where, precisely the group was invited to expose why it remained as a non-organised group)

In addition, the project was evaluated by external entities who were provided with all the documentation from the beginning and were given access to speak with the population and participate in meetings. An example of this was an analysis of the project within the scope of a Master's Degree in Social and Solidarity Economy of ISCTE and within the scope of the Alternatives Programme (<https://fgs.org.pt/pt/p-alternativas/>)

Summary of the experience

This project is part of a new model of public management, based on the empowerment of a new citizenship, on the emergence of an organized and active civil society, alongside the municipality, capable of producing development and change.

The project started with a citizen who considered that it was urgent to reverse the degradation of the village space, to improve the quality of life and to settle people. This citizen was joined by other citizens, and together they drew up a sustainable development project for the village, which they presented to the municipality.

In parallel, and since there were no means in the municipality to develop what was proposed, they sought partnerships and developed the plan, always informing and discussing the process with the municipality and having its support whenever necessary.

One of the first partnerships was with the Lisbon School of Fine Arts to develop sculptures to enhance the intangible heritage of the village, which were the starting point for the requalification of the public space.

This initiative leveraged much of the requalification of the village and valorisation of the heritage.

The empowerment mechanisms included forums, actions of the theatre of the oppressed with adults, theatre with children, calls for participation at specific moments, pedagogical actions programmed with the municipality.

In parallel, the Municipality held meetings with the Citizenship Group in order to consult them about what they considered to be best for the village, in the context of the Municipality's Strategic Development Plan.

In 2020, a communication dynamic was established by the Municipality that involves quarterly meetings with the Citizens' Group and in which the Parish Council also participates, so that strategies are defined together, actions programmed and forms of mutual support.

The project continues to be developed and a public space for leisure is being re-qualified and, depending on the will of the population, and with new partnerships, there is a focus on the economic and environmental aspects, which includes rethinking agricultural production and studying the possibility of creating products with the stamp of the village and the citizenship project.