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*The landscape knows no boundary*

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**THE LANDSCAPE OBSERVATORY OF TAGUS RIVER:  
RELEVANCE OF TRANSFRONTIER COOPERATION  
BETWEEN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Tagus river is the most notable and longest Iberian water shad. It empties into the Atlantic Ocean in Lisbon after crossing around 1000 kilometres of a very diverse and impressive Portuguese and Spanish landscape. Such a landscape includes outstanding biophysical, historic, cultural and aesthetic values, where some hotspots are designated as national protected area or biosphere reserve by UNESCO.

The cultural landscape of the Tagus in all its diversity and excellence has driven various initiatives associated with the construction of a landscape observatory, seen as an essential framework for the collection and exchange of information and the establishment of protocols and partnerships between public institutions and local communities in a territorial governance perspective. The Landscape Observatory of Tagus river intends to be a coordinating structure for the dynamic of the Tagus Cultural Landscape project covering the national section of the river and the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, it is important to define and implement projects capable of combining the protection of the essential resources to ensure the landscape quality and the promotion of socio-economic base of initiatives that promote development.

One of the possibilities that this joint can be applied to the Tagus landscape is the definition and implementation of a Green Infrastructure. This project is now being prepared to be submitted to the Transborder Cooperation Programme between Spain and Portugal.

**Key words:** Tagus' Landscape Observatory, Cultural Landscape, Green Infrastructure, Tagus river, Transfrontier cooperation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tagus River, understood in a cross-border perspective, congregates relevant biophysical, historical and cultural aspects which reflect a huge wealth and landscape diversity.

In 2014 the Tagus Cultural Landscape Project, promoted by a partnership that involves the academy and a NGO, aiming at preserving and promoting those natural and cultural values, has been awarded by the Universidade NOVA de Lisboa and Santander-Totta Bank as a collaborative research which may be seen as a public recognition of the relevance of that heritage (Oliveira et al., 2015). The main result of the activities carried out under this project was by the Tagus Universal Association, delivering to the UNESCO National Commission a proposal of inclusion of the Cultural Tagus landscape in the indicative list of Portugal, on 15 June, which coincided with the approval of the Architecture and Landscape National Policy by Portuguese Government, published on July 7 in the Official Journal.

The definition of a Green Infrastructure in the Tagus river seems to be a great opportunity for both the European Landscape Convention and the Architecture (Oliveira et al., 2011) and Landscape National Policy (MAOTE, 2015) implementation under the umbrella of the Landscape Observatory of Tagus's River.

## 2. THE LANDSCAPE OBSERVATORY OF TAGUS RIVER

Landscape observatories can provide important contributions to the implementation of the European Landscape Convention as essential structures for the collection and exchange of information and the establishment of protocols and partnerships between public institutions and local communities.

There have been numerous observatories landscape in Europe and has significant intervention in the areas of knowledge, identification and characterization of the landscape in the context of awareness, education, training and participation in the establishment of cooperative networks between observatories and close coordination with the policies of planning and land management (Gambino et al, 2013).

It is intended that the Tagus Landscape Observatory fulfills these various dimensions and be developed as an aggregator hub for sharing knowledge and the cultural and socio-territorial dynamics of Tagus's landscape.

The Observatory is based in a platform as an interface with the general public through a website that features the following structure:

- An institutional field which presents the concept, the historical and the project team,
- A repository of information on the Tagus, which includes theses, articles and other relevant documentation to the increase of knowledge of the territory and its resources,
- A photo observatory (Photoscaping), with three different fields, the publication of proof photographs that are relevant to gather different views of the Tagus, the use of photography as a methodology for landscape monitoring and publication of photographs suggested by the public to show various aspects of recognized interest, either positive or negatively.
- A field dedicated to public participation which are inserted prominent news about aspects and issues related to the Tagus, a calendar of events and a forum for debate in a blog.

The landscape observatory will also produce and make available knowledge and information on specific themes, with this field a more technical and scientific, particularly in terms of the dynamics of landscape and territory, with input for its assessment and monitoring, the study of identity and cultural factors that may be a priority for protection and landscape conservation in their natural and cultural dimensions. Education and training here deserve a particular highlight, both in terms of working with the schools of the groups that are located in the area of influence of the project, such as local communities who live, work and enjoy the landscape (Oliveira, 2015).

### 3. A GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AS TRANSBORDER COOPERATION

According to the definition given by the European Commission in 2013, "a green infrastructure is a strategically planned natural and semi-natural areas network, designed and managed to provide a wide range of ecosystem services. It incorporates green spaces and blue and other biophysical components in areas land, including coastal and marine areas." Based on a huge diversity of territorial and ecological complexity, it is important to identify, characterize and valuing ecosystem services in order to stimulate the green economy, ensuring the increase of territorial cohesion in the various socio-economic and environmental dimensions of the Tagus river. The goal is to establish a concept of territorial basis for the Tagus River to position itself as a structural element and cohesion between the north and south, urban and rural areas, the coast and the interior, enhancing cross-border cooperation. Based on this concept, together with a set of methodologies of geographic analysis and evaluation of the landscape, we intend to identify an infrastructure that can be considered under the territorial management towards a more cohesive and sustainable development of the Tagus territory.

This green infrastructure should be based on the following principles according to landscape assessment already developed in Portugal (Cancela d'Abreu et al., 2004) and in Spain (Molina Holgado et al., 2010, Mata Olmo and Sanz Herráis, 2005) and the cultural landscape approach (Oliveira et al., 2014):

1) Applying the concept of Cultural Landscape to the Hydrographic Basin of the Tagus River allows intervening the incredibly rich natural patrimony with an exceptional set of cultural heritage assets, both tangible and intangible.

2) Tagus River is Water, a precious and limited resource. Thus, before a temporal and special variability of the hydrological cycle in the Iberian Peninsula, given the existing pollution issues and anticipating the resulting problems of water scarcity, it is important to preserve the health and sustainability of the Tagus River Ecosystems, along its' whole course and, simultaneously, of its' natural heritage, through an efficient transnational governance of hydric resources.

3) A governance of hydric resources implies the effective participation of all parts concerned: the state, the markets and local communities.

4) The diversity and particularity of cultural heritages of different communities along the river, mainly those on the riverbanks, calls upon its' involvement in raising awareness, protect and valorization of that heritage and, as well, of the natural heritage, through social networks in a local scope. The knowledge of the local heritage reality is, therefore, essential to the development of a highly aware and responsible citizenship, resulting from a joint effort of environmental education, development of the scientific culture and increased literacy levels.

5) Promoting a broad debate on the cultural landscape concept applicable to the Portuguese and to Spanish Tagus, which is expected to lead to the definition and compilation of the essential elements that should be afterwards validated by the academy and Governmental institutions and gain the final form of a Landscape Atlas of the transborder Tagus River. This contribution will allow for synergies evoking the highlight potential for sustainable development.

6) The same debate will also contribute to develop, with the local social networks, a wider perception about the Tagus River and its' cultural landscape, by building up of a Trans-community Network of the transfrontier Tagus Landscapes, supported by an efficient communication structure, which is an important contribution for the Transnational Network of the Tagus River Culture.

7) This effort will allow the outlining of possible futures for a sustainable socio-economic development (for instance, a more integrated perception of the concept of cultural tourism around the Tagus cultural landscape and the resulting synergies, represented by an

unmistakable image of the Tagus brand), identifying itself with its' material and immaterial elements.

8) The transversal feature of the cultural landscape concept will incite a new upturn of the debate about the relevance of the landscape in the transborder area through its' focus on the territorial development and, as well, the need for articulation and reconciling of territorial planning with the sectorial policies of nature conservation and cultural and environmental qualification.

Possible consortium: University of Lisbon; Autonomous University of Madrid; CIMAlto Alentejo, CIM Médio Tejo; CIM Beira Baixa; Regional Agency for Tourism Promotion of the Alentejo, Conservation of Nature and Forestry Institute, Hydrographic Confederation of the Tagus river, Deputación of Cáceres, Extremadura Autonomous Region, EDP Company.

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