

The Cultural Park
of the
Maestrazgo de Teruel

Charcterization of the region

The Turolense Maestrazgo consists of a peculiar geografic and historic unity situated between the highlands of Teruel, the cuenca minera central and the plains of Bajo Aragon, having its natural prolongation in the Castellleon part of Maestrazgo, through the "Ports de Morella". Covering an extremely mountainous area which as the backbone has the "cuenca minera central" and the heights of the Guadalope river much like the river basins of its smaller afluentes.

The various communications have formed a region of "circular" journies revolving around an extensive central area of difficult access formed by the natural space of the "Hoces of Guadalope", with scarcely show any signs of inhabitanace.

Its strong regressive character can be seen by the demographic data. The population density is around 4 to 5 inhabitants/km², if one excludes the two most exterior and nearby nuclii in the area of Bajo Aragon, it would reduce the figure furthermore to around 3 inhabitants/km². The area having lost 74% of its population to what it was at the start of the century, giving it all the characteristics of a population notably obselete. The inhabitants are made up of nuclii relatively far apart, notable for their past splendour.

The agriculture is limited and is very much bound to the cattle huts with presence of the sheep sector and cattle in the high parts and some pork and rabbit farms. Only in the area closest to Bajo Aragon appears a huge range of products with the presenece of vineyards, olive groves and old irrigated land. The forestal explotation is limited to some small sawmills.

As a result of recent exploitations of the area, the minery occupation of activities exists in nuclii near the Cuenca Central.

Development in the commercial sector exists in some principal areas, being very much a subsidery of external centres. The traditional handcrafts is practically residual, with many small workshops of different materials beginning to sprout up.

The agricultural production presents some interesting risks apart from its small dimension, with the existence of some pastry and cheese workshops and pig conserves, and above all by the exterior presence of the cured ham in diverse curers in the upper areas. In the area one can find a Dehydrated Fruit Cooperative (Dried peach) and four textile workshops.

The LEADER initiative of the Turolensen Maestrazgo

The initial budget presented by the Community Initiative, LEADER, arose from within the dynamicness of what's been generating for some years from within the village of Molinos, with a tiny population of 400 inhabitants, sharing its attractive turistic qualities, such as its "Grutas de Cristal" (Cristal Caves), have helping establish a global understanding of its natural and

cultural heritage, a development programme at local level as a communal point.

The idea of extending the model to the adjoining areas first came about in 1991 through those responsible at the time of the Workshop-School in Molinos, carrying out a rural development project involving a partnership of nine town councils of Maestrazgo. At the same time formulating an evaluation of resources available in the same area and the creation of a Local Action Group, consisting of representatives of a whole range of institutions and entities of different political, social and regional economical structure, as participants of LEADER, each group providing its distinct ideal and practical perspective. Such is the structure of the Centre for the Development of Maestrazgo - Teruel, formed by the town hall of Molinos, as the nucleus of this sudden beginning, along with the Teruel County Council, the General Union of Workers, the Cooperative Agrarian Federation of Aragon, the Aragonese Association of Joint-Stock Labourers, the Maestrazgon Town Council Touristic Association and the Development Foundation of Social Economy and Cooperatism, and finally the later edition of the Aragonese Regional Council.

On evaluation of resources followed by a through look at possible investment projects that would cover the differing sectors of the area, done in such a way that the initial project sent to the European Commission already consisted of a detailed list of investors. The seriousness of the methodology employed and the realisticness of the financial proposal presented resulted in the project being approved without doubt over the ambitiousness evident in the project, it was placed in third place out of fifty-two national programmes in forms of the amount of investment proposed (1,455 million ptas.), at the same time having the smallest population out of all the programmes (5,200 inhabitants), in relation to the threshold set by the LEADER directive.

Once the initiative was put put in motion, the main job of the team running the centre has been the constant continuation and assistance of all the projects, those from day one right up to those incorporated much later. Equally as difficult has been the guarantee for co-finance of technical support, complementary measures and the running of the centre, something achieved thanks to the agreement signed with the Aragonese Regional Government, consisting of an investment of 178 million ptas. During the first two years of the programme, along with the 331 million from the European Community.

The type of investors we have is quite diverse, currently there are some sixty-five projects under-way, all complying with the objectives set by the programme, making the enormous force presently forming in Maestrazgo, where to invest seems the general tendency that demonstrates against the current recession. In some form the demonstrative effect that pursues LEADER is planely being completed, however if we think of all the projects that are under way have caused a change in mentality, providing possible various alternative activities.

The tourism sector has without doubt gone beyond expectation, monopolising a large part, bettering the current situation with the creation of various infrastructures, which have been lacking up

until now (campsites of various categories). At the same time the creation of alternative types of lodgings for rural tourism, offers of activities with nature or different types of youth hostals, are strongly being developed. There are also other types of projects aimed at the production of agricultural handicrafts already accounted for, improving local production (wine, oil, biological fruticulture, etc.). The continuation of such lines of orientation and a re-evaluation of the situation which now affect the type of action that is not going to directly support productive investment, but abandon for the same potential elements: heritage and joint action, proposals put forward for new tourism programmes, the environment, the setting up of rallies and other actions are what will take us forward into the second fase of action with the development of the LEADER initiative, which we are sure will contemplate in parallel to the rising of a new state of activity following the development in this brief lapse of time.

In the same way the creation of a telematic network or the Aragonese Centre for European Rural Information running the CARREFOUR programme, taking steps in the joint territorial model of Aragón, advancing in its perspective to reform structural funds appointed for new operative programmes and the directive of a new LEADER, which will be the first to interconnect experiences and the creation of networks through the potencial of the environment.

The Cultural Park of Maestrazgo

We have noted that the evaluation of resources, with which the area accounts for has been one of the central examples employed to push forward the development programme in Maestrazgo. The territory, the population, the primary materials or the active sectors have been scrutinized as elements that are potentially evident.

The cultural hereditary materialized into a great many material (art and noble or popular architecture) and non-material (its own history or the traditions), resources that are necessary to put into action, for the strategy of global developments, such as the quality natural spaces of which many are practically virgin. It giving elements for which in market logic exists a notable demand, as a base, cultural tourism with its "non-renewable" goods of nature.

It seems that heritage has begun to play a profitable role, for the investment projects generated in what was once a discreet affair, but not in a sceptic manner limiting it to a satistical contemplation, opperating however in a logical manner, presentation and interpretation. To begin such a process, once having evaluated the global situation, it is important to carry out a general inventory and a study of the possible lines of intervention. Here presents the need of treatment which implies a plan of recupertion (as much for natural spaces and countryside as of archeological and architectonical) and also supporting various collectives who from differing viewpoints have been developing investigational and defensive work.

However the key part of the process lies in the moment when the said colectives begin to understand that your activity is absolutely praiseworthy but should be able to disperse it in

relation to the development process being generated, following the model worked in Molinos. Here for some time now such a course has been proceeded for some time now reflecting on aspects carried out in the creation of diverse structures aimed at the creation of its natural and cultural heritage. The creation of the Cultural Park of Molinos in 1986 represents a fundamental landmark in this dynamic.

Driven by the Aragonese Institute of Archeology, dependent upon the University College of Teruel and the town hall of Molinos, the Cultural Park bases its work in the global exposition of all the aspects linked to the relation it establishes between a town and its natural inhabitants of historic assent. The model of the countryside and ecosystems produced from this relation is offered through itineraries, interpretation rooms as a result of a real process in which they have carried out topical debates, expositions, publications, courses and international workshops, taking as the epicentre heritage and its museological presentation, equally they initiated investigational programmes still open, till now, concentrating on special archeological and socio-educational intervention. Ending by saying that the whole process has had the relevant contribution of the Workshop-School in Molinos, formed in 1989 within the Cultural Park itself, its formative work complementing the material collaboration in much of the work carried out.

Already we have noticed in other parts of the region the existence of diverse initiatives which without having reached a well developed stage of this ideology, they have worked in a similar form to Molinos. Since its creation in 1978 the "Grupo de Estudios" (Study Group) from Mas de las Matas set up the Institute of Turolensen Studies, since then it has been developnig a extremely important investigational work that, although amplified to all aspects, was involved in the formation of the present reality, it was based basically in the recuperation of past historic knowledge through the composition of information which the area lacked as a result of the destruction of all existing files in 1936. the afore mentioned work, linked with its other angle of the areas heritage and supporting new artistic manifestations have made room for the creation of a Mas de las Matas Museum, which is incorporated to the Aragonese Museum System, the museum consists of diverse rooms (archeological, plastic arts, temporary samples) and auxillary instalations. Furthermore the work has been seen in sixteen publications to this date, offering a notable amount for studies at local and regional level.

On the other extreme end of the region, in Galve, we found an exceptional initiative for the defence of ones heritage. The praiseworthy work of a palentological adorer, José María Herrero, prospecting and supporting the work of various teams from different universities for thirty-five years. They've brought to light enormous riches in forms of fossils offered by the area, documented by multiple national and international publications, the findings being displayed in a provisional exposition room supported by the town hall.

Finally, within the experiences that were already gained, the start of the LEDAER programme was launched with a project for the

creation of a Geological Park in Aliaga making use of the multiple variety of relief formations which they have been shown for many years now to a good number of investigators and students of European universities. The initiative with the Geodynamic Department of the University of Zaragoza and the town hall of Aliaga, hoping to channel this interest, have been developing, for the moment, the first phase in the creation of itineraries and the installation of explanatory boards.

So, the existence of such nuclei of action at heritage level have driven the team running the Centre for the Development of Maestrazgo to form a proposal that redimensions to a new form of intervention and the creation of touristic-cultural attractions.

The said proposal sets a previously planned coordination between all the initiatives, confronting and coordinating all the methodology to be carried out and establishing a series of priorities in order of execution, for a second phase it would be an integrated management of joint projects.

The short term objective is not to consolidate a route of cultural character that serves to support multiple touristic investment projects establishing their journey to the approach of the LEADER programme. Such a route can be a lineal journey, through the diverse thematic parts, emulating the experience of the ecomuseums across the territory which are frequently found in the rest of Europe.

In this form the diverse collectives have elaborated a plan of action, which can be seen currently cofinanced between the LEADER programme and the Aragonese Government.

The Aragonese Institute of Archeology set-up the investigational programmes for the Cultural Park of Molinos, this time orientated directly at the creation of viewpoints in diverse and significant archeological deposits, such as scenic work in the area, the edition of monographic guides and the publication of thematic cartography, along with a viability study for the recuperation of an ancient paper mill as a centre for handicraft and museological production. At the same time they're working on the creation of multimedia interactive programmes linked with the environment and heritage as much for Molinos as for the rest of the Maestrazgo, once having finished with the informatic treatment of the inventory of resources of the region carried out by a geographic informative system.

The study group of Mas de las Matas has presented the relocation and extension of its museum, recuperating not only a rural millstone building in the area, but also creating various thematic rooms in which would be a decentralized set-up for expositions, making use of the space that unites its only value - a wheat mill and another oil mill situated in a small town near Jaganta. Reproducing the wheat cycle, showing how it's formed as well as agriculture, water and irrigated land or the presence of art and religious architecture in the area. The museum, open to new works in this sense, orientated to demonstrate a view of the technical side in the countryside and a presentation beforehand so the visitor can see in forms of heritage within the influencing area.

The Galve Geological Park is working right now with the instalation of the interpretation centre as an anchoring point to initiate the visit, with the perspective to serve as a documentation centre for university groups. On the other hand it's elaborating a general guide of walks to carry out, following an additional scheme that is similar to the promotional pamphlets, that they'd like to extend to the package being the current initiatives of the walks.

The Galve Palentalogical Park took advantage of the boom generated in recent months to push for the reconstruction of two dinasaurs and the signing of routes for the visits of fossils and diverse ecosystems of the area.

It can be proven that the effect generated by the investment projects has mobilised the action in forms of heritage, consciously done jointly with the town about the closeness and importance of its resources, creating participation in the development process at the investigators requests from the university and other collectives in the generation of "productive culture".

The Centre for the Development of Maestrazgo does not only limit itself to delegating these actions in existing initiatives but however also promoting differing forms of intervention. The proposals presented for FUTURES proves the creation of a basic infrastructure for the development of activities in the countryside within the G.R. 8 walks, which covers the Maestrazgo area (signs, creation of panels, interpretaion tables, recuperating historic tracks, equipping rock climbing routes, publishing guides), or the LIFE programme creating a management model and the execution of pilot activities, following the conclusions of an evaluative study, impacts carried out by an Environmental Educational Colective of Zaragoza. Such an orientation could equally lead to the planification, in this trimester, for courses in architectonic rehabilitation techniques for construction profesionales, as had occurred previously with the adoption of various criterias in the urban management of town halls or the realisation of diverse models of hereditorial tourism, in the view that all the commercial promoters know how to publicize with the resources available in the best form possible. Finally, the centre is studying the creation of two new points of action, expositive and investigative action, if all is well under the committing condition to new entities and colectives in the execution of respective projects. Said points would be taken as the key priority, on one hand the aspects linked to the use of the river Guadalope and to the natural areas which cover Villarluengo and Pinares de Fortanete. Furthermore the rich architectural heritage, popular and palacial of an ample area which has gained as the presentational card, the town of Mirambel, the Europa Nostra Prize in 1983.