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**DEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDERS AND TERRITORIAL IDENTITY IN  
PORTUGAL**

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**Abstract:** The need to (re)affirm the diversity of places and regions in order to make them economically and culturally “more competitive” on the globalised market of goods and services has been widely accepted in regional and local development policies in Portugal, but much more rhetorically than in operational terms. This largely reflects the fact that policies, as well as their instruments, do not rely on empirical evidence of the changing character of territorial identity. In particular, there are virtually no records regarding representations of territorial identity features and issues by local/regional development stakeholders, both individual and institutional ones. The problem is that appropriate conceptualisations and analytical tools for comprehensive identification and assessment of various dimensions of territorial identity have been lacking. Since it has not been clear what the identity of places and regions means in factual and verifiable terms to different development stakeholders, it is has not been possible to determine what aspects of the identity need to be strengthened, preserved, diversified, or made “more competitive” in regional and local development policy design and implementation. This paper brings forward discussion on the conceptual-methodological issues in the study of territorial identity and the role of local/regional development stakeholders in this change in rural Portugal. The evidence obtained from a nation-wide field survey of Portuguese local development agents’ knowledge, attitudes and practice related to territorial identity as a development asset is presented, and a future research agenda is outlined.

## **Introduction**

Specific biophysical, human and material features of places and regions are embodied in their local identity.<sup>1</sup> However stable or changeable these features may be, it is always the identity that makes specific territories distinguishable from the neighbouring or more distant ones. In the era of increasingly aggressive globalisation of economy and culture, "strength", "resilience" and "adaptability" have become praised qualities of local/regional or, simply, territorial identity. Moreover, the competitiveness of "territories with identity" became a strategic panacea of many development policies.

The concern for the diversity and autonomy of regional and local identity has been increasingly voiced across Social Sciences over the nineties (Benko & Lipietz 1993; Amin and Thrift 1994; Hadjimikalis, 1994; Massey and Jets 1995; Agnew 2000) and has gained a strategic importance in regional development policies in the peripheral and lagging regions and countries of the EU, such as Portugal (Comissão Europeia 1994; DGDR 1997). The main argument is that an increased competitiveness of places and regions on the globalised market of goods, services and ideas can be decisive for achieving sustainable "local development engineering" (Commission européenne 1994).

In Portugal, there has hardly been a regional development strategy or a local development programme that would not warn about the loss of identity as a manifestation of social and economic depression and marginalisation of places and regions, or that would not emphasise that combating negative and attracting desirable effects of globalisation requires that special attention should be given to the regional/local identity. It has been argued that globalisation is imposing difficult challenges because "it has brought about elements and factors that are unfavourable to both the inter- and intra-regional social and economic cohesion", though, at the same time, "it is essential to attract the foreign investments that will enable diversification of the regional economy and, at the same time, promote its high quality and stability, including social and environmental sustainability" (MP 1999, Chapter I: 52; 69).<sup>2</sup>

In this context, it has been widely accepted that the valorisation of the territorial identity is essential in regional and local development strategies and programmes, especially in rural areas that are vulnerable to globally imposed cultural and economic change.<sup>3</sup> However, at the field level, the need to (re)affirm the identity of places and regions in

rural Portugal has been promoted much more rhetorically than in practice. Development policy instruments do not rely on solid empirical evidence of the changing features of territorial identity and, much less, their relation to the local/global nexus. This has been largely due to important conceptual-methodological limitations in studying territorial identity as a development issue in the context of globalised economy and culture.

In this context, the objectives of this paper are, first, to discuss these limitations and, second, to propose a new conceptual and methodological framework for the study of territorial identities. To this end, the results of an exploratory research, recently carried out in rural Portugal, and an agenda for a future inter-regional research project on this topic are presented.

### **Conceptual Dilemmas and Methodological Constraints**

Why places and regions differ, notwithstanding the homogenising effects of the globalised markets, lifestyles, information, etc? The range of plausible responses has been wide. For example, Johnson laconically asserted that places continue to differ “because people make them so, not because of any necessary causal relationship but rather because of the spatially-varying nature of humanly-created *milieux*” (1999: 137), while others elaborated on issues of the “sense of place” (Rose 1995) and “contestation of place” (Masey and Jess 1995), or of “endogenous/exogenous interface” in local development “inventories and contexts” (Roca 1999).

Other explanations point to the autonomy of places and regions in “historical unfolding of the local civil society”, because of “the locally singular combination of presences and absences, the locally peculiar sedimentation of practical and discursive knowledge, of commonsense, of behavioural dispositions and coping mechanisms” (Pred 1989: 218), while some argue that “globalisation provokes more the exacerbation than attenuation of regional differences” (Agnew, 2000). According to Amin and Thrift, “globalisation does not represent the end of territorial distinctions and distinctiveness, but an added set of influences on local economic identities and development capabilities” (1994: 2).

In order to reconcile local development needs, potentials and contexts with globally imposed conditions, a comprehensive recognition of origins and nature of the identity of places and regions is required. However, the problem is that the concept of territorial identity has not been an analytical category, equipped by methods and tools for

recording and assessing the changing identity features. Their interpretations are usually rather broad, ranging from simple “characteristics and particularities” and “unique properties” of places and regions, or more sophisticated ideas about “natural and cultural heritage” and “endogenous potentials”, to the development-related concerns regarding local/regional “comparative (dis)advantages”. However, the actual content, scope and value judgements behind such generalisations tend to remain highly subjective and biased, thus inadequate for development policy and strategy design, or for development planning and project formulation purposes.

If it is unclear what the identity of a place or a region means in factual, practical and/or verifiable terms, how can one determine what aspect of the identity needs to be strengthened, preserved, diversified, or made “more competitive? And, more importantly, who are (or should be) the legitimate “guardians” of territorial identity today and tomorrow, that is, which institutions or individuals are capable, or are entitled to “cope with” globalisation locally? Answers to such questions are difficult and call for drawing attention to at least two conceptual-analytical constraints.

First, the macroscopic and top-down perspective, as well the uses of only secondary sources of information have prevailed in the literature on local/global interdependencies, while there has been too little insight at the local level. Though “commentators seem sure that there is a 'dialectic' between the global and local, that in some sense what counts as the local has been transformed by globalisation” (Massey, 1991, in Amin and Thrift, 1994:1), most usually the empirical evidence has been sought at levels not lower than single or groups of countries. Interpretations based on primary records of the effects of globalisation at lower, intra-country, regional and local levels have been underrepresented and, in fact, neglected.<sup>4</sup>

The second limitation has to do with the “underestimation at present of the literature on the local-global nexus in terms of the role of people and their organisations as social agents affecting change” (Hadjimichalis, 1994: 249). Indeed, virtually no effort has been made to divert from a tendency to interpret changes in economic, cultural, political and other spheres of life primarily from the perspective of systems and institutions, and to ignore the fact that every institutional setting is run and/or used by individuals, groups and their organisations and that, consequently, all representations of territorial identity are necessarily subjective.

By removing the above-mentioned limitations, firmer grounds could be created for a more profound, empirical and policy-relevant understanding of, as Amin and Thrift asserted, “the continued salience of places as settings for social and economic existence, and for forging identities, struggles, and strategies of both a local and global nature” (1994: 9).

### **Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice in Portugal**

The need to care about territorial identity has been accepted as the *conditio sine qua non* for further development of Portuguese rural economy and society in the context of globalisation, and, as Albino suggested, "local identity should be operationalised into a development resource... The strategy of local development should be based on the appreciation of the ancestral typicality as a means of encouraging further evolution of new local innovations" (1997: 113).

Aimed at operationalising such rhetoric, as well as at finding possible ways out of the conceptual-methodological constraints to the understanding of local/global nexus, an exploratory field research on this topic has been conducted since 1999 at the *Universidade Lusófona*, Lisbon. The findings are expected to contribute (i) to improved focussing, both conceptually and operationally, on territorial identity as a development resource and, consequently, as a vital policy issue, as well as (ii) to an assessment of the role of development actors and agents, and their more efficient targeting in rural development policies plans, programmes and interventions.<sup>5</sup>

The main project activity has been a nation-wide survey aimed at recording the development stakeholders' interpretations of linkages between territorial identity, globalisation and regional/local development. The main instruments in the realisation of the survey have been the questionnaires on knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) of selected sets of development stakeholders.<sup>6</sup>

The first KAP survey, conducted in March 2000, addressed a representative sample of sixty local development agents (LDAs), mostly senior professionals and decision-makers in local and regional development agencies in rural Portugal.<sup>7</sup> The questionnaire consisted of three sections. In the first section, the importance LDAs attribute to local identity as a development issue was determined. In the second section, the attitudes of LDAs towards the globalisation, and the role of individual and institutional stakeholders

in changing socio-cultural identity were explored. The third section examined the role of the LDAs in relation to local identity features, as well as their sense of "cosmopolitanism". The main findings are summarised below.

### On local identity<sup>8</sup> and development

Asked to express their views on the importance of local identity in development of the area in which they operate (Table 1), a large majority of LDAs supported the idea that "to care about local identity must be a priority in the local development interventions" and, to a lesser extent, that local identity "must become competitive in order to enable local development".

Table 1: Attitudes of LDAs on local identity and development issues  
(% of valid responses)

Local identity and development issues	Totally agree %	Agree more than disagree %	Do not agree nor disagree %	Disagree more than agree %	Totally disagree %
To care about local identity must be a priority in the local development interventions.	76.4	23.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Strength of local identity depends on its capacity to resist external influences.	29.1	30.9	7.3	21.8	10.9
A strong local identity is an essential prerequisite for local development.	52.7	30.9	3.6	10.9	1.8
Underdevelopment reflects the persistence of negative characteristics of local identity.	11.1	29.6	11.1	35.2	13.0
Persistence of negative features of local identity are caused more by external than internal factors.	7.3	20.0	23.6	41.8	7.3
Conservation of traditional values, arts and crafts impedes the modernisation of local economy and society.	0.0	1.8	5.5	27.3	65.5
It does not make sense to worry about local identity in the era of the globalisation of the economy and culture.	1.9	3.7	0.0	11.1	83.3
Local identity must become competitive in order to enable local development.	67.3	20.0	5.5	5.5	1.8
It is worth sacrificing the traditional local identity if it can contribute to increasing economic prosperity of a local community.	1.8	1.8	9.1	45.5	41.8
Adequate valorisation of local identity is hardly possible without the intervention of locally recruited development agents.	44.4	27.8	14.8	9.3	3.7

Likewise, in the opinion of a considerable majority, the “adequate valorisation of local identity is hardly possible without the intervention of locally recruited development agents.” The affirmative response, though not so explicit, was also obtained on the concept that “strong local identity is an essential prerequisite for local development”.

The large majority of LDAs "totally disagreed" with allegations such as that “conservation of traditional values, arts and crafts impedes the modernisation of the local economy and society”, and that “it does not make sense to worry about local identity in the era of the globalisation of the economy and culture”. A less firm negative response was recorded on the suggestion that “it is worth sacrificing the traditional local identity if that would help increasing the economic prosperity of a local community”.

Far less unanimous views were expressed regarding many other aspects of local identity/development nexus. For example, on whether or not the strength of local identity has to do with the capacity to resist external influences, the majority expressed their either "total" or "partial agreement", but about one third gave a negative response. An even greater disagreement was recorded on the idea that “underdevelopment reflects the persistence of negative characteristics of local identity”. The most controversial issue, however, seems to be whether the persistence of negative characteristics of local identity has to do with internal or external factors, on which approximately equal shares of affirmative, negative and neutral response were obtained.

#### On globalisation<sup>9</sup> and local identity

The only globalisation-related argument on which a clear majority of LDAs expressed the same kind of positive attitude (i.e., over two thirds "totally agreed") is that "it is necessary to challenge globalisation at the local level" (see Table 2). The assertion that “globalisation of lifestyles and consumption patterns is a negation of local cultural identity” was "totally agreed" by less than a majority, while the views on all other aspects diverged very much, and in all directions. For example, there is equal or nearly equal share of those who "totally agree" and who "disagree more than agree" with the allegations that globalisation is, in fact, the “americanisation of the economy and culture”, that it is a “positive process for the future of Humanity”, or that globalisation of culture "can contribute to the affirmation of the local cultural identity".

While extremely opposite attitudes were expressed on the issue of whether globalisation of communication technologies is beneficial only to the elite, the two allegations that provoked greatest divergence and indeed scepticism among the LDAs are that “globalisation of markets and competitiveness can contribute to the affirmation of small-scale economy” and that “globalisation is more in favour than against the objectives of local development”. Finally, on the issue of whether “globalisation creates ever-greater opportunities for social and economic development in the peripheral regions” a near majority expressed affirmative views, but this issue provoked also important shares of neutral and negative reactions.

Table 2: Attitudes of LDAs on globalisation and local development issues (% of valid responses)

Globalisation and local development issues	Totally agree %	Agree more than disagree %	Do not agree nor disagree %	Disagree more than agree %	Totally disagree %
Globalisation is a positive process for the future of Humanity.	18.2	43.6	14.5	20.0	3.6
Globalisation creates ever-greater opportunities for social and economic development in the peripheral regions.	10.9	38.2	18.2	27.3	5.5
Nowadays, globalisation is actually the americanisation of the economy and culture.	23.6	30.9	21.8	23.6	0.0
It is necessary to challenge globalisation at the local level.	67.3	25.5	3.6	1.8	1.8
Globalisation of lifestyles and consumption patterns is a negation of local cultural identity.	41.8	21.8	10.9	20.0	5.5
Globalisation of culture can contribute to the affirmation of the local cultural identity.	25.5	30.9	12.7	27.3	3.6
Globalisation of markets and competitiveness can contribute to the affirmation of small-scale economy.	18.5	25.9	14.8	25.9	14.8
Globalisation is more in favour than against the objectives of local development.	12.7	34.5	18.2	21.8	12.7
Globalisation of technologies of communication is beneficial only to the social elite.	0.0	42.6	13.0	16.7	14.8
Globalisation stimulates the strengthening of the critical citizenship consciousness.	32.7	34.5	16.4	10.9	5.5

Regarding the effects of specific manifestations of globalisation on Portuguese society and economy (Table 3), the LDAs showed greatest unanimity in praising globalisation of communication technologies and of civic conscientiousness and critical citizenship. A less strong, but clear unanimity was shown also in denouncing the effects of



globalisation of consumption patterns and lifestyles. A greater inclination towards positive than negative stand was revealed regarding globalisation of financial capital and investments, as well as of markets and competitiveness.

Table 3: Attitudes of LDAs on effects of globalisation on Portuguese society and economy (% of valid responses)

Manifestations of globalisation	Effects of globalisation on Portugal				
	Very positive %	Positive %	Not positive nor negative %	Negative %	Very negative %
Globalisation of the financial capital and investments	7.7	44.2	19.2	25.0	3.8
Globalisation of markets and competitiveness	7.5	45.4	11.3	32.1	5.7
Globalisation of communication technologies	30.8	57.7	9.6	1.9	0.0
Globalisation of consumption patterns and lifestyles	30.8	67.7	9.6	1.9	0.0
Globalisation of civic conscientiousness and critical citizenship (environment, democracy, peace, tolerance, etc.)	27.8	53.7	11.1	7.4	0.0

In contrast, regarding effects of globalisation on the geographic area in which they operate, the views of LDAs diverged very much (Table 4).

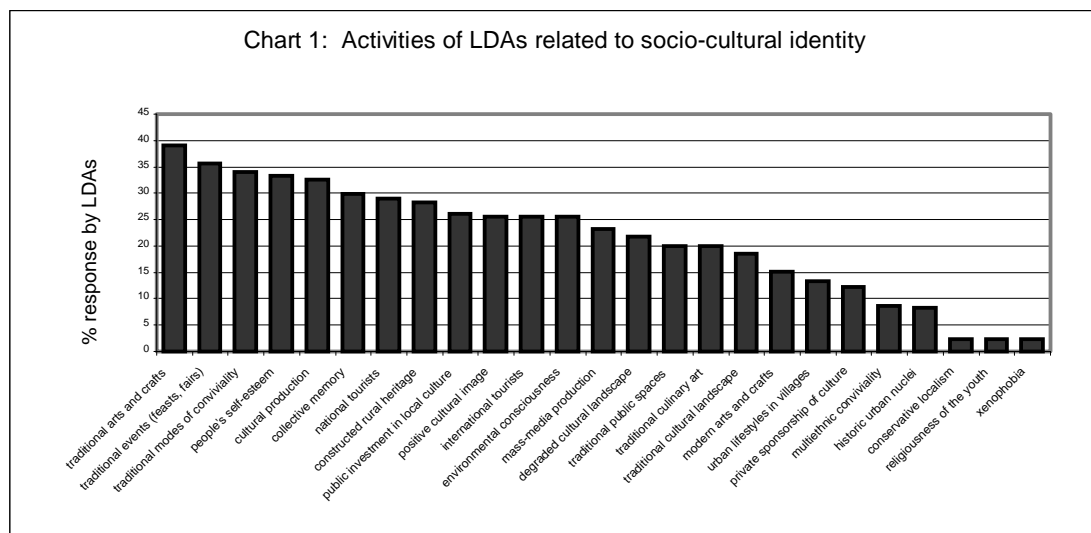
Table 4: Attitudes of LDAs on effects of globalisation in the area in which they operate (% of valid responses)

Manifestations of globalisation	Effects of globalisation in the area in which LDAs operate				
	Very positive %	Positive %	Not positive nor negative %	Negative %	Very negative %
Globalisation of the financial capital and investments	3.8	32.7	42.3	15.4	5.8
Globalisation of markets and competitiveness	2.8	35.3	31.4	23.5	92.2
Globalisation of communication technologies	23.1	51.9	19.2	3.8	1.9
Globalisation of consumption patterns and lifestyles	20.8	32.1	35.8	11.3	0.0
Globalisation of civic conscientiousness and critical citizenship (environment, democracy, peace, tolerance, etc.)	15.4	53.8	23.1	5.8	1.9

For example, while a majority praises the globalisation of communication technologies and of civic conscientiousness and critical citizenship, there is also an important share of neutral views on that. Or, while less than a majority considers local effects of globalisation on consumption patterns and lifestyles as "negative" and "very negative", a sizeable share considers such effects "positive" or "uncertain". A greatest level of uncertain views, as well as of division among the LDAs, was recorded regarding local effects of globalisation of financial capital and of markets and competitiveness.

### On the role of development stakeholders

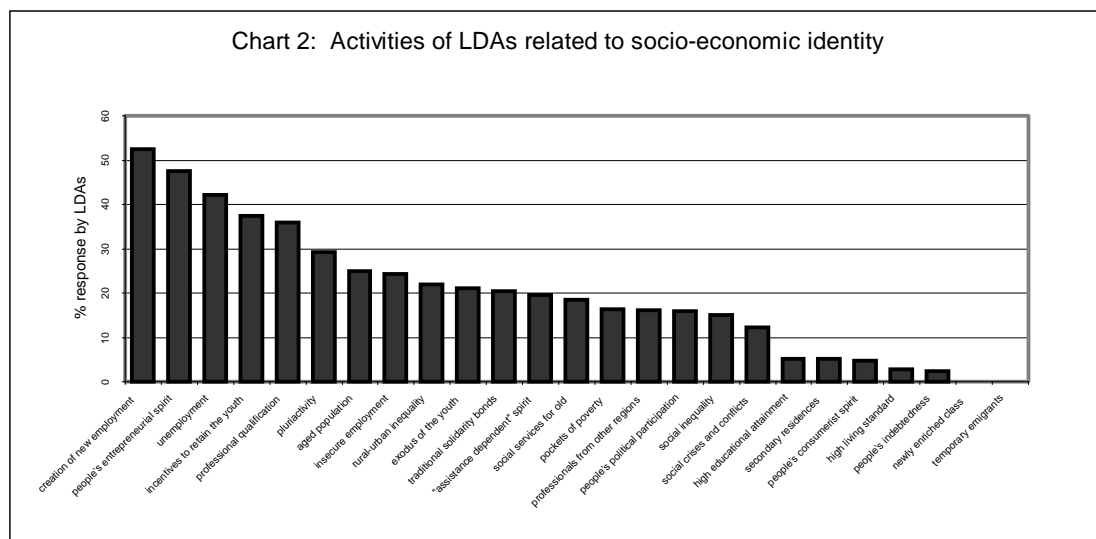
The LDAs' current activities have been related mostly to the socio-cultural components of local identity such as traditional arts and crafts, traditional events and modes of conviviality, people's self-esteem, cultural production and collective memory (Chart 1).



It was recorded that such concentration on tradition-related identity components is actually similar to that in interventions in which LDAs were active in earlier periods. Major change occurred only regarding people's self-esteem, which is currently included much more, as well as with the environmental conscientiousness which was earlier the most represented component and currently is not a priority. The least, almost negligible, amount of the LDAs' current engagement has had to do with identity components such as traditional cultural landscape, degraded landscape, multiethnic conviviality, conservative localism, religiousness of youth and xenophobia. It is worth also mentioning that over 40% of LDAs expressed their preference for future activities in relation to people's self-esteem, traditional public spaces, multiethnic conviviality,

positive cultural image, degraded cultural landscape, traditional cultural landscape, urban lifestyles in villages and xenophobia.

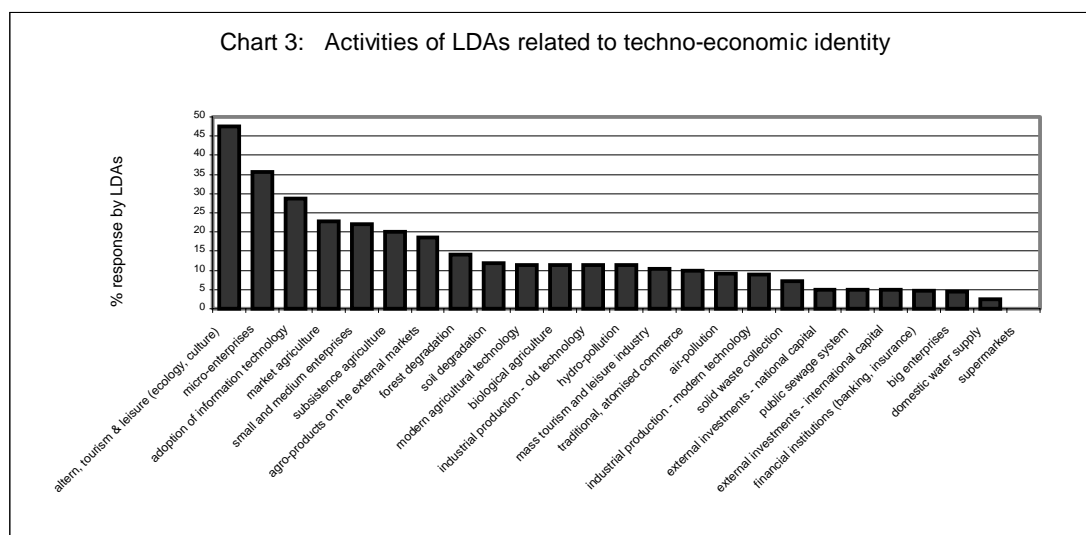
The socio-economic identity features are more present in the current activities of LDAs than the socio-cultural ones, the highest-ranking components being the creation of new employment opportunities, people's entrepreneurial spirit, unemployment, incentives to retain youth, professional qualification, and pluriactivity (Chart 2).



It was also evidenced by the Survey that in their earlier activities LDAs were less oriented to the socio-economic dimension and the focus was quite different, i.e., none of the presently highest-ranking identity components was a priority. As to the future, most LDAs expressed greatest interest in engagements related to social and rural-urban inequalities, peoples' consumerist spirit, care for the elderly, and exodus of the youth.

Regarding the techno-economic dimension of local identity, LDAs have participated mostly in interventions linked to alternative tourism and leisure industry, micro-enterprises, adoption of information technology, market agriculture and small and medium enterprises (see Chart 3). Similar to the experience with components of socio-economic identity, the intensity and focus in the presently on-going activities have been different from interventions in earlier periods, when the highest ranking was traditional commerce, followed by subsistence agriculture and domestic water supply. Records also show that the aspects of techno-economic dimension of local identity to which the

LDAs would most like to devote themselves in the future include those that have been underrepresented in their activities so far, such as adoption of information technology, promotion of SMEs, traditional commerce and organic farming, as well as combating forest and soil degradation.



When asked in the KAP questionnaire to qualify the role of local development stakeholders in relation to the socio-cultural dimension of local identity, LDAs responded quite unanimously that local political leaders are the only outstanding “promoters of cultural linkages and exchange” with the outside world (see Table 5). The majority considered students, return migrants and highly skilled professionals as the only local stakeholders who "easily adopt external cultural innovation". Amongst those who "do not easily adopt external cultural innovation" the following were identified as most notable: small-scale retailers, small and medium farmers, small and medium industrial entrepreneurs and retirees. Among those who "oppose external and glorify local culture", the most frequently highlighted were new residents from other countries.

The only institutional stakeholders that most LDAs consider as true “promoters of cultural exchange” are local and regional development agencies, local governments, modern civic associations, cultural institutions and secondary schools. While just the Catholic Church and social assistance institutions "do not adopt cultural innovation easily", there are no great differences among other institutions in respect to the preservation of the socio-cultural dimension of local identity.

Table 5: Attitudes of LDAs on the role of local stakeholders in relation to the socio-cultural dimension of local identity (% of valid responses)

Local stakeholders	Promote cultural linkages / exchange %	Easily adopt external cultural innovation %	Do not adopt easily external cultural innovation %	Oppose external and glorify local culture %	Not known %	Not applicable %
<b>Individuals</b>						
political leaders	44.6	3.7	35.2	9.3	5.6	3.7
religious leaders	14.8	1.9	37.0	7.4	37.0	1.9
highly qualified professionals	28.8	42.3	5.8	13.5	1.9	7.7
small /medium agricultural entrepreneurs	0.0	11.3	50.9	3.8	22.6	11.3
big agricultural entrepreneurs	3.9	24.5	15.1	0.0	22.6	34.0
small / medium industrial entrepreneurs	0.0	21.2	46.2	0.0	23.1	9.6
big industrial entrepreneurs	38.	28.3	7.5	0.0	24.5	34.0
small-scale retailers	00.	11.8	58.8	11.8	9.8	5.9
students (secondary and higher education)	19.2	51.9	5.8	9.6	5.8	7.7
retired people	00.	1.9	45.3	28.3	18.9	3.8
local residents employed outside	61.	26.5	12.2	2.0	42.9	10.2
return migrants	19.	45.3	11.3	1.9	24.5	13.2
returnees from former colonies	00.	17.0	18.9	3.8	37.7	22.6
new residents - nationals	13.2	26.4	9.4	0.0	35.8	15.1
new residents - internationals	24.5	17.0	3.8	35.8	17.0	1.9
<b>Institutions</b>						
primary schools	31.5	18.5	29.6	1.9	16.7	1.9
secondary schools	41.5	20.8	17.0	11.3	7.5	1.9
polytechnic schools	19.6	19.6	3.9	0.0	5.9	51.0
university (branch of)	18.4	10.2	2.0	0.0	2.0	67.3
professional training centres	35.9	20.8	9.4	0.0	9.4	24.5
municipal government	49.1	17.0	24.5	3.8	1.9	3.8
county government	24.1	13.0	46.3	7.4	7.4	1.9
mass media	34.0	26.4	20.8	1.9	7.5	9.4
Catholic Church	14.8	5.6	37.0	7.4	25.9	7.4
other Churches	7.7	5.8	17.3	7.7	36.5	25.0
cultural institutions	43.4	22.7	17.0	7.5	1.9	7.5
industrial enterprises	8.5	26.9	23.1	0.0	17.3	23.1
commercial enterprises	7.6	26.4	28.3	0.0	17.0	20.8
financial institutions	15.1	41.5	3.8	1.9	16.1	22.6
social assistance institutions	28.3	9.4	30.2	3.8	15.1	13.2
tourism and catering enterprises	25.3	41.5	13.2	0.0	5.7	11.3
agricultural co-operatives	15.1	11.3	32.1	5.7	24.5	11.3
associations of entrepreneurs	25.5	21.6	9.8	0.0	15.7	27.5
traditional associations (sports, music)	38.4	19.2	21.2	13.4	3.8	3.8
modern assoc. (ecology, civic action)	43.4	28.3	9.4	1.9	7.5	11.3
local and regional development agencies	58.5	29.7	9.4	3.9	0.0	7.5

Finally, it was recorded that most LDAs share the view that cosmopolitanism<sup>10</sup> is important for the materialisation of the slogan "Think Globally, Act Locally" (Table 6). More positive than negative views were recorded regarding allegations such as that "cosmopolitan attitude is indispensable in care for local identity", that "globalisation of culture and cosmopolitanism are mutually supportive", and that lack of cosmopolitan attitude "can significantly diminish the capacity of the LDAs". Major disagreement and doubts were provoked only by the issue of whether "cosmopolitanism can be accepted locally only by the elite and not by the entire community".

Table 6 Attitudes of LDAs on cosmopolitanism (% of valid responses)

On cosmopolitanism	Agree totally %	More agree than disagree %	Does not agree, nor disagree %	Disagree more than agree %	Disagree totally %
Globalisation of culture and the cosmopolitanism are mutually supportive.	33.3	31.5	20.4	13.0	1.9
Cosmopolitan attitude is indispensable in care for local identity.	37.0	29.6	16.7	9.4	7.4
Cosmopolitanism can be accepted locally only by the elite and not by the entire community.	1.9	14.8	22.2	25.9	35.2
Lack of cosmopolitan attitude can significantly diminish the capacity of the LDAs.	38.2	29.1	14.5	10.9	7.3
Cosmopolitanism is essential for the realisation of the concept-slogan "Think Globally, Act Locally".	56.4	27.3	10.9	5.5	0.0

### Future Research Agenda

As stressed earlier, in contrast to the pro-identity rhetoric, rural development policies and programmes in Portugal do not rely on empirical evidence about territorial identity features, nor about the role of the development stakeholders in their change. In order to contribute to the bridging this gap, and building on the above-mentioned and other results of the exploratory research (Roca, 2000), a trans-disciplinary research project, entitled “Territorial Identity, Globalisation and Development in Portugal: the Regions of Minho and Alentejo – IDENTERRA”, has been prepared at the *Universidade Lusófona*, Lisbon, for the period 2002-2004.<sup>11</sup>

The IDENTERRA Project’s objectives are three-fold: (i) to provide empirical evidence on and assess changes in natural, human and material features of territorial identity in the regions of Minho and Alentejo, in the context of globalised economy and culture; (ii) to appraise the role of development stakeholders in relation to the changing territorial identity of these two regions; and (iii) to lay grounds for conceptual-methodological frameworks for the integration of territorial identity in regional and local development policies and initiatives.

The traditional regions of Minho in Northern and of Alentejo in Central-Southern Portugal, both still largely rural, have been marked by distinct geographical features and

development contexts and subject to deep changes induced by globalisation. New power relations and interests have emerged among local and global, traditional and new actors and agents, who compete for land use and other development resources, including territorial identity.

Comprehensive regional surveys and in-depth local case studies will be carried out, addressing changes in biophysical, socio-cultural, economic, technological and other features of the two target regions. This will lay grounds for creating two regional "Territorial Identity Data and Image Banks". In order to store, process and disseminate data and results, a GIS, an Internet site and a CD-ROM will be developed and, at the conclusive stage of the project, will be integrated in a unique "Territorial Identity Documentation and Information Centre" intended for public use. The organisation of an International Conference on Territorial Identity and Development, as well as international networking, are also envisaged. This should all represent a basis for further research and sensitisation of decision makers, professionals, local and regional stakeholders, and of the general public about territorial identity as a development resource.

## **Conclusions**

The need to reaffirm local identity as a means of coping with impacts of globalisation has been widely accepted in rural development policies in Portugal, but more rhetorically than in operational terms. Too little has been known about the aspects of local identity that are accountable for sustainable rural development and how to minimise their vulnerability and increase competitiveness. Also, virtually no attention has been given to the role of local development stakeholders, both individual and institutional, in relation to local identity as a policy issue.

According to the findings from the exploratory KAP survey in rural Portugal, LDAs demonstrate far less homogeneity in attitudes on local identity as a development issue than it might have been expected, which only reconfirms the ambiguity problem in dealing with this concept. The fact that a large majority agreed on only one, basic assumption (i.e., that "to care about local identity must be priority in local development interventions"), whereas their judgements diverged on all other crucial aspects (i.e., dichotomies between the traditional and modern, positive and negative, endogenous and

exogenous forces of progress *versus* identity) calls for the testing of such responses against the professional experience of LDAs and specific EU, national and/or local development policy frameworks within which they operate.

The survey records also revealed at least two positive features regarding the LDAs' activities. Firstly, compared with the past, the current development interventions in which LDAs participate seem more focused on the alleviation of negative and assimilation of positive social and economic effects of globalisation. Additional studies should clarify whether such change in priorities has to do with the changing nature of the local-global interface, with redistribution of roles and conflicts among development stakeholders (e.g., external financial institutions, large entrepreneurs, outside experts, secondary residents, emigrants, tourism and leisure industry, etc.) and, again, with the EU, national and/or local development policy frameworks.

A second positive feature is that the LDAs seem eager to engage in exactly those features of local identity that are underrepresented in their current development activities, such as the care for cultural landscape, external image, rural-urban cohesion, people's consumerism and indebtedness, exodus of the youth, adoption of information technology, external demand for local products, organic farming and forest and soil degradation. It is, however, too early to argue at this stage of research that this orientation indicates the LDAs are actually better aware of true development challenges than the policy designers and program promoters.

The LDAs revealed a quasi-total lack of agreement on a wide range of globalisation-related issues, which mirrors the diversity of approaches and controversy of interpretations of this phenomenon in general. Surprisingly or not, but certainly preoccupying is the fact that in their responses on globalisation the LDAs demonstrated a great deal of perplexity, scepticism and much more pessimism than optimism about the prospects for reaffirmation and greater competitiveness of local culture and economy. This restrained attitude is in discrepancy with the commonly accredited, politically, financially and otherwise supported concept of strengthening regional local identity as a strategically important rural development policy option.

In order to understand this discrepancy and identify policy-relevant linkages along the local/global nexus, the empirical evidence of the changing nature of territorial identity



need to be analysed in the context of (i) the specific geographical settings and developmental contexts in different places and regions, and (ii) the entrenched and emerging interests and roles of regional/local development stakeholders.

It is expected that the IDENTERRA Project will provide important breakthroughs in this respect. It will address globally conditioned livelihoods in two distinct regions, Minho and Alentejo and promote the need to care for environmental, socio-cultural and other aspects of territorial identities in a pro-development perspective (i.e., in opposition to the currently present negligence and/or conservative traditionalism). By insisting on the role of individual and institutional stakeholders in coping with the globalised economy and culture at local and regional levels, the Project will also encourage community driven, "grassroots" approaches to development.

Furthermore, the theme, objectives, activities and wide dissemination of the IDENTERRA Project's results are expected to encourage broad public awareness among a wide range of concerned parties (i.e., from development policy-makers to community leaders and agents), about the importance of respecting territorial identity as a development resource and indeed a potential asset in inter-regional and international competitiveness,

## **Endnotes**

- 1      There is no commonly accepted definition of the notion of the local identity. Depending on the scope, context and purpose of analyses, the notion of "local" is sometimes referred to as "territorial", "regional", or "community", while "identity" often means "culture", "character", or "uniqueness". Rose (1995) brought about a major breakthrough in clarifying the complexities in interpreting the notion of local identity and, in particular, of the "sense of place".
- 2      A typical example of the pro-identity rhetoric in Portugal can be found in the Portuguese Regional Development Plan 2000-2006, where it is maintained that "harmony between modernity and tradition mean, both territorially and geostrategically, combining the generalised cosmopolitan living patterns with the valorisation of collective identity" (MP 1999 Ch. III: 10).
- 3      Rural areas in Portugal have suffered from decline in small-scale agriculture, under-utilisation or abandonment of cultivable land; lacking investments in economic and social infrastructure and services and, especially, in productive activities, as well as from continuous weakening of demographic vitality and depletion of endogenous human resources, known as "human desertification" (Roca 1998). All this has been accompanied by rapidly fading cultural and economic traditions and indiscriminate adoption of new identity features.

- 4 True, geographers, sociologists, industrial economists and business analysts, political scientists and others have explored effects of globalisation on local cultural identities, local business strategies, local industrial agglomerations, local political struggles, etc. (Amin and Thrift, 1994:1), but such contributions tend to cover only sporadic and isolated cases, rely on secondary sources of information and remain confined to monodisciplinary interpretations.
- 5 A distinction must be made between local "agents" and "actors". Local development actors are individuals, groups and public or private institutions that directly or indirectly contribute to the improvements in the quality of life in a given locality. They can range from students and workers to decision-makers and managers in local economy, politics etc. However, local development agents (LDAs) are only those actors who explicitly search for solutions to local development problems and try to promote an optimal valorisation of the endogenous resource potentials. While all actors can contribute to the affirmation of local identity, interventions of the LDAs tend to be pivotal. (Roca 1998; 2000).
- 6 The "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 (Roca 1999).
- 7 Around one hundred and fifty local and regional development agencies operate in Portugal under various juridical forms (e.g., associations, co-operatives, foundations and consulting firms). Many have emerged as part of the recent history of Portugal (marked by the overall democratisation of development) and actually became leading agents of socio-economic change in rural areas, especially since Portugal joined the EU in 1986. The use of EU Structural Funds has been largely channelled to support their activity.
- 8 The notion of local identity was presented in the KAP questionnaire as "a set of cultural, social, economic, technological and other specificities of places and regions" and it was disaggregated in its socio-cultural, socio-economic and techno-economic dimensions, each consisting of 25 features that best reflect realities of rural Portugal, both the long established and recently emerging ones.
- 9 The notion of globalisation was introduced in the KAP questionnaire as "a process of rapidly growing interdependence, at the planetary scale, of tendencies, problems, values, decision-making and behavioural patterns".
- 10 The notion of cosmopolitanism was introduced in the KAP questionnaire as "a positive approach towards multicultural, participatory citizenship and to social and economic solidarity among communities at the global level".
- 11 The Project is to be carried out by the Applied Social Science Research and Studies Unit of the *Universidade Lusófona*, Lisbon, in cooperation with the Centre for Research in Geography and Regional Planning of the *Universidade Nova de Lisboa*, and the Associations of Counties in the two target regions.

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