

A

Abstract

The rural landscape is becoming increasingly close to the ideal of nature, therefore it is being used as the receptacle of individual and collective perceptions. Landscape is on its way to be the new ecological paradigm. Right at the point when society is prepared to engage in landscape protection, the rural landscape suffers from a wide range of pressures which threaten its continuity as a social, cultural and environmental feature. In this context agriculture and agricultural policies are playing an important role.

In the framework of this dissertation, a cross disciplinary approach is pursued, in which the concept of landscape as geographical unit is considered to be the starting point towards the development of intersectorial strategies which may contribute to the protection of the rural landscape as well as of the rural population.

By taking in account experiences, methodologies and techniques, specially in the psychological and social field, it has been carried out a case study on farms next to a reach of the Alcáçovas river which aims to study the man environment relationship. This thesis argues that farmer's environmental attitudes influence the conservation of the ecosystems within the space they manage.

Even though the results are far away from the initial expectations, this study points out the importance of the study of the various publics present in the rural landscape as it emphasises the distinct environmental attitudes and behaviours of different groups, namely those between rural and urban farmers. Therefore, and despite the results, it is considered that the study of the human dimension plays a determinant role in the conservation of the environment and the rural Mediterranean landscape in an integrated and sustainable way.

KEY-WORDS: *rural landscape conservation, Mediterranean region, environmental attitudes and behaviours*