



Abstract

The European Landscape Convention calls for the definition of 'landscape quality objectives' as "the formulation by the competent public authorities of the aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings". Notably in regions with poor participatory culture and in rural landscapes abandoned by people and consequently by their activities, dealing with the future does not seem a straightforward task. In these marginal rural landscapes the role of agriculture is being altered under the influence of the new rationale of the Common Agriculture Policy, so it may have to assume different functions in the future. In this context the development of 'exploratory landscape scenarios' can be a useful tool, firstly to find plausible landscape futures, and secondly to trigger discussions with the public regarding their aspirations for their landscape. The methodological approach is illustrated at a local scale by using the case study of Mértola in southeast Portugal. The results of the scenario exercise point out the adequateness of the methodology in the development of futures that are perceived as plausible by local stakeholders and, thereby, able to bring out their desires and threats towards the future of their landscape.

Keywords: European Landscape Convention, landscape scenarios, exploratory scenarios, rural landscapes, landscape policies.