

TERRA. Revista de Desarrollo Local

e-ISSN: 2386-9968

Número 13 (2023), 118-141

DOI 10.7203/terra.13.26030

IIDL – Instituto Interuniversitario de Desarrollo Local

Land Resources and Local Productive System in the Albuñol Basin (Granada, SE of Spain)

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SECCIÓN ARTÍCULOS

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Abstract: The Mediterranean coastal plains have suffered an intense process of productive change in recent decades. Territories of secular human occupation, multifunctional orchards characterized by their ecological diversity and rich heritage, have evolved towards reproductions of speculative production models that imitate locally the general practice of the sector. In this evolution, characterized by impoverishment and loss of identity, territorial conflicts have multiplied, and new realities have appeared that compromise the meaning and continuity of these spaces.

In the present contribution are studied the functional keys and contradictions of the productive and development model of the Rambla de Albuñol (Granada). This is one of the Penibetic valleys of the central sector in the Andalusian Mediterranean coast. The area offers an extraordinary record of territorial processes and conflicts that allow, on the one hand, to detail the recent evolution of these spaces, key to the ecological balance and maintenance of the territorial structures of the Mediterranean world; likewise, they make it possible to reflect on the importance of land management models at the local scale. Finally, discursive proposals are made regarding the productive, territorial and institutional reality of this environment, obtained from the lessons learned in previous phases and seeking to advance towards more sustainable models.

Key words: Sustainability; Endogenous Development; Productive Models; Greenhouses; Andalusia.

Recibido: 30 de enero de 2023

Aceptado: 24 de mayo de 2023

Referencia / Citation:

Sánchez Escolano, Luis Miguel (2023). Recursos territoriales y sistema productivo local en la rambla de Albuñol (Granada, SE de España). *TERRA. Revista de Desarrollo Local*, (13),118-141. DOI 10.7203/terra.13.26030

IDEAS CLAVE / HIGHLIGHTS / IDEES CLAU

<p>1. Las vegas mediterráneas se mantienen como centros productivos agrarios de primer orden.</p>	<p>1. The Mediterranean plains remain as first order agricultural productive centers.</p>	<p>1. Les hortes mediterrànies es mantenen com a centres productius agraris de primer ordre.</p>
<p>2. La irrupción y expansión de sectores muy rentables (subtropicales, invernaderos) han modificado su orientación productiva.</p>	<p>2. The irruption and expansion of very profitable sectors (subtropical, greenhouses) have modified its productive orientation.</p>	<p>2. La irrupció i expansió de sectors molt rendibles (subtropicals, hivernacles) ha modificat la seua orientació productiva.</p>
<p>3. El cambio de modelo productivo ha generado conflictos y transmutado los modos de vida.</p>	<p>3. Productive Model changes have generated conflicts and transmuted ways of life.</p>	<p>3. El canvi de model productiu ha generat conflictes i transformat les maneres de vida.</p>
<p>4. La planificación y autoridades no han sabido dar respuesta a los nuevos desafíos que han surgido.</p>	<p>4. Planning and authorities have not known how to respond to these new challenges.</p>	<p>4. La planificació i autoritats no han sabut donar resposta als nous desafiaments que han sorgit.</p>
<p>5. La implementación de políticas de desarrollo y una nueva gobernanza, fundamentales para alcanzar la sostenibilidad.</p>	<p>5. The implementation of development policies and new governance, essential to achieve sustainability.</p>	<p>5. La implementació de polítiques de desenvolupament i una nova governança, fonamentals per a aconseguir la sostenibilitat.</p>

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT¹

The approach of strategies and tools for the economic and social promotion of peripheral and dysfunctional territories requires new approaches to their reality and circumstances. It is necessary to overcome the traditional notion of "progress", "growth" and, of course, "economic development" through enrichment and expansion of the concept, providing tools that enable a critical review of current trends. The primary objective is something well known by pre-existing policies, plans and programs: utilizing other means to continue the path already begun, which, although it has borne some fruit, is still far from meeting the objectives of general revitalization, to reach the much demanded economic diversification and conclude with the effective social reactivation that was aspired. Therefore, new perspectives must be incorporated that invite us to consider a necessary social reorganization (innovation) to improve efficiency in the sustainable use of the existing territorial capital, and the implementation of novel practices that help to intelligently articulate this new scenario: participation, transparency and new governance.

This work approaches, from a holistic perspective of the neoendogenous and local development paradigm, the geographical reality of the productive system established on the banks of the Albuñol dry riverbed (Granada, SE Spain). It is a 115 km² space focused on intensive agriculture which has developed with notable commercial success in recent decades. However, this positive economic result transcends to other orders of reality (increase in the population in a rural area, general increase in the quality of life, arrival of investments and financial resources...), is based on an irrational use of local resources.

The starting hypothesis states that it is possible to reinterpret and redirect the existing negative dynamics in the area, which endanger the viability of the productive system, through the practical application of the values and theories of the neoendogenous and local development paradigm.

In this way, the research was designed under the premise of recognizing and critically analyzing the main conflicts and challenges that the productive system of Albuñol's dry riverbed presents for neoendogenous and local development. After reviewing the scientific literature, the local press and other technical reference materials, a general framework of ideas has been built that serves to understand the approach made from the reference paradigm. Next, the study area is analyzed as a favorable scenario for the application of these values and the main existing conflicts are detailed. Likewise, an effort is made to empirically contrast the theories elaborated with the reality of the territory. Cartography and photographic records have been elaborated specifically for this phase's study, in addition to using statistical information that accompanies the examination process undertaken. The study ends with a series of reflections and proposals conducive to solving and overcoming the detected dysfunctions.

The organization of the productive space in the Albuñol dry riverbed thus presents different scenarios, with dynamics that, despite having a common origin in the productive intensification registered in the last decades, give rise to particular situations depending on their position in the watershed and the way in which economic, social and natural factors interact in each case. For

¹ Traducción exclusiva de los autores/ Authors' exclusive translation.

this reason, it has been decided to approach them following the natural organization of the dry riverbed, the backbone of the current exploitation systems.

1. Headwaters and upper course area
2. Surroundings of Albuñol and middle course
3. Lower course, delta and surroundings of the mouth of the riverbed

After unraveling the interpretive keys that allow us to recognize the components and functionality of the local productive system in the surroundings of Albuñol's dry riverbed, a series of proposals are then made to articulate the necessary change of direction in the models of territorial management with an impact on the study area. These are presented organized in three orders or dimensions (Table 2): 1) relative to the productive economic reality; 2) of a territorial order and on resources; and 3) referring to the institutional dimension, where its social aspect is also considered. Overall, its leitmotiv would be aimed at, on the one hand, intervening in favor of spatial and social justice; on the other, help manage a rational use of resources, in many cases from a state of ineffectiveness and prior abandonment; and, finally, supporting good practices, those that prioritize values that build ties in the community and a positive dynamic feedback.

The discussion reflects on the possibilities derived from the results of the investigation. In the first place, the local productive system of the dry riverbed of Albuñol is presented as a case that contradicts what the theory of local development usually showed. Due to the success of the model in its current characteristics, especially in the economic field, and because there has been no counterbalance or serious attempts to correct it by the institutions and planning tools with an impact on this space, its inhabitants have opted for a way of operating that go against any logic related to sustainability.

Incidentally, different elements that were once significant for social cohesion and that had the potential for economic use if other scenarios had been considered have been degraded or lost over time: the natural resources, tangible and intangible heritage, the landscape, natural and urban landscapes and even rural identity.

The results of this work also show that a new evaluation or stage must be included in the analysis of this type of case study. The processes of productive intensification, supported by new technical possibilities, within the framework of a society that does not participate in the concern for sustainability, require a reconsideration of the limits and possibilities for these ideas. This makes it equally essential to continue delving into these aspects, looking for parallels or exceptions in comparative studies, since what has happened in the local productive complex of Albuñol's dry riverbed has temporal and spatial equivalence with what happened in other Mediterranean plains spread throughout the Spanish coast.

As general conclusions we can highlight:

1. Considering the economic dimension of their reality, the study substantiates that despite increases in production and the competitive gains in key sectors such as intensive hothouse agriculture, local entrepreneurs do not reinforce these results in procedural, technical, sustainability or efficiency improvements to their management models
2. From the sociocultural point of view, a general absence of the most basic values of urbanity and respect for public space and its resources has been verified, a state of affairs that has found unexpected shelter in the indifference or ineffectiveness of the administrations in charge of ensuring compliance with plans and standards. In other words, governance mechanisms that aim

to guarantee a minimum that avoids conflicts and new problems in coexistence do not seem to work.

3. Considering the political-administrative dimension in which territorial policies allow the creation of a favorable local economic environment, it has been observed how the social and monetary automatisms generated by the listed elements have not found correction or surveillance from outside. Thus, the role of institutions does not correspond to the theory of guaranteeing the continuity and efficiency of the model with protection and care.

Based on all of the above, it is possible to conclude that the achievement of economic and social viability of agriculture in hands of local producers, has been overshadowed by the lack of control in the management of resources and the non-existent use ordinance.



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