



CHAPTER

5





IN LOCO - HERE IN THIS PLACE

HANNES LORENZEN IN CONVERSATION
WITH ARTUR FILIPE GREGÓRIO

Artur and I stroll across the September fair of Tavira, a coastal city near the Sierra do Caldeirão, on the southernmost tip of Portugal. It is still quite hot, but we sit in the shade of the [IN LOCO](#) stand and have a glass of homemade lemonade

spiced with herbs from the Sierra.

"Do you think we have gone too far 'trademarking' IN LOCO?" Artur asks, pointing at a sculpture made of cork. "We started with the idea of promoting local farming and food together with rural tourism, wine heritage trails and



fairs. But we also offer many products from 'cortiça' (cork) in our new MADE IN LOCO shop. IN LOCO was founded as a non-profit local development organisation, but we are now also into new entrepreneurship and trademarking."



OPPOSITE
1a. 1b. Algarve. Landscape of cork oak trees.
Traditional cork extracting method

THIS PAGE
2a. 2b. 2c. Made "In Loco":
wood, wild herbs and liquor
3. Cork master teaching how
to carve a cork drinking spoon

I am not worried. True, IN LOCO is now working in a broader economic environment. But it still carries this spirit I felt when I came to the Sierra twenty years ago. Cultivating tradition and preserving slow growth of the local economy and collective knowledge was and is the recipe. And this cork sculpture is a symbol of that. Cork oaks are slow growers and nowhere so deeply rooted in the local rural economy as here in the Algarve. Here cork is used not just for sealing wine bottles, but also to insulate and decorate homes. Artur points out a

host of local olive oil-based cosmetics and adds *"with our local products and rural tourism services, we have been able to attract many Europeans from those centres of mass tourism at the seaside up to our remote villages of the Algarve. We have made Europe 'in loco'."*

'In loco' means *'here in this place'*, and IN LOCO of which Artur is programme director was founded as a development organisation in 1988 in this beautiful sierra, one of the most remote and marginalised rural areas of Portugal. In September 2018, Artur's

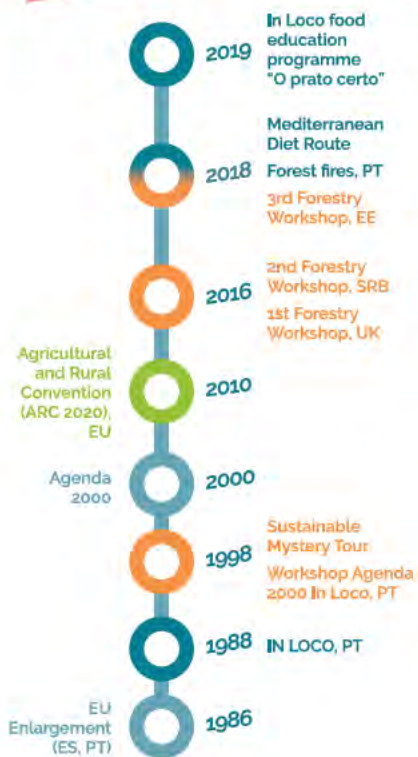


"We have made Europe 'in loco.'"

team and the IN LOCO movement celebrated their 30 year anniversary. *"This fair is a very emotional moment for us,"* Artur says, *"our local identity, knowledge and traditions have proved to be solid and sustainable."*



Journey through time



FEELING EUROPEAN BUT STAYING AT HOME

Artur and I met whilst organising the Forum Synergies 'Agenda 2000 – IN LOCO' event in 1998. It was the climax of the Sustainable Mystery Tour and linked the many places, projects and people we had visited years before and whom we had identified as great examples of sustainable rural development. We gathered their stories and strategies in a 'travelling exhibition' which offered a background for discussions and debates with rural people, politicians and media across Europe.

"We really felt honoured and encouraged that the tour ended here, at IN LOCO's territory. There were so many new ideas and people telling their stories. It all sounded so familiar to us, even from far away rural places as the Baltic countries. Isn't that the idea of Europe that we keep looking for what we have in common? The IN LOCO gathering at the end of the Sustainable Mystery Tour was one of those moments where you can feel like a European whilst staying at home," he adds.

IN LOCO was founded by Alberto Melo, professor for public law and adult education and his wife Maria Priscila Soares. Both were convinced that the only way to develop the very remote Sierra do Caldeirão would be to empower women, gather farmers, small enterprises and artisans from the Sierra starting with small products and services, training and sharing best practices, cooperatives, sharing limited facilities and developing projects and programmes together. In three decades, the IN LOCO association has been the incubator of many strategies and events of sustainable rural development in the

*"Only the dream
that turns into action
becomes history."*

Alberto Melo

Algarve region. It has strengthened citizen participation in these issues, especially also integrating minority groups and people at risk of social exclusion. This fair of Tavira where Artur and I sit in the shade is a symbol of continuity of this initiative.

OPPOSITE

4. Artur Gregório, with a memory tile of the Sustainable Mystery Tour workshop in Algarve, Portugal

5. Marta Marcis and Uwe Kurzke at the Sustainable Mystery Tour final gathering at 'In Loco'

6. Alberto Melo and Maria Priscila Soares, founders of In Loco

"It was one of those moments where you can feel like a European whilst staying at home."

Artur Gregório

THE SUSTAINABLE MYSTERY TOUR

'*The Magical Mystery Tour*' was an early hit and a film by The Beatles in the late 1960s, featuring people travelling in a coach making unspecified magical adventures. Forum Synergies (at that time still ENESD) borrowed the idea of visiting and gathering the magic of bottom-up rural development movements.

Following a series of inspiring local workshops from May 1996 to October 1997, the team of ENESD gathered at [Mas de Noguera](#) near Valencia in Spain, to imagine and prepare such a tour of discovery and animation throughout Europe, visiting the places where the magic of sustainability had appeared. The outcome was a plan of a tour from the far North East to the most South Western part of Europe, from Estonia to Portugal.

The tour comprised three pillars: local workshops and public debates on the future of rural Europe with a view to the then planned reform of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU called '[Agenda 2000](#)'; a travelling exhibition featuring the places and projects which were then part of the ENESD network; and finally a diary of the tour, gathering very personal '*messages from the countryside*' of ordinary rural people, to be told to regional, national and European decision makers during and following the Sustainable Mystery Tour. The messages were translated in four key languages and embedded in a European mosaic of sustainable development. The tour was a genuine adventure. Crossing borders between the then

'*candidate*' Baltic countries, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary needed high diplomatic effort. Austria and Italy, Germany and France were easier before arriving at the concluding workshop in the Sierra do Caldeirão, Algarve, Portugal. At each stop of the tour, in the cities or in the countryside, the '*travelling forum on the future of rural Europe*' offered space to exchange ideas on rural policies, EU enlargement, and the involvement of citizens in the various levels of democratic decision making. Many of those meetings and conferences were attended by national ministers, national and regional administrations and authorities.

In November 1998, the exhibition arrived at the European Parliament and was opened by the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Franz Fischler, who received '*messages from the countryside*', prepared by the local organisations and projects having hosted the Sustainable Mystery Tour. The tour was supported by Fondation de France, the German Schweißfurth Stiftung, La Caixa Foundation and the European Commission.

The impact of the Sustainable Mystery Tour on the Agenda 2000 reform of the CAP may be difficult to measure. It certainly was a magical adventure for those participating. And it laid the ground for travelling workshops as one of the most inspiring methods having emerged in Forum Synergies and our partners' treasure of what we call '*rural reality checks*'.



WILDFIRES SPREAD FAST

When Artur and I meet again in 2019, we have the notorious forest fire summers of 2017 and 2018 just behind us. Fires and devastating storms plagued Europe in those years. The Algarve in particular was seriously hit. "The fires were catastrophic," Artur remembers, "up north, many people died and entire regions burnt down. I remember what

Drennan Watson from Highland and Islands Forum in Scotland said back in 1998, when the Sustainable Mystery Tour ended here. He said our forests were evidence of absentee landlords from Lisbon, far away bureaucrats from Brussels and a very unsustainable forestry policy. The bureaucrats believed that eucalyptus would help by boosting the Portuguese paper industry. But instead it boosted fires. Drennan was right."

Experts connect the devastation of the forest fires to Portugal's very limited forestry policy. Though there is no common EU policy for forestry (as there is for agriculture), EU support was given for the planting of eucalyptus trees to supply paper industries with raw material. Eucalyptus grows very quickly, ideal for the paper industry. It is also a highly flammable wood, meaning that eucalyptus forest fires spread quickly and have the potential to be incredibly destructive. Additionally, these forests have very low biodiversity because insects and birds avoid them. Traditional dry orchard systems on the limestone area - joining olive, almond, fig, carob and cork trees - in the shale mountains, by contrast, grow very slowly. They tend to produce highly biodiverse ecosystems, preserve soil and water and are resilient to climate change. Local cork and olive processing industries also offer much better income for farmers and small industries.



RESILIENT FORESTS GROW SLOWLY

IN LOCO argues that a much-needed forest reform must be integrated into the Portuguese Forest Development Policy, which in turn is closely interrelated to a Rural Development Policy. These two policies have suffered a progressive disinvestment in recent decades. This has meant that the ability to detect, implement and evaluate how the forest may contribute to the sustainable development of the rural world in which it resides, has also

“We need to invest in the slow-growing, deeply rooted dry orchard and cork forests.”

been reduced. We need to consider the environmental policy, for forests are crucial actors in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss.

IN LOCO's view is that we need to move away from our addiction to fast-growing eucalyptus forests which produce dead landscapes and invest instead in the slow-growing, deeply rooted dry orchard and cork forests. They will take more time but they will help us weather future storms. We anticipate more wildfires in the decades ahead as the landscape becomes increasingly arid and we need to be prepared for this. Olive and cork forests will improve our resilience to these shocks but sustainability takes time.

FORESTRY POLICY CHANGES

A truly sustainable forest policy needs to take this into consideration and move away from comparatively instant-gratification eucalyptus. It requires long-term thinking and planning ahead. Sustainable development takes time, it is not a quick-fix and so we need to discourage political short-termism and encourage slower, more deeply rooted development policy making.

“Fortunately forest management is now changing in the right direction, but we are still 20 years away from recovering from the errors made in the past,” Artur says. “A truly



integrated rural development strategy articulates people, forest, cork, olive oil, agriculture, livestock and their cultural and productive systems in a sustainable way. I have heard Forum Synergies considers running one of its sustainable forestry workshops in Portugal. That would be great.”

OPPOSITE

- 7. Fires in eucalyptus forest in 2017
- 8. Resilient forests grow slowly

THIS PAGE

- 9. Hiking in a cork oak forest

PEOPLE!



With years of experience in the environmental sector and as a clerk of a rural Parish in England, **Gwil Wren** first encountered Forum Synergies in 2009 when he participated in workshops on *‘Sustainable Development in Lake Areas’*, to find contacts with people who were actively promoting nature conservation. Since he joined Forum Synergies in 2011, he has taken part in different events in 10 European countries stretching from France to Ukraine. He is the leader of Forum Synergies’ forestry working group and co-organised workshops in his home village in 2016 but also in Serbia and Estonia. Inspired by meetings and discussions he picked up from Forum Synergies to accept that *“everyone has a different point of view - farmers, nature conservationists, economists. But you can only really make a step forward and find a common ground when you talk to each other!”* That’s what also influences his work for **EuCAN**, an NGO working for nature conservation in the UK and Europe. Gwil worked and lived in the countryside all his life.

FORUM SYNERGIES' FORESTRY PROGRAMME

"Forest management and the forestry industry have been under scrutiny at global level since deforestation was identified as an issue of concern in the 1970s. Although numerous initiatives have been launched to address this, many challenges remain. Globally deforestation has slowed marginally but natural forests and their biodiversity remain critically threatened." Written by FS team in 2012 this is more the case now than ever. At that time a small working group started to elaborate a work plan for activities

to enhance efforts in favour of sustainable forest management. After 3 meetings (UK - 2016, SRB - 2016; EE-2018) the 4th workshop is now planned in a Mediterranean country to complete the European perspective on the topic. Having identified the political gap on the EU level from the beginning - where no European Forestry Policy exists - the topic of climate change has become a more and more urgent and obvious challenge since then and will be given priority especially in the following workshops.

A NEW RHYTHM FOR TOURISM

Whilst forests take their time to grow deep roots, the tourist industry has become ever faster and busier. *"The time of having a one month stay in one place is definitely over,"* Artur says. *"People want to visit many different places with a high diversity of activities and services, the Sierra, but also the seaside, some sport and adventure and also some calm hanging out at the beach. That changes almost everything."* The region relies on tourism and so has had to change its

approach to accommodate this.

Artur points to the return of a dynamic, younger generation who have helped bolster and modernise the local tourism industry. *"They have access to resources which the elder generation has not, such as naturally surfing the internet. They are interested in spirituality and new ways of living sustainability, want to make the countryside their new world. Their new views and expectations bring us new creativity in thoughts and practical action. So we now offer a complete system of bookings, reservations and services, and that is what the new*

generation is really good at. It does not mean that we lose the other aspect of connecting people, food, heritage and fun. It is just a different rhythm."

'MEDITERRANEAN DIET' AND A MENU FOR EVERYONE

One offer which tries to combine slow growth with fast-paced, pleasure-seeking tourists, is the *'Mediterranean Diet Route'*, organised by IN LOCO. Including over 150 enterprises, restaurants, heritage sites, small farms, village communities and ecotourism providers, it is a discovery trail of Algarve Mediterranean Culture by their food, wine, local products and special places. The idea is that tourists get an insight taste for the area by travelling around and visiting and having real experiences on these different projects. *"Cooperation and connection, not competition, is the spirit of it all,"* Artur explains. A fresh wind is blowing the heat away. Artur





10. Diet Route Stand on revolution day's festivity in Lisbon
11. Tavira Mediterranean Diet Fair

and I stroll on at Tavira fair. "What would mean 'O Prato Certo' - the right dish - for you?" Artur asks. "Fish, salad, vinho verde?" I guess. "Not bad," he nods, "but that is a typical tourist view. What we mean with our new campaign 'O prato certo' is finding the

most appropriate menu for everyone according to local and seasonal products, a healthy diet for everyone's economic situation. We want our food to be part of our rural development work including sustainable farming, preservation of food heritage, but also

ensuring healthy and affordable food for all. 'O prato certo' is our new food education programme for 2019. It is a new attempt to link food with social security. But 'the right dish' is of course also something we offer our tourists to get closer to our rural reality."

THE FAIR ABOUT FAIRNESS

One hundred and nineteen producers have gathered here in Tavira from thirty-nine Portuguese provinces, from Algarve, but also from Alentejo and Vale do Tejo and even from other parts of the Mediterranean region. So IN LOCO is a magnetic field for 'the right dish' for everyone. The fair is also about fairness, mutual trust and exchange of good ideas. What the Slow Food movement promotes in Italy, the Mediterranean local food choice, In Loco has established

here for quite a while. People feel connected with the Mediterranean lifestyle, although Portugal's coast is mainly the Atlantic Ocean.

"Maybe today, as the EU prepares for a new reform of the Common Agricultural Policy towards 2030, we should fight again for 'the right local development policy'", reasons Artur. "The new CAP reform proposal of the Commission suggests to reduce support for rural development.

That would be again an immense challenge for IN LOCO", Artur believes. "Portugal may now be out of the worst part of the financial crisis, but the crisis

"We should fight again for 'the right local development policy!'"

of our rural regions remains. Those were really dark times when we felt the consequences of liberalisation and globalisation of trade and how vulnerable we are as a small country," Artur reflects, "I believe these hard times are not over. We see how quickly things can change when governments change or when big companies move their capital and investments elsewhere."

ARC2020

The Agricultural and Rural Convention 2020 (ARC2020) is a European think tank and a food, farming and rural development news platform. The published content includes EU policy developments, the real-life stories of farmers, told by farmers, the following of developments in agricultural technologies and the tracking of national and international food sovereignty movements. The core idea is to bring into conversation a wide range of food system actors, from policymakers and academics to activists and farmers. ARC2020 wants to support a European agroecological transition by providing a space for

lively, informed debate on what good practices are already happening and where further work is needed. It is an important way for all stakeholders to remain up-to-date with the work being done in other parts of the continent, particularly concerning the implementation of national and EU food, farming and rural policy. It is also a way of learning from each other, a little like what Forum Synergies does in more personalised way. Incidentally, it is where editors and writers Hannes Lorenzen and Helene Schulze met first, because ARC2020 is another one of Hannes' passion projects and Helene is on the staff.



12. Christmas festivities with local community
13. Team involved in Tavira Med Diet Fair

RESILIENCE - LIVELIHOODS WITH LIMITED RESOURCES

"In fact we have grown, we have many more diverse projects now, and programmes like LEADER have really helped us to expand. But in some cases these projects have also become mainstream in the negative sense. People do things because there is money offered. But it should be the other way around. The money should

only come when people know exactly what they want for their village and how they want to cooperate. Our fellow organisations from Minha Terra and Animar have a lot of experience in that, and they try to focus on their own initiatives coming from villages and communities, or from small farmers. The bigger farmers do not need to get involved as they mainly sell their raw material to the traders. But we need to make sure that we get a higher value product locally so that we do not lose

out on the big market."

"What can IN LOCO do for Europe, now that it is time for a new Agenda 2030? It is our traditional lifestyle, we are living in small communities, we have been surviving in very harsh climatic, economic and social conditions. We have been inventive in making our livelihood with very limited resources based on mutual help between neighbours.

Grounded on the seven LEADER principles, IN LOCO has built upon

the diversity of village economies. We have connected projects through education, exchange of good practices. Our region is today very rich but in very small quantities. We create much value out of small quantities of good

meat, fish, cereals and vegetables. All for a perfectly healthy Mediterranean Lifestyle. We have still a very broad knowledge of wild herbs, medicinal plants, varieties of grains and landraces of

animals. It would be ideal to move towards organic farming but that is not all. It is the social and economic connection and the involvement of the entire community that counts for being successful," Artur concludes.

THE ALGARVE EXPERIENCE IN A NUTSHELL

The Algarve holds a special place in the Forum Synergies' heart as the final stop of the Sustainable Mystery Tour back in 1998. It seems this was quite an outstanding occasion for both the European visitors and the local participants and it fills me with warmth to return and reflect with Artur on everything that has happened in the years since.

Looking closely at the sustainable olive and cork forests of the Algarve, we see an argument for slowing down, taking our time and thinking long-term. These slow-growing trees will take a while to bear fruit but they will produce biologically rich landscapes, decrease the risk of devastating forest fires and create better paid jobs for the local community, compared with the eucalyptus forest and associated employment.

The Algarve experience demonstrates a theme we see time and time again in this book: the fraught question of who should be involved in sustainable rural policy-making. Absentee landlords have an understandable preference for eucalyptus plantations: they provide quick growth and quick economic gain for the paper industry. That they produce 'dead' landscapes is of little interest when you do not live in them. The local community, on the other hand, has an incentive to hold on to their dry orchard and cork growing because it is more sustainable and environmentally richer in the long term. These parties have not had equal clout in decision-making processes because of

the imbalance of power, the paper industry is an important source of income in Portugal but value is not determined just through monetary means and a truly sustainable forestry policy must recognise this.

Sustainability is defined by long-term impact and an ambitious forestry policy needs to take the same long view. Currently the political and economic system prefers short-term gains and quick-fixes. Widespread eucalyptus forests are a good example of this. The policy-making process needs to be adjusted to think better into the future.

This appreciation of slowness also plays out in other arenas. There is a case to be made about savouring the moment, something the 'Mediterranean Diet Route' and the Slow Food movements across the continent are striving to instil in European citizens - take your time, really find out about what you are planting, seeing, eating, or experiencing; and appreciate it fully.

Not only is savouring a more enjoyable experience, it is also politically important: it gives us the space to think about the ethical effect of our consumption, who has produced the food we eat? What labour and processes have created the landscape in which we sit? We need to take time to make the connections between our consumption and the effect that has on other people, on animals and on the environment. I am so sure this will help us make more informed ethical choices, and tastier ones too.