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**Report on evaluation of the Quality Letter
CCDT team conclusions**

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B. Object of debate: *Quality Letter applied to a project of cultural landscape*

C. Reference: **Project A STUDY ON THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AREA IN RÂPA ROȘIE, ALBA COUNTY (SACPC-ZRR)**
Contract CCDT-CJ Alba

D. Procedures (P): P.1. Outlines of the project, P.2. Analysis of the project limits, P3. Identifying the manner in which participatory action research was carried out led to these limits, P4. Identifying the possibilities and limits of the *Quality Letter*.

P.1. Outlines of the project

Concept. At the beginning of the 20th century, geographers started using the term “cultural landscape.” Thus, the concept of heritage protection came to also include something other than historical buildings and settlements. Since the 1980s, the notion of “cultural landscape” has been used increasingly. A series of definitions are widely accepted:

“Cultural landscapes are the combined works of nature and man. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal.” (UNESCO, 1992¹).

Objectives. The main objectives of the project were: Operationalisation of the concept of cultural landscape, through a threefold approach: *local history and culture, ecological context and social environment and local economy*; Defining elements specific to the cultural landscape in the Râpa Roșie Area in order to better promote the area; Identifying the identity references that are specific to the inhabitants of the Lan crăm village as a basis for community support in local development projects, including for better tourism development; Drawing up minimum sightseeing tracks and tourist developments in order to make the most of the cultural landscape of the Râpa Roșie Area.

An integrated approach of landscape and its stages. For an integrated approach of the landscape, the interdisciplinarity principle was applied and several stages were followed.

In a first stage, the results from previous disciplinary research were integrated. With this occasion, a list of works written on the subject of Râpa Roșie, in the fields of: history, archaeology, ethnography, literature, social sciences and sciences of nature.

The second stage consisted in elaborating **contributions scientifically fundamented by the project team members**, by means of theoretical research and field research with the inhabitants' involvement. The aspects that had been previously neglected in previous researches of fundamentation of the touristic promotion of the Râpa Roșie Area, respectively elements of local history and culture and elements of local identity. Also, a first **project of touristic development of the area** was created in the context of opportunities provided by a highway which is going to cross the area.

In a third stage, as an **element of action-research**, within a meeting of stakeholders interested in the development of the area, a **debate on the project** of touristic development was started, with the aim of promoting the cultural landscape of Râpa Roșie. The meeting took place at

¹ World Heritage Convention. Article 1.

the Sebeş Town Hall, on November 15th, 2007 and it was attended by *representatives of local authorities and of interested non-governmental organizations*.

The objectives of the meeting between the researchers and the local actors were the following:

1. To clarify the concept of cultural landscape and adopt a common language of researchers and actors as a basis for the elaboration of project to promote the area for tourism;
2. To identify common points and differences of opinions, representations and actions that aim to develop the territory under study;
3. To create links between the social actors interested in developing cultural projects;
4. To complete/adjust the proposed project with ideas and information that can ensure in the future an active involvement of communities to territorial development projects.

The main **common** ideas of the proposed project, extracted from presentations and debates were the following:

- The highway that will cross the area is an opportunity to promote the cultural landscape of Râpa Roşie due to the facilities provided by the free access of many visitors and the Râpa Roşie Area will certainly be the most spectacular element of visibility of the cultural landscape;
- The need to elaborate advertisement materials that do not exclusively contain natural landscape elements, which attract and are more easily assimilated by the tourism consumer;
- The need to create modern facilities and equipments without affecting the quality of ecological factors.

The differences of opinions revolved around the following issues:

- The new highway route: the Town Hall representatives presented an adjusted project that designs the highway too close to the reserve (about 500m), and the changes were made for technical reasons;
 - Finding a solution to the conflict between tourism promotion and protecting rare species of flora and fauna, inevitably induced by anthropic activities;
 - Preserving/eliminating pasturing in the area, an important economic activity which can create a particular picturesque cultural landscape;
 - The Army buildings and its Shooting Site as elements that disturb the landscape;
 - The tendency to extend the cultural landscape area to the entire Sebes Valley.

Recommendations of the project team. The project team had made the following important recommendations: to include in the development strategy of the municipality of Sebeş the following priority: “Promote the cultural landscape of *Râpa Roşie*”; To initiate, support and develop a programme to promote the cultural landscape of Râpa Roşie, entitled “Râpa Roşie – the Prophet’s Footsteps”; to create a network of stakeholders interested in the touristic promotion of the area; to create materials to promote the potential, strategies and local initiatives to promote the cultural landscape of Râpa Roşie (web site, flyers, brochures, information boards etc.); Prepare an “inter-community consortium” for a common strategic action in the field and access European and international funds for large-scale projects (for instance, structural funds of the European Union); Support workshops to elaborate funding proposals for micro-projects to turn the area to tourism advantage.

To sum up, we can identify three key moments of participatory research-action in the project A STUDY ON THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AREA IN RÂPA ROŞIE, ALBA COUNTY (SACPC-ZRR):

- *Prepare the project through documentation and identifying the first research directions (CCDT, CJ Alba, Capitel SA – architecture firm);*
- *Write the project (CCDT, CJ Alba)*

- ***Consult inhabitants on:***

- the perception of cultural and historical tradition: taking personalities as reference marks
- represent the connection between Lucian Blaga and Râpa Roşie: an organic component and the sphere of the immemorial
- perception of community value
- perception on measures to promote the specificity of the place: the importance to resuscitate the collective conscience
- traditions and customs
- a projection of the future of Lancrăm
- a perception of limiting agriculture and animal husbandry in the Râpa Roşie area.

P.2. An analysis of project limits

During the debates, the following limits of the project A STUDY ON THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AREA IN RÂPA ROŞIE, ALBA COUNTY (SACPC-ZRR) were set out:

- The conclusions to which the project writers reached (especially researchers) are too general, and are rather valid for a cultural landscape model;
- Although the integrated approach of the territory has turned good results, they are not synthesized in long-term recommendations;
- The local actors and the direct beneficiaries, although involved in research, are not sufficiently found in the study authors' recommendations;
- The potential direct beneficiaries (Romanian and foreign tourists) are not found in the expressed viewpoints;
- There is the risk that the project will not be disseminated in an appropriate and efficient manner.

P3. Identifying how the means of carrying out the participatory action research led to these limits

In order to reach this purpose, a *PROPOSAL OF A REFLECTION GRILL ABOUT THE PARTICIPATIVE PROCESS IN ACTION-RESEARCH* was used.

Mean 1.a.1: *Compilation and analysis of existing documents and data (scientific and technical, political, legal, etc.) on the target problems.*

In the project SACPC-ZRR the documentation used to define the project of action-research was not sufficient (considering quantity and quality) to give a global initial vision of the target problems. Effectively, in Romania, projects dealing with cultural landscapes are of very recent date and collaboration with Europe in this field is very rare. The focus has been placed on legal documentation and less on scientific and technical.

The objective that mentions that the diversity of documentary sources will allow the main dimensions of the object of action-research to be considered was for the most part respected in *an integrated approach* of the territory. However, the documentation has not been jointly analyzed by all the project promoter team.

As we said above, the documentation did not benefit from a sufficiently developed scientific support.

Mean 1.a.2: *Account of existing bodies and actions linked to the general subject of the project. Drawing up of a map of territorial actors involved and of the logics of existing networks.*

A map of territorial actors was not drawn up at the start of the project, as it was not clear who should be involved and who should not, but later on, during its development. Only the contracting parts were involved in the project at first (CJ Alba and CCDT), as the idea of participation developed with the project.

Mean 1.b.1: *Organisation of work meetings with researchers and actors which can be potentially involved in the action-research at the beginning of the projects.*

The project promoter team has not made a wide dissemination of the project to promote the involvement of other actors and researchers that might be concerned in the project. Only the local authorities in the interest area of the project were contacted (Sebeş – Alba).

The final composition of the action-research team did not include residents of the area of research or the direct beneficiaries of the project: *the tourists*.

The main disciplines involved (history, environmental science, land improvement) were adequately represented, as an expert in population geography is lacking.

Mean 1.b.2: *Work themes definition with the collaboration of all the participants.*

The themes of work have been agreed by all participants involved, but the moments and indicators of evaluation during the project were not completely agreed by the researchers.

Mean 2.a.1: *Drawing up of a synthesis of documents and data (state of the art) accessible to all participants.*

A synthesis document containing the "state of the question" with regard to the problems being tackled has been elaborated at the origin of the project, this synthesis document has being accessible to all the participants, but it was further analyzed only by researchers who set out the main lines of research.

Mean 2.a.2 *Implication of several research teams of different disciplines or multidisciplinary research teams*

The final action-research team has formed by territorial actors involved in the different addressed topics and by researchers from different disciplines or with experience in multidisciplinary projects, but the mobilisation of the team as a whole only took place for a short amount of time, for certain actions foreseen in the project. Team coordination has not been provided by an expert in the basic thematic field of the project: territory improvements.

Mean 2.a.3 *Making up multidisciplinary diagnostics articulating quantitative and qualitative methods and considering the notion of "territory" from a global point of view (historic, geographic, economic, sociological dimension).*

The team of the project has employed only qualitative methods, which did not allow a direct measurement of different opinions and attitudes connected to the preservation of the area under

study. Partially, the local level of administration was neglected, which was only shortly part of the research team.

Mean 2.b.1 *Training and awareness-raising by researchers of territorial actors on research methods and tools.*

The project that we describe here did not contain the training of local actors; they were just *informed* on the methods used by researchers. Consequently, training sessions turned into information reunions and competence transfer was accidental.

Mean 2.b.2 *Training and awareness-raising by territorial actors of researchers on specific features of the project target territory and population.*

The researchers were aware of the main features of the territory as well as of its population, but the meetings favoured the dimension of preserving the cultural heritage, which sometimes contradicted the current needs of the population ready to sacrifice landscape in favour of daily life needs. The awareness-raising sessions for landscape preservation were not enough.

Mean 2.b.3 *Collaborative participation of researchers and territorial actors in the implementation and development of the investigation.*

The Internet was used as the only means of communication between participants, when they were far from one another.

Mean 3.a.1 *Creation of an evolving steering committee gathering the different active participants (researchers and actors). Organization of sub-group teams gathering researchers, involved institutions representatives and territorial actors according to the defined themes. Elaboration of a work programme that defines interim objectives and impacts on the territory.*

The project had a coordination committee but it did not involve representatives of all the actors. Although there was a work plan, meetings were not regular. The attention of the coordination committee was especially centred on financial aspects.

Mean 3.a.2 *Creation of an autonomous consultancy ethical council that guarantees a proper implementation of the project.*

An autonomous consultancy ethical council was not considered to be necessary. The gender issue was correctly approached by a balanced division of tasks in teams.

Mean 3.a.3 *Evolving hierarchy of data access according to the degree of responsibility of each participant.*

An evolving hierarchical data access system was established on the basis of the responsibilities of each participant, but the data access was limited by the coordination committee to the core of the project team (CJ Alba – CCDT).

Mean 3.b.1 *Observation of deontological principles of research in Human and Social Sciences (anonymity of surveyed individuals, observation of rules on statistical secrecy, transparency of the investigation objectives, and autonomy of territorial actors from the funding bodies).*

The project observed the anonymity of participants and the rules of statistical confidentiality. The project objectives were made public for the local actors. A complete autonomy from the funding entities was not however possible.

Mean 3.b.2 *Setting up of a chart, accepted by all participants, that lays down the deontological principles, the collaborative organization of the work to be performed, the degree of autonomy of researchers and actors within the project framework with respect to the institutions for which they work, and transparent use of the results.*

The Project did not set up a chart but it set out several mutually agreed principles.

Mean 4.a.1 *Implementation of a “Quality Plan”, with interim visible objectives to be achieved, allowing the regular measurement of the evolution and impact of the action-research.*

The project did not have a "Quality Plan" of the action-research process. The consequences and sanctions only regarded financial aspects.

Mean 4.a.2 *Communication at different stages of the action-research of interim reports to all participants and the concerned population.*

The work sub-groups presented interim reports but the coordination committee did not provide interim reports for all participants. The coordination committee closely monitored the financial aspects.

Mean 4.a.3 *Observation of the impact of the developed decision making toolkit on the decisions taken in the whole territory. Observation of the dynamics followed by the population to take ownership of the results.*

A project implementation programme was established, which will probably open the path towards a successful participatory action research.

Mean 4.b.1 *Implementation of a specific work group in charge of preparing the continuation of the action-research, both in terms of monitoring the developed actions and in terms of developing new action-research projects, on the basis of the work dynamic established within the work sub-groups.*

A work team formed of researchers and representatives of CJ Alba was set out to continue the project in other areas of the county. There is no database for the need of projects for medium and long term in the studied territory.

P4. Identifying possibilities and limits of the *Quality Letter*.

The analysis of the project SACPC-ZRR from the perspective of the *Quality Letter* highlighted some of its strong points:

1) The *Quality Letter* allows at first a classification of research projects into fundamental research projects and action research projects, depending on the extent to which the Letter's principles are observed. A certain explanation is possible here: the projects can be of pure research and to different degrees; they can be projects of action research up to the *model action research* described in the *Quality Letter*;

2) The *Quality Letter* can outline the main dimensions of the *design* of a project, which allows the funding bodies to classify the projects listed in an open tender and to choose the best;

3) The *Quality Letter* is also useful in *the final evaluation* of a research project based on the partnership researchers-local actors;

Concerning the limits of the *Quality Letter*, the participants in the discussion organized by CCDT noted the absence of references to the high costs that applying its norms in real projects involves, costs that, from a financial point of view and from the point of view of the operation time, can make projects difficult to put forward and be accepted by funding bodies, which are often oriented towards low costs and finding solutions to specific problems.

E. Conclusions

The analysis of the *Quality Letter* by the CCDT team and its partners, through the reference to a recently carried out project, allowed CCDT and its partners to re-evaluate their activity and make improvements.

The Quality Letter itself can be seen as a document which can be improved and disseminated in multiple European level partnerships.

Another outcome of the talks was the need to carry out a more thorough theoretical grounding of each provision of the *Quality Letter*.