

## ARES INNOVA and RURAL LAB

### Results report

#### SCENARIO

Two forces converge in Montefaro en the Ferrolterra area that define the contemporary and responsible trajectory towards the future: **the need for social justice and environmental regeneration.** The territory exemplifies the way in which economic dynamics irremediably determine the nature of a social system, dispossessing it of a narrative for the future, while the natural environment is presented in a state of unstable equilibrium under the ever-present threat of an equally irremediable decay due to the mandates of orthodox development models.

Sustainability is an insufficient word to respond to this vulnerable instability. The creation of a social and environmental context resilient to tomorrow is not a matter of conservation, but of **active revitalisation**, of **regenerating** the sources of life, of making energy flow through the key network of the **landscape**.

#### CO-CREATION

The word landscape came up recurrently. Inspired by the conversation with Pedro Couzado, a veteran environmentalist who collaborates with Asociación Betula, the participants in the co-creation processes became aware that, over and above functionality for the transformation of the environment, be they economic, institutional or survival, and even over and above an ethical reason that obliges us all to a commitment, there is a purer and more primordial **aesthetic reason**: the contemplation of the landscape as the sublime impulse that leads to action. An action that starts from the recognition of the inherent **dignity** of the human and natural landscape as the ultimate reason for an **activism based on care and meditated conversation with the environment**. Action that is carried out from the calm gaze that comes from the experience of those who have learned to listen to the murmur of the trees, the tides and the paths, a gaze that turns **the landscape into a subject endowed with the inalienable right to dignity, justice and life**.

For all these reasons, the landscape was proposed as the protagonist of their work and results. Thus, from this intention, they began a **process of dialogue between the landscape and the future**, initiating a conversation based on respect, in which they learn together to **co-create the conditions** from which the **opportunities for life** that the landscape deserves will emerge.

## A Manifesto for a Laboratory.

From this reflection on landscape, the co-creation participants elaborated a manifesto that makes explicit the intention of their collaborative exercise. The Manifesto was synthesised in the naming of the initiative as "**Laboratorio da Paisaxe Futura**". "Laboratory" because it is intended to create an environment of experimentation, where the components available to the territory come into play: history, identity, resources, institutions, to combine in innovative ways. "**Paisaxe**" because the subject is the well-being of the whole social and natural system, beautiful and intimately interrelated. And "**Futuro**" because it is a lighthouse, because it aims to tell a good story about new, dignified, just, prosperous and regenerative ways of understanding, being and being in the world.

The resulting Manifesto - with the participation of numerous citizens, local institutions and associations, accompanied by experts - which should lead us to action, reads as follows:

### *We are the Landscape Laboratory.*

*We are an initiative that seeks to activate a participatory process that helps us to imagine our own future and promote transformative actions in the area of the Ares estuary. We work to turn our environment into a reference of ways to revitalise all aspects of reality and the present and future well-being of our social, cultural, economic and ecological landscape. From the recognition of the value of our people, our identity, our resources, our history, our knowledge and the potential of our territory, our purpose is to help create an awareness of pride, dignity and care, to provide the tools, and to develop the spaces where people, organisations and communities can take on the collective construction of a new landscape for the future worthy of being lived.*

## Shaping the Landscape

In parallel, a set of **principles, a model and a process** were developed to guide and give meaning to the participatory exercises to identify the impact actions that would emerge.

This process of citizen innovation began with the **activation of the Manifesto**, which led to a question: How to generate participatory processes that inject energy for the future into the territory and mobilise the possibility of building a new future landscape worthy of being lived?

The first activity consists of learning how to inject this "**energy of the future**" by **identifying our own capacities** to generate change (culture, technology, investment,

knowledge, people, institutions, etc.) and **integrating processes that strengthen these capacities** thanks to the dialogues, reflections, collaborations and participatory co-creation methodologies that we will activate over time. An energy that must be strong enough to overcome the lack of confidence and immobilising self-esteem, the apparent lack of capacities to lead the transformation and the fragmentation of institutional initiatives.

An energy that we must put into action by responding to the following **principles** or basic needs:

- **Enhancing the value** of the social and environmental landscape of the Ares/Montefaro area.
- **Generating awareness** of transformation.
- **Empowering people and resources** to become agents of change.

The principle that summarises the above is the need to **create an emancipated community capable of shaping its own future**.

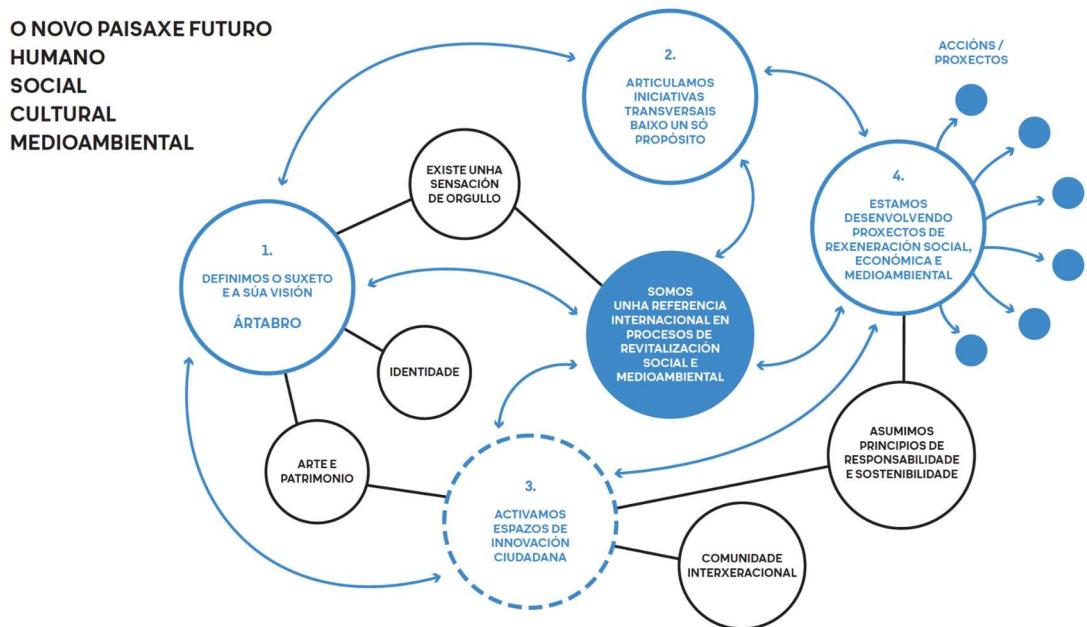
But, above all, these principles aim to **restore our capacity to imagine**. The exercise of visualizing the future landscape is an essential element in defining impact strategies. Therefore, in their exercises, they seek the capacity to generate collective visions of desired futures, which can serve as a lighthouse to guide actions. The shape of this human, social, natural, natural, economic and cultural landscape that emerges from the conversations held is that of a **sustainable, resilient, diverse, proud, participatory and iconic landscape that seeks to become a reference at home and abroad**.



## In search of a story of tomorrow.

In summary, the central idea of the Laboratorio da Paisaxe Futura is **to bring forth a new inspiring and mobilising narrative that generates impact**.

A story that begins with the **definition of this subject/landscape** and its own proud vision of itself in the future. A vision that is **capable of articulating initiatives and mobilising agents of change under a common purpose**, in order to set in motion **transversal actions of impact**, facilitated by **spaces that make transversal and intergenerational collaboration possible**. This collaboration is the driving force behind innovative projects and actions that make regeneration a **continuous and organic process**, integrated into the way of being of an environment that has internalised principles of **responsibility and sustainability**. All this with the ultimate goal of becoming an **international reference in ways of revitalising social and natural environments**.



## Persistence.

All this is intended to lay the conceptual bases on which to build the model of impact and transformation of the Montefaro and Ares environment. The solutions must emerge from the activation over time of these dynamics **in a persistent, consistent manner and from the real and disinterested collaboration between all parties**. Without this focus and will for permanence, inaction will lead to disillusion. That is why the main function of our initiative is to **keep alive the inspiring image of a**

**desirable future, and to shape this collective landscape endowed with a life of its own.** For as Fred Pollack wrote: "As long as the image of a society is positive and flourishing, the flower of culture is in full bloom. However, once the image begins to decay and lose its vitality, culture does not survive long".

Finally, and as an **example** of activation, an idea emerged that draws on the principles shown above and serves as an example of intervention in the environment in search of the regeneration and emancipation of this future landscape. This is a purely **speculative** idea, which arose in the midst of the discussions and the workshops and which helps us to give shape to the principle of emancipation based on the enhancement of existing resources, the generation of awareness and the empowerment of the key actors: the **battery**.

To be in Montefaro is to be in a privileged position that offers perspectives and broad horizons. The **old military surveillance and anti-aircraft defence batteries** remind us that this is a strategic place and that, although metaphorically, this position should still allow us to continue to anticipate risks, to protect ourselves and to provide us with visions of the future. But the batteries are also an **architecturally fascinating space**, integrated into the natural context for reasons of camouflage, anticipating biophilic, symbiotic and regenerative construction trends, establishing **a formally balanced dialogue** with the environment. It is therefore **an iconic and differential space** that can be used as an element that symbolises the intention of dialogue with the environment of this initiative. So taking advantage of this unique peculiarity of Montefaro allows us to continue to re-signify the function of the batteries in order to explore a little more of their meaning and potential. If the objective is to inject life energy, the "battery" can be, based on its polysemy, a source of energy. This idea ties in with one of the key initiatives of this project: the energy emancipation of the area through the generation of heat for heating using biomass from the clearing of the forest. This is **a perfect example of a regenerative circular economy**, capable of creating a virtuous cycle of service and self-managed environmental care, a cycle that is given even greater symbolic meaning by using the abandoned space of one of the batteries to house the biomass micro-power plant.

With the battery now transformed into the energetic and regenerative heart of the area, this exercise of resignification could be further enhanced by intervening the architectural environment in an artistic way, so that it becomes an iconic place that symbolises our collective purpose. To this end, the design of the space and micro-central should be done through the collaboration of artists, activists, engineers and architects, who turn the batteries into a social space and a source of attention, awareness and transformative energy. This intervention must take into account the abandoned network of paths that connect the batteries with the Monastery, a place that would in turn serve as a venue for the Laboratory's own cultural, scientific and activist activities and events.

