

**Table 2** Perceptual differences in the two types of destinations

Tourist destination	Pristine destination
The more educated reveal greater awareness	The less educated reveal greater awareness
Less-than-30 age group is more aware	More-than-50 age group is more aware
Major threat to the ecosystem is perceived to be from tourism	No major threat to ecosystem is perceived

partly explain the different results obtained for education and age for the two types of destinations. This activism has attracted the attention of the youth and the educated in the tourist destination, who may otherwise have been more distanced from the ecosystems relative to those in the pristine areas. This suggests that support of environmental activism can be

an important catalyst in generating awareness and concern for coastal ecosystems.

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# Reporting on new research: the spatial impacts of European Union rural environment policies

*Nelson Lourenco,\* Maria do Rosário Jorge,\*\*  
Carlos Russo Machado,\*\* Luís Rodrigues\*\**

**P**olicies can be important drivers of change with a strong ability to structure the social and the economic organization. Given this, the authors have embarked on a research study to examine the significance of the European Union agricultural, rural, regional, and environmental policies on land-use change.<sup>1</sup>

However, policy impacts vary according to the regional contexts, which means that the same policy can have different effects on development and on the capability to create conditions for regional sustainable development, depending on the socio-economic and biophysical conditions.

An understanding of policy impacts pre-supposes an analysis of the regional context and involves local analysis in order to explain the behaviour of social groups. In fact, the analysis of the processes of rural development and their articulation with external

driving forces, such as policies, is only possible by considering regional and local dynamics.

The research on the significance of policies will be based on a cross-disciplinary approach integrating both socio-economic and biophysical dimensions. The methodology will be developed to understand the problem progressively at various levels – national, regional, and local – using different techniques according to the specific characteristics of the aspects that are the object of analysis.

One of the main challenges in the elaboration of the methodology, conceived as a tool to monitor and assess the changes, is to integrate the information from different sources and of different types and different scales into a model. The team's skills and experience will be helpful to achieve this objective. A frame that will integrate both socio-economic and biophysical dimensions will be developed to study the impact assessment of policies in rural areas, which will contribute to support the decision-making process.

\*Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal; \*\*Universidade Atlântica, Lisbon, Portugal

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