

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

# RECOVERY OF INDUSTRIAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE AS A RESOURCE FOR DEVELOPING TOURISM IN THE CASTILLE CANAL MUNICIPALITIES

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## INTRODUCTION

It was during the reign of King Fernando VI that the Marquis de la Ensenada came up with the idea of the Castille Canal (Canal de Castilla in Spanish), which took almost 100 years to build. Construction work began in 1753 and finished in 1849 under the reign of Queen Isabel II, thanks to private initiative. Enlightened bourgeoisie agreed to sponsor the completion of this great work after almost one hundred years in exchange for a licence to operate it. It runs for 207 kilometres through 38 municipalities, mainly in the provinces of Palencia and Valladolid, but also in Burgos. It is an inverted “Y” shaped and is divided into three branches: the Northern branch, the Southern branch and the Campos branch.

Originally, in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the Castille Canal was built to better connect Castille with the port of Santander. Nowadays, this infrastructure is being used to improve rural tourism in economically and population deprived inland areas, which is why local agents regard it as a strategic cultural and industrial heritage asset that can breathe new life into the regions adjoining its banks. Although it was initially a major industrial flour-producing area, flour production gradually declined until 1959, when most of the industries located on its banks closed and the dams and sluice gates were dismantled.

While irrigation was a minority use during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, nowadays the main use is to supply drinking water to the towns of Valladolid, Palencia and Medina de Rioseco. The canal also supplies irrigation water to more than 21,000 hectares of crops. Culturally, the canal is a genuine example of nineteenth-century civil engineering and, in terms of tourism, it has prompted the emergence of rural tourism, which is undoubtedly linked to the perception of quality that city dwellers have of natural spaces, especially if they are protected areas.

## I. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The prime objective of this article is to compile, look for and systematise the different amounts invested by different (mainly public) bodies for the rehabilitation, conservation and maintenance of the Castilla Canal's assets, with a view to analysing the value of the industrial heritage along its banks and its environmental surroundings. The secondary objective is to assess whether the Castilla Canal can be used to breathe new life into the economy of the surrounding areas; and whether this would bring new tourist initiatives, and so offer a much broader range of tourist products and services. The official documentation and lists available on the websites of different government bodies has been consulted to analyse the courses of action launched in each municipality through the European Rural Development Funds, as well as other schemes financed by other public or private bodies. This information has been used to draw up tables showing the amount invested in each town or city, who paid it, the year the action took place and in what the amount was actually invested. In addition to overall investment, the tables have facilitated an analysis of the specific actions in the Castilla Canal municipalities.

ArcGis software (ArcMap) version 10.2 has been used to produce the cartography required to better visualise the information presented in this article. The software generated choropleth maps for representing zonal phenomena with absolute or relative values, and the intervals have been defined manually to better show the similarities/differences between the municipalities in the study area. The colour palettes in the maps help to identify the contrasts and similarities between them. The tables were generated with Excel spreadsheets.

## II. RESULTS

Assessing existing heritage in rural areas is one of the means of socio-economic development for such areas. Indeed, cataloguing a region as an area of ecological value or an asset of cultural interest can prompt initiatives designed to diversify the economy, through activities that complement agriculture. They can also serve to promote female and youth employment in rural areas, a process that the EU is encouraging as a mechanism for retaining population locally and avoiding internal and rural depopulation.

Many of the actions are oriented towards recovering environmental and industrial heritage recovery. In the particular case of the Castilla Canal, aid has been allocated to recovering the infrastructure by repairing siphons, bridges or docks; the adjoining areas, such as the towpaths, which are an important green communication route, where environmental quality and quality for rolling out leisure activities prevail; and the recovery of certain industrial buildings, such as the flour mills which, together with the textile industry and the fulling mills, were the features that most defined the industrial landscape of the Castilla Canal.

Recovering the infrastructure and some of its industrial buildings has served to enhance its tourist value due to its appeal as industrial heritage and as an explanatory model of an industrial archetype directly linked to farming. Its value as industrial heri-

tage combines with its rustic value, and certain natural spaces have been included in the Natura 2000 Network catalogue. The spaces that are also catalogued as being of natural or cultural interest are an essential component of tourist attraction, and positively impact the development of economic activities linked to rural tourism.

The Castille Canal holds value as a reference point for nineteenth-century industrial heritage, one of its outstanding features being the flour mills. The value of the industrial assets as tourist assets was enhanced in 1991, when the canal was declared an Asset of Cultural Interest under the Historic Site category, and action was taken to recover and improve it. The body responsible for any action taken in this area is the Duero Hydrographic Confederation (hereinafter, DHC, *Confederación Hidrográfica del Duero* in Spanish). The DHC is in charge of all the canal's constructions, their maintenance and authorising any action involving the infrastructure or its banks. Therefore, the conservation of all the cultural and natural assets found on the banks of the canal also depends on the DHC. Any historical heritage-related issues are the responsibility of the pertinent national, regional or local administration.

Over the years, several public and private rehabilitation projects have been carried out on the cultural, industrial and natural heritage of the Castille Canal's riverside municipalities, along with publicity and tourist promotion projects. These include the Arquimilenios and Arquimilenios II Programmes that ran from 2004 to 2008, with an investment of more than €50 million. This resulted in more than 99 actions throughout the region, although they focused on the Camino de Santiago, the Castille Canal and the Vía de la Plata (Silver Route). AS total of 40 projects were completed in Palencia, which is where most of the canal runs through, and the investment exceeded €19 million.

Several schemes, subsidized by different bodies, have been launched to rehabilitate the cultural and industrial assets of the Castille Canal. A total of €20,904,813.63 has been invested since the year 2000, although €14,553,712.09 worth of municipal cultural and artistic asset recovery and rehabilitation works have also been undertaken. In addition, €4,744,703 has been invested in wetlands such as the Laguna de Fuentes de Nava or SPAs and SCIs adjoining the canal. Altogether, a total investment of approximately €40,203,228.72, without including the DHC'S actions. Some of the infrastructures have been rehabilitated for use as tourism accommodation and facilities and for cultural services and activities, but initiatives have also been launched to house archives and exhibition halls.

Environmental schemes include those promoted by the EU, through ERDF funds, such as the protection and improvement of certain Natura 2000 Network sites, especially those related to birds, and those promoted by the Duero Hydrographic Confederation.

In 2006, the Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade, the Department of Culture and Tourism of the Castille-León Region, the Provincial Council of Burgos, the Provincial Council of Palencia and the Provincial Council of Valladolid signed a collaboration agreement to promote a Tourism Excellence Plan for the canal. A Canal Tourist Management Consortium was also founded with the main remit of diversifying the range of tourist activities and services on offer. The plan was allocated an initial budget of €4.2 million, mainly for recovering infrastructures, promoting tourism and local entrepreneurship, as well as improving electronic communications.

### III. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Rural development policies have contributed to the recovery and maintenance of Castilla-León's heritage. A significant part of the churches, castles, palaces, monasteries, etc., have survived thanks to rehabilitation funding from different bodies, which has also served to maintain the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century hydraulic works. Nowadays, the canal is an essential attraction for anyone interested in rural tourism. Yet is tourism a key resource for developing a territory? Has tourism managed to settle a population that in the villages lives all year round? Does tourist activity contribute to economically diversify a territory? There are many questions that we ask ourselves when we research tourism in predominantly rural environments, as concern about how to maintain these rural spaces is at stake, and the answers have been both positive and negative.

Over the last three decades, various programmes such as LEADER, PRODER and FEADER have been implemented to promote rural development, along with other initiatives aimed at maintaining the industrial, cultural, historical and artistic heritage, with significant investments that have not had the expected results. The Castilla Canal alone, despite being a national benchmark for industrial heritage, is not enough to boost the economy of an agrarian region and prevent the population exodus by attracting young people so that the area does not fall into abandonment. Moreover, the Castilla Canal's tourist appeal as a hydraulic infrastructure is very limited if tourists can only pass through it, and it cannot retain them by offering other activities. Therefore, tourism is unlikely to become a factor of local development in certain municipalities where, for the most part, the population has declined over the last few decades and is doing so at a faster pace as the years go by.