

GEOINVOLVE PROJECT:

an example of community participation in Arouca Geopark (Portugal)

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INTRODUCTION

The GeoInvolve Project is being developed in the Arouca Geopark by the Local Contract for Social Development (CLDS) – AroucaInclui - ADRIMAG (Local Action Group) in partnership with AGA – Arouca Geopark Association and the Municipal Museum/ Arouca Municipality.

The Global Arouca Geopark (Portugal) has the same area of Arouca Municipality (328 km²). It is constituted by 20 parishes and preserves 41 geosites (Rocha, 2008; Sá et al., 2009) together with a very rich cultural heritage. This project brings together two important heritage resources this territory: the “maize bread rocks” geosite and the homemade maize bread, intrinsically related by the similarity of this geosite shape with the maize bread crust. The “maize bread rocks” geosite is located in a residual granitic landform of Freita Mountain. There are two granitic boulders presenting polygonal weathering, which remember the crust of traditional maize bread. This is nowadays one of the most important touristic spots of this territory. The production of traditional maize bread is an ancient and hard tradition that has been forgotten by the youngest generations.

The main aims of the GeoInvolve Project are to promote good practices concerning to the production of maize bread, to strengthen the inter-generational transmission of traditional knowledge; to recognize geosites as local resources, especially the “maize bread rocks” geosite; to understand the Geopark concept and to contribute to the strengthening of Arouca Geopark as a geotourism destination. The community involvement is also very important.

GEOINVOLVE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

•LECTURES

The GeoInvolve Project started with six lectures raising the community's awareness, which covered 12 parishes from Arouca. The rural parishes of the Arouca Municipality were selected because it would be easier to find a great number of people that still produce traditional maize bread at the present time. These lectures were attended by approximately 120 people, mostly women. Several participants shared their contacts for future activities.

•FEIRA DAS COLHEITAS (*Harvest Fair*)

After the invitation of the Arouca Municipality, the GeoInvolve project was integrated in the *Feira das Colheitas (Harvest Fair)* since the 2010 edition, the largest annual event organized in the Arouca Geopark, through workshops, a contest and a point of sale of maize bread. The three promoted workshops of homemade maize bread, had as main purpose the transmission of knowledge between generations (Figure 1, a; b). The "The Best Homemade Maize Bread 2010" contest seeks to encourage the production of homemade maize bread quality (Figure 1, c). The point of sale aimed to raise awareness among producers of traditional maize bread about the great potential of this product, which was much sought by visitors. This initiative promoted the community sustainable development, generating supplementary income for them (Figure 1, d).



[Figure 1] – *Feira das Colheitas'* activities. a: Children workshop on homemade maize bread; b: Children workshop on homemade maize bread; c: "The Best Homemade Maize Bread 2010" Contest; d: point of sale of traditional Maize Bread.

•MILLS VISIT

The International Day of Monuments and Sites, held on 18th of April 2010, was celebrated throughout the activity “There’s maize bread at the Museum”. During the day there was a walking trail - "The Path of the Mills" (Figure 2; a), a free visit to the Arouca Municipal Museum, which has a collection related to the cultivation of maize and rye and the production and taste of homemade maize bread in the outdoor space of the Museum with the entertainment of a local folk group "As Lavradeiras de Canelas.”

On 20th August 2010 was promoted the activity “Culture and Geology in Arouca Geopark: maize bread and maize bread rocks” under the Live Science in the Summer - national program sponsored by the Portuguese Ministry of Science. Was promoted a walking trail from the Municipal Museum to Figueiredo's mills where the participants had the opportunity to taste regional products: the traditional maize bread and honey from Arouca. There was also a guided visit to the Museum and to the Maize Bread Rocks geosite in Freita Mountain, where they could observe the similarity of this geosite with maize bread crust (Figure 2; b).



[Figure 2] – Arouca Geopark visits. a: Mill visit; b: Maize bread rocks geosite visit.

•SHOW COOKING: HOMEMADE MAIZE BREAD

According to an intergenerational philosophy, it was promoted 3 activities where the participants had the opportunity to learn about the production of homemade maize bread. This show cookings were enriched with a scientific explanation of the maize bread rocks geosite:

- Celebration of the Epiphany - 7th January 2011;
- Social Arouca Fair - organized by the Rede Social (Social Partnership) from 18th to 19th June 2011;
- Show Cooking to Arouca Senior Academy (ASARC) students - 28th June 2011.

CONCLUSIONS

The GeoInvolve Project is being a very important opportunity to involve local communities with the Arouca Geopark and to promote the knowledge about the geosites, especially the *maize bread rocks* geosite, at the same time that the traditional production of maize bread is being recovered.

During the several promoted activities, films and photos were made with the aim of a book production about the traditional practices. The main challenge of this project was the creation of a women cooperative engaged in the production of homemade maize bread. It will be an important geotouristic product of Arouca Geopark and a contribution for its sustainable development.

Acknowledgments

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References

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