



Escape2

ALDEIAS DO XISTO

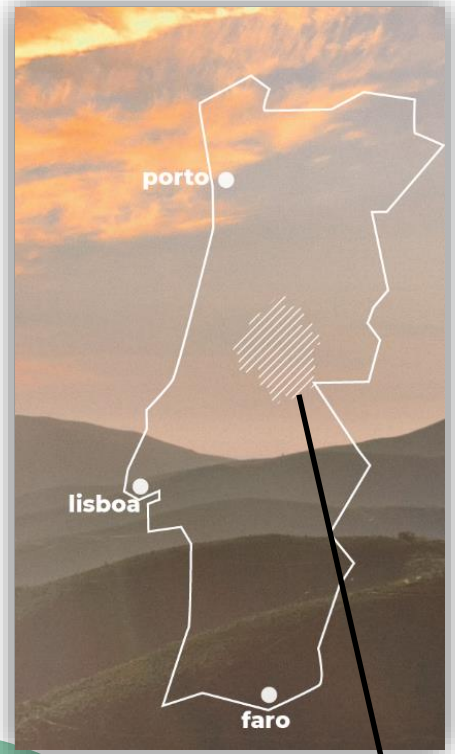
Country

Portugal

Example of **CONNECTING TO COLLABORATIONS & COMMUNITIES**

Website

[Homepage | Aldeias do Xisto](#)



ABOUT PORTUGAL'S COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS

In Portugal, there are networks that link collaborations and communities, in which the potential of co-working is highlighted, with new methodologies of creative collaboration, in which tourism agents, public entities and local communities come together. All these agents, together and in a complementary way, develop actions to structure products and promote the territory. Each network works on the challenges that best serve the needs of the respective territory, and the great advantage is that they are closer to the places and people. The Portuguese example of the network called Aldeias de Xisto corresponds to an area of 5,000 km², composed of 27 villages, contained in 4 territorial units predominantly of schist, [4 classified areas](#) and [1 dark sky certification](#).

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Called schist, because this is the stone used in the construction of the houses and the most abundant in the region. The various shades of this rock, also used in the paving of narrow, winding streets, blend perfectly into the colours of the natural landscape, and are not always easy to distinguish. But it is worth trying.

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HOW IS YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE INNOVATIVE? WHAT GAP IN THE MARKETPLACE DOES IT FILL?



The Schist Villages are an innovative product of sustainable tourism in the Central Region of Portugal, as well as a Tourism Network, because it brings together or unifies the will of public and private agents of a region, which are reflected in the shared management of a brand, guided by the same principles of social responsibility. In Schist Villages, schist stone predominates, which is its unique differentiating and innovative, using a material of local origin in line with the principles of "sustainable construction". The proposed requalification and use of heritage for new tourist segments has filled a gap in the market: the mobilisation of communities in the valorisation of their material and immaterial heritage, in their endogenous resources, has allowed the creation of wealth, of jobs, the mitigation of human desertification in these rural regions, social and economic development, and the preservation of culture and heritage. At the end of the twentieth century, the four Territorial Units where the Schist Villages are located suffered the negative consequences of rural abandonment, which negatively affected the state of conservation of the architectural heritage and the dynamics of the socio-economic fabric. The brand Aldeias do Xisto has allowed the area of the Central Region to lose the stigma of human desertification, the inertia of the private sector and the lack of regional identity. (Alves, 2014) New forms of investment, whether in real estate, services or modern, organic agriculture or specialised in endogenous products, are emerging and promoting the settlement of people, projects and investments. The spirit of partnership is the key to the success of this strategy, favouring the articulation between all the economic agents involved, in a perspective of active participation in the development process. (Batista, 2016)

WHERE DID YOU SOURCE THE MAIN SUPPORT AND RESOURCES



Portugal benefited from European structural funds for the development of programmes that allowed the recovery of several villages in the interior of the country that had a weakened economy. One of these programmes was the PAX (Programme of Schist Villages). The PAX promotes local products, the tourist entertainment of the villages and the qualification of its inhabitants and economic agents through professional training, with the aim of improving the living conditions of the resident populations, creating jobs, and making the Schist Villages as heritage with tourism potential through these community funds of this Program. The PAX's main lines of action focus on four different but interdependent aspects: Social, Heritage, Tourism and Communication/Marketing (Batista, 2016).



HOW SUCCESSFUL HAS IT BEEN?

The secret of the Schist Villages brand lies in its network, in the strong partnership with public and private partners. This project, led by ADXTUR - Agency for the Development of Tourism in Schist Villages - which is a platform for regional public-private cooperation, supra-municipal, to mobilize populations, gather the will and support investment for the development of a territory, which must be preserved and promoted, challenging Portugal to think its future also from the villages, has been successful thanks to its solid network of cooperation. The convergence of the brand and its partners (municipalities, accommodation, catering and tourist entertainment companies, craftsmen, micro-producers, traders and other agents, from associations to parish councils and individuals) is the result of close collaboration between public and private agents, which allows a new tourism product in the centre of the country, and which has boosted the economic and social fabric, as is the case of Bookinxisto, a multi-services platform that brings together the entire offer of the brand, contributing to the tourism success of the region. (Batista, 2016)

The brand "Aldeias do Xisto" has the products identified by a representative seal of the brand that "attests" the quality of the products of the Aldeias do Xisto, in a promising initiative, where these products are promoted and marketed. (Alves, 2014)



WAS SUCCESS A RESULT OF CONNECTING TO COLLABORATION?

The economic valorisation of endogenous resources and the permanence of culture encouraged a collaborative approach between the various economic and social development actors in the territory.

As a result of this link to collaboration, or this network strategy, a mobilisation of investment takes place to boost the economy and generate employment, giving added value to the region, which allows conditions to be created to attract and maintain the region's population. The success translates into an increase in tourist attraction and the number of stays, the strengthening of the regional identity through its endogenous resources and its differentiation in the national and international tourism market.

This connection to collaboration becomes a success when sustained by regional, national and international partnerships in the political, economic, scientific, technical and cultural fields. (Alves, 2014)

The sustainable development of these territories is the result of the tourism factor that makes all other sectors develop as a function of tourism, in a relationship of various interdependencies. Thus, it is essential to encourage the collaboration and participation of populations, actors and local authorities in the implementation of sustainable programmes that ensure a real link between social, economic and tourism aspects, so that they continue to give success, consisting of municipalities, accommodation, restaurants and tourist entertainment companies, artisans, micro-producers and shopkeepers, and other agents, from associations to parish councils and individuals. (Batista, 2016)

