

Evaluation Panel: SOCIAL SCIENCES - Sociology, Anthropology, Demography e Geography

R&D Unit: Centro de Estudos Transdisciplinares para o Desenvolvimento (CETRAD)

Coordinator: Timothy Leonard Koehnen

Integrated PhD Researchers: 45

Overall Quality Grade: GOOD

Evaluation Criteria Ratings

- (A) Quality, merit, relevance and internationalization of the
R&D activities of the Integrated Researchers in the R&D Unit Application: 3
- (B) Merit of the team of Integrated Researchers: 3
- (C) Appropriateness of objectives, strategy, plan of activities and organization: 2

Base Funding for (2020-2023): 546 K€

Recommended Programmatic Support

PhD Fellowships: 3

Programmatic Funding: 153 K€.

Justification, Comments and Recommendations

The Centre contributions aim to integrate an international publication strategy with knowledge transfer to its field of research. This combination of social research with the application of analytically enriched knowledge to the local field of rural practices has the potential to generate a distinctive achievement. However, while the obtained results, related to practices of wine production, social effect of tourism, sustainable local entrepreneurship, HIV/AIDS infection, and local forest management, demonstrate that the Centre is strongly embedded in a regional society, the research work of the Centre as a whole is not oriented to international standards of scientific knowledge production and interdisciplinary cooperation.

All three research groups (focusing, in short, on tourism, innovation, and society) are involved in the research work resulting in the main contributions of the Centre. The research strategy of the Centre is fully oriented to themes relevant to the practical perspective of applied research responding to the interests of local stakeholders representing local business and municipalities. It would be beneficial to develop institutional settings to promote methodological diversity as well as a theoretical discussion, which would enable further reflections promoting the internationalisation of the Centre's research strategy. It would be similarly helpful to develop a way to balance the diverse interests of local stakeholders and their influence on the research agenda of the Centre.

The Centre was able to respond to specific problems of public interest both in respect to issues related to local economic development (the competitiveness of local wine industry, local entrepreneurship, and the management of local forests) as well as to wider social challenges (the HIV/AIDS infection and social effects of tourism). Nonetheless, policy recommendation and the application of research findings related to these research themes could be more guided by social and environmental sensitivity. That is, research themes and their theoretical and methodological framing in an international perspective could take more into consideration the social and ecological responsibility of institutions involved in local economic development as well as local governance. Thus a buildout of research strategy with an international perspective with full of potential could be identified in the combination of recently applied research themes with a reflection on the environmental sustainability and social responsibility of related social actors which could also inform the collaboration between the Centre and various local stakeholders.

The institutional performance of the Centre is primarily oriented to a knowledge transfer to its local stakeholders, it takes aim also at internationalisation. This is evident in its involvement in research projects based on international cooperation, in its effort to promote publication in internationally prestigious academic journals, and the involvement of its key researchers in the structures of international academic life. Unfortunately, there are institutional limits to achieve further advancement of internationalisation both of the research perspective and collaborative practices of the Centre through participation in high-quality international research projects. These limits can be found first, in the form of cooperation between the Centre and the University it belongs to, second in the mode of integration of researchers into the Centre. Increasing internationalisation would require a qualitative change in the Centre research project organisational capabilities, primarily in the application procedures and project management, which cannot be achieved without the strong institutional support from the University. Besides dealing with institutional procedures, the

systematic support of the international publication-related activities would be required, that would, for instance, be able to deal with issues related to open access publication, including training, translation as well as article processing charges.

While the deep personal motivation of researchers is forming a valuable asset of the research strategy it cannot serve as the only ground for further internationalisation of the research performance without initiating organisational changes related to the division between teaching and research. The institutionalised possibility of circulation between teaching duties and research positions, including the alternatives of full time and part-time researchers, would make the engagement of researchers in the field of internationalised research more viable.

It seems to be crucial to face the challenge to attract a critical mass of new PhD students who could be integrated into new research projects developed along the thematic lines outlined in the strategic plan of the Centre. Perhaps the possibilities of the Centre are influenced by the misfit between the organisation of the academic year and the funding opportunities provided by various institutions, nevertheless, there are signs of systematic dealing with this challenge on the side of the Centre or the University. The integrative function of research groups consist of collaboration between senior, junior and PhD researchers which plays an important role in motivating researchers, nevertheless the management of human capacities is not organised on the level of research groups. The planned change to replace research-group coordinators with local stakeholders and Ph.D. program directors in the governing body of the Centre manifest this secondary role of research groups in the strategic plans of the Centre. Thus, to build up an effective social environment for future PhD students also would require to provide these researchers with established modes of interdisciplinary research cooperation, to share knowledge as well as get feedback from her colleagues while broadening the disciplinary perspectives with broader social science methodologies and theoretical models. What more in recent working conditions various obligations and duties disallow Ph.D. students to concentrate on their doctoral research and dissertation.

As a final point, it should be stressed that the internationalisation path needs to be strengthened and expanded in the Centre. A more elaborate, theoretically-anchored and policy-informed research agenda should be developed so that the Centre will be better prepared for more competitive research projects and networking actions.