



Couso´s project



Summary

O Couso is an integrated and open community where everyone operates according to the principle of ‘*Leave what you can; take what you need*’. The self-sufficient ecovillage has many permanent residents and hosts pilgrims doing the Camino de Santiago. They have adopted the principles of permaculture and managed to become self-sufficient energetically, reducing the workday and transforming work into a communal and shared activity. At the same time, they have started to operate as a ‘gift economy’.

Why is it a case of energy citizenship?

It is an energy citizenship case as the community pursues the goal of maintaining energy self-sufficiency, providing a refuge for ecological travellers and residents. The people who live in O Couso aim to promote the pedagogy that another world is possible – another way of doing things, consuming, based on ecology, alternative energies and in dialogue with nature.



HOLISTIC



COLLECTIVE



RURAL



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101022492.

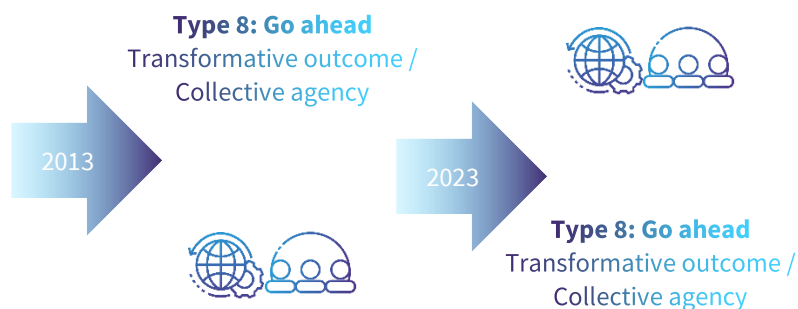
Goals



1. Rehabilitating the village of O Couso to turn it into a house of welcome for pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago according to the paradigm of the Gift (*"Leave what you can; take what you need"*);
2. Creating a school of experience concerning the values of the New Ethical Culture, an 'international school of gifts and talents' where these values can be put into practice and serve as inspiration to the world;
3. Creating an integral and open community where people who feel inspired by these values (the gift economy and generosity) can live a complete life in a privileged place and environment;
4. Becoming self-sufficient in terms of energy and drinking water.

The story and the typology

The project is based on the principles of voluntary simplicity and austerity and argues that the current system and lifestyles are not sustainable. Hence, a paradigm shift with new values is necessary – the New Ethical Culture, intended to be taught through the 'international school of gifts and talents' and designed to create an open community inspired by the values of the gift economy and generosity.



Case history summary

For the summary methodology, click [HERE!](#)










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Phase 1: From the creation of the case in 2013 until 2023

Since its creation, there have been no changes in the type of collective agency that characterises O Couso. Over the years, however, there have been several changes related to the goals of the case. Some have to do with the adaptation to a new way of life in connection with nature and the lack of the means and tools of urban life. Others are related to improving the energy system and scaling up growth in the use of photovoltaic panels, which have been an essential element. In this sense, a large part of the control over consumption has been lost due to the lack of technological instruments that would

allow the community to learn about means of production and consumption within the community.

	Individual			Collective	
					
 Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	7. Do their share	9. Do the job
 Transformative	2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way (within organizations)	6. Make their vote count	8. Go ahead	10. Make their claims

Main type: Go ahead



Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

Phase 2: Current state and future, 2023 -

The creation of the shelter for pilgrims has been achieved, but the project members are currently undergoing a period of reflection as its implementation entailed great effort that members consider cannot be sustained over time. If this is not reconsidered, it could affect the survival of the community. The natural community approach is being reconsidered.

In the near future: The main conditioning factor will be overcoming the debts that have been incurred, which have reduced the shelter's opening time to the summer season only. The possibility of generating more energy that makes it possible to acquire electric means of mobility (an electric car, for example) may also favour the project's progress. In the longer-term future: changing the

consumption paradigm of visitors to the shelter. It is also considered important to maintain the motivation of the permanent members of the community, who experience significant attrition due to the living conditions and contact with visitors with different motivations, interests and expectations.

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Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

The aspects of energy citizenship

Although it is not a main objective of the project, which is focused on creating a different way of living and relating to nature, members share the idea that **society must find different ways of participating in the debate and decision-making about everything related to energy generation and consumption**, especially with regard to the transition to using renewable energy sources.



Democratic energy future

Energy democracy is considered a positive value, but the vision does not really address it

All those involved in the initiative have a say in the decisions that are taken at O Couso, but as one of the members states, "We are not governed by democracy as usual, because as a shelter, where there is a high turnover of people, we could not adhere to the whims of each group, because if the group changes, the rules change and that is unfeasible." **Decision-making occurs through hierarchical consensus.**



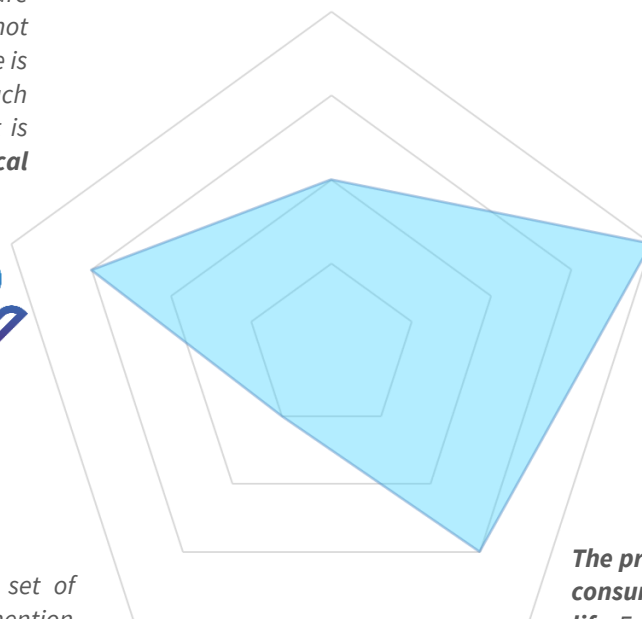
FOCUS ON DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

O Couso defends the principles of equity and justice. One of the founders of the project states, "**We want to help people who, for some personal circumstances are going through a difficult time or social exclusion.** We have realized that many people who were living on the streets were coming here to try to rebuild their lives and people who had gone bankrupt financially and didn't know where to go. So, we decided to get completely involved with this just cause, to lend a hand as much as we could".

Citizen control



Citizens can express their views, but their views are not necessarily taken into account



**Equity and justice
Involvement is fully open**

Although the project is derived from the application of a set of principles and philosophy, there is no explicit recognition or mention of the ecological limits to carbon emissions.

Carbon limit



There is no recognition or mention of the carbon limit related to the case goals

The project aims to be self-sustainable from the production to the consumption of food, energy and everything related to day-to-day life. For example, participants feed themselves with seasonal products harvested in the garden; their mobility is as ecological as the landscape allows (bicycle, electric car, etc.); they consume spring water, produce their own photovoltaic energy and dispense with everything superfluous.



**Environmental sustainability
Environmental sustainability is part of the process; energy remains the main focus**



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Further information



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Source of images

<https://proyectocouso.org>



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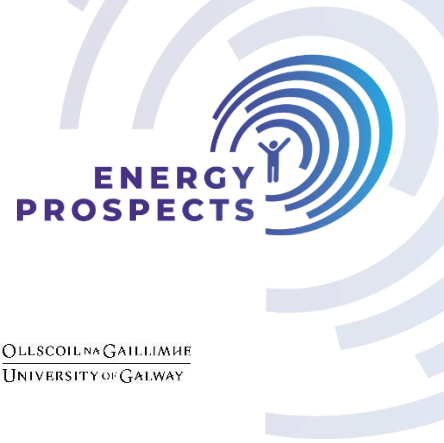
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