

A Worrying Subject: Soil Erosion

Soil erosion is defined as the wearing away of topsoil. Topsoil is the top layer of soil and is the most fertile because it contains the most organic, nutrient-rich materials.

Causes of Soil Erosion

Natural Causes:

- Thermal amplitudes (physical weathering)
- Changes in the soil's composition (chemical weathering)
- Heavy rain
- Wind

Human Causes:

- Removal of soil's vegetable cover
- Disoriented mining activities
- Overgrazing

Forests' Effect on Preventing Erosion

- Slowing the rainfall
- Protecting from the wind
- Decreasing the thermal amplitude, because of the humidity

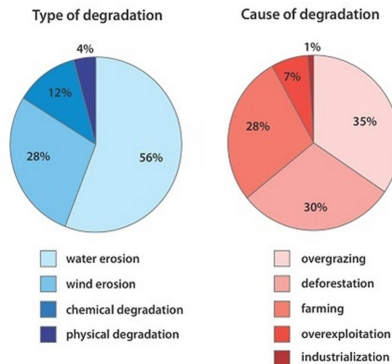


Fig.1- Types and causes of degradation

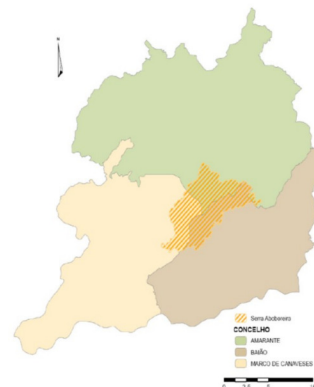


Fig.3- The location of Serra da Aboboreira-forest area near Marco de Canaveses' High School

Current Situation in Marco de Canaveses

| Risk of erosion | Area | |
|-----------------|----------------|------------|
| | Hectares | % |
| None | 0,42 | 0 |
| Low | 656,28 | 15 |
| Medium | 3669,57 | 85 |
| High | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 4326,27 | 100 |

Fig.3- The risk of erosion in Serra da Aboboreira

- In general, the risk of erosion varies between low and medium risk. Medium risk areas are associated with spaces with little vegetation (or even without it) usually pasture used for grazing, or occupied by shrubs and other herbaceous plants.
- In conclusion, the risk of erosion isn't worrying in these fields, but it should be monitored periodically, in order to analyse and prevent future alterations.

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