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Collaborative processes and spatial planning: the national spatial planning policy in Portugal

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Abstract: As Patsy Healey (1997) argues, the growing interest in public participation and the rise in more collaborative governance processes in spatial planning since the 1960s is evidence of the efforts made to overcome the weakness of the representative model, as well as foster communication among multiple stakeholders, so as to respond to the growing expectations and needs of citizens. Faced with less direct intervention in society and the economy by the State, building a more participatory democracy that coexists and enriches representative democracy is crucial. In Portugal, public planning policies are relatively recent. The guidelines and strategic options for territorial development are outlined in the National Programme for Spatial Planning Policies (PNPOT). Recently (2017-2018), the PNPOT was reformulated, with the intention of defining the spatial planning and development strategy and designing the new action programme for Horizon 2030. The proposal was open to a period of public discussion and was then submitted to the Portuguese parliament for possible approval. This study intends to explain the levels of governance and collaboration in the development of this national programme.

Keywords: collaborative planning; spatial planning; public policies; PNPOT

Introduction

The political and academic agenda has increasingly been focusing on and intensifying the debate around public participation and the growing number of collaborative government processes in spatial planning policies and practices. However, this debate is not new. In the 1960s, given the acknowledgement of some shortcomings in the representative model and a very hierarchical, vertical and centred State, the importance of engaging citizens in planning and decision-making processes was reiterated to enable the design of more inclusive policies that met the needs and expectations of the population (Davidoff, 1965; Healey, 1997). But little changed at the end of the 20th century. In the 1990s, government decision-making continued to be hierarchical and centralised, and discussions on the State's modus operandi came into the spotlight. A new form of a public administration was needed, driven by governance policies, which help shape the State's new role and new conception of intervention, encouraging more flexible and open procedures (via different forms of public

participation, involving a network of different public and private players). This led to a paradigm shift, from government to governance (Ferrão, Tulumello, & Bina, 2015; Stoker, 1998).

Collaborative and governance processes became key to designing public spatial planning policies (Ferrão, 2014). By engaging different stakeholders (citizens, policy makers, technical experts and other stakeholders) one fosters knowledge sharing, social learning and civic and institutional empowerment. The inclusion of citizens in the process can certainly produce better outcomes than the traditional processes that are usually envisaged in legislation. Thus, today, to enhance the democratic inclusion of citizens in more collaborative and smarter governance processes, there is greater acknowledgement of the importance of public debate and the promotion of citizenship (Allmendinger, 2017).

In Portugal, the spatial planning policy is relatively new, which explains the lack of an adequately widespread and autonomous academic and business community (Ferrão, 2014; Marques, Veneza, & Maia, 2019). It is a country where Community policies have a considerable influence given the scale of public investment involved, leading to significant public exposure and development thereof. Spatial planning is a national policy and, therefore, is attached less importance in the political debate as it is only funded indirectly by Community policies. Moreover, traditional planning values are still deeply ingrained in civic culture when it comes to territory, due to the country's recent and rapid urbanization (Marques et al., 2019).

The guidelines and strategic spatial development options in Portugal are outlined in the National Spatial Planning Policy Programme (PNPOT). This instrument is key for designing building the pathways that connect the various levels of spatial planning, as it must ensure consistency in sectoral policy interventions in the territory and define the general guidelines for the other land management instruments (LMI). In drafting these instruments, participation and collaboration between the various stakeholders must be envisaged and taken into account at the outset, from forming the task force to discussing the draft bill in the National Assembly.

In August 2016, Portugal initiated the amendment of the PNPOT, which was approved in 2007. This paper is a brief discussion of the key points in the participatory and collaborative processes carried out. To this end, twenty interviews were conducted with key players in the process to critically reflect the way in which the work was organised. Participation highlights and the dynamics of collaboration are also included. PNPOT 2007 assessment documents and those drafted during the amendment process thereof were analysed (minutes of meetings and public debate sessions, public discussion weighting documents and various technical documents), as were video recordings of public hearings held by the Assembly of the Republic at different points during the drafting process.

1. Conceptual framework

1.1. Participatory process in spatial planning

Since the 1960s, there has been greater interest in public participation and an increase in the number of more collaborative governance processes for spatial planning. It is an attempt to make up for some of the shortcomings in the representative model and to address the need to connect the multiple

stakeholders in order to meet the growing needs and expectations of the citizens (Davidoff, 1965; Healey, 1997).

The State's decreased direct role in society and in the economy, and the historical shortcomings of an overly hierarchical, vertical and centralised political power, reflect the need for "smarter planning" in favour of a more participatory and collaborative democracy that enriches representative democracy. This means shifting from standard decisions to designing more efficient and effective public policies, based on principles of more centralised, responsible and transparent public and land management, where "citizens play an active role in the decision-making process for public policies" (Davidoff, 1965).

There is greater acknowledgement of the importance of public debate and the promotion of new civic processes to enhance democratic inclusion (Allmendinger, 2017). A democracy that should be better informed and enlightened, enabling each citizen to be heard and well informed, as only thus will they be able to participate and understand the decisions to be taken, having the power to act and be an effective member of society (Arnstein, 1969, 1975; Davidoff, 1965; Verba, 1967).

In terms of designing public spatial planning policies, in Portugal, as stated by João Ferro, "collaborative spatial planning processes must become a form of governance" (Ferrão, 2014). Engaging citizens, members of government and other players and interest groups in discussing and considering spatial planning processes fosters the sharing of information and knowledge, social learning and civic and institutional empowerment. Involving citizens in the process can produce better and more suitable outcomes.

The more dynamic the collaborative processes and the greater the concurrence between experts, policy makers, civil servants, different players and citizens, the more efficient spatial planning policies and practices will be (Davoudi & Strange, 2009; Ferrão, 2014). Hence the importance of enhancing civic education processes and the building of civic communities to strengthen ties between the State and its citizens, based on a culture of a more active civic engagement in government affairs and in safeguarding the public interest as regards spatial planning (Peel & Lloyd, 2007).

However, people don't trust in the political model today, which discourages participation and collaboration. On the other hand, dissemination of information and knowledge about development interventions is lacking, alongside society's poor territorial culture (ordinary citizens, political leaders, technical experts and academics). All this weakens citizenship and contributes to further shortcomings in civil society's engagement in the design of public policies (Davoudi, 2012).

1.2. Spatial Planning Policy in Portugal

The Portuguese Constitution enshrines spatial planning as a public sector function, a primary task of the State, and, therefore, it is essential that citizens be clarified as to the concept of spatial planning and the importance thereof. It is essential that civil society be shown that spatial planning does not serve merely for technical assistance in land management, but rather, most importantly, it is a practice underpinned by a set of values that must be part of the national development plan (Ferrão, 2014; Gaspar, 2014).

In recent decades, Portugal has made significant progress when it comes to spatial planning practices and culture, particularly in terms of legal frameworks and active participation in the process of European harmonisation. However, published studies on this process are still lacking (Ferrão, 2014; Gaspar, 2014). In this regard, Ferrão (2014) states that in public policy, spatial planning “is a doubly ‘weak’ policy: its mission is weak, given the discrepancies between the ambitious goals and the conditions to achieve them, and it is weak when it comes to the adverse effects of other policies, given its vulnerability to negative impacts” taking into account spatial planning goals and principles. Portugal’s spatial planning policy is relatively new and prematurely discredited. The technical and scientific community is also very fragmented, although it is seeking to strengthen interdisciplinarity, which itself creates conflict and leads to difficulties of convergence (Campos & Ferrão, 2018).

The infancy and shortcomings of spatial planning in Portugal reflect the poor territorial culture of a part of society, both of citizens and of institutions. A spatial culture ingrained with values, rules and practices based on a “traditional administrative-bureaucratic and technical-rational” still predominates (Ferrão, 2014). These characteristics are of greater concern as this poor territorial culture is combined with a significant traditional spatial planning culture. All this leads to barriers in developing attitudes, competences and practices capable of placing spatial planning at the heart of the national development model. Portugal, therefore, still finds itself in what many authors call “disorderly land-use” (APA, 2008; Baptista, 2008; Ferrão, 2014; Schmidt, 2008).

Ferreira (2007) believes that this situation is related to “accelerated urbanization in recent years”, which is reflected in rapid material, economic, technology and communications changes in Portugal that were not accompanied by a change in mindset. As such, the author recognises that “the Portuguese people do not have an adequate notion and understanding of territorial values. And they mistreat the land. Drastic changes in the way the Portuguese people view, design, use and transform land are needed”. Significant changes are, therefore, required both as regards instruments and planning procedures that implement the “transition from a plan culture to a planning culture”, which expects a greater sense of “culture of territory” from stakeholders (Campos & Ferrão, 2018; Ferrão, 2014; Pereira, 2009).

Until the end of the 20th century, Portugal did not have a clear national spatial planning policy or a regulatory instrument for public spatial planning policies that coordinated land-use, that promoted the engagement of society in designing a public land policy and that promoted a civic planning culture.

2. The National Spatial Planning Policy Programme (PNPOT)

“A well-organised country requires the population to internalise a planning culture. Portuguese spatial planning thus relies on the enthusiasm of technical experts and politicians, as well as the contribution of all citizens.”

(MAOTDR, 2007)

2.1. PNPOT: overview of the process

The Portuguese spatial planning system is regulated by the National Spatial Planning Policy Programme (PNPOT). This Land Management Instrument (LMI) defines the goals and strategic land development options, as well as the national land-use model. The PNPOT is also the reference framework for regional, intercity and municipal spatial planning programmes and guides strategies that effect domestic territory (for mainland Portugal and for the archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira)¹.

The PNPOT was created by the Basic Law on the Spatial Planning and Urbanization Policy of 1998 with the purpose of providing the country with an instrument aimed at defining a forward-looking, cross-cutting and integrated vision of spatial planning and development. Creation of the PNPOT further aims at promoting the coordination and interaction of public sectoral policies on a spatial basis.

Drafting of the PNPOT was only decided in 2002 by the XIV Constitutional Government of Portugal. The final document was approved by the Assembly of the Republic on 4 September 2007, following an extensive period of public debate and consultation, which involved public authorities and representatives of civil society (who sat on the Advisory Committee) (Gaspar, 2007). Once this process was concluded, the implementation stage began, effective between 2007 and 2013. The Portuguese Government (through the Directorate-General for Territorial Management - DGT) is responsible for assessing implementation of the PNPOT and for creating a monitoring indicators system for the action plan and drafting spatial planning status reports (prepared every 2 years)².

In terms of assessment, the PNPOT influenced and hindered spatial planning policies, particularly at regional level, as the design and implementation processes for Regional Spatial Planning Programmes (PROT) in Portugal were based on it. However, during the implementation of the PNPOT, nothing was done in terms of monitoring and assessment, which demonstrates that Portugal still does not have a consistent culture of monitoring and assessing the system and LMIs. It continues to focus primarily on drafting and approving plans rather than reflecting on planning itself. Moreover, during implementation of the PNPOT, engagement of all players was not consistently promoted and a

¹ Basic Law on the Spatial Planning and Urbanization Policy (Law no. 48/98, of 11 August), which sets out the basis for the spatial planning and urbanization policy and creates the PNPOT.

² Basic Law on the Spatial Planning and Urbanization Policy (Law no. 48/98, of 11 August); Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 76/2002, of 11 April, which determines the drafting of the PNPOT; Law no 58/2007, of 4 September, which approves the PNPOT; General Basic Law on the Public Land, Spatial Planning and Urbanization Policy (Law no. 31/2014, of 30 May).

commitment between stakeholders was not actively encouraged, given the need to implement the Programme's spatial strategic goals.

The PNPOT was only assessed in 2014, when the effective period of the 2007-2013 Action Plan ended (DGT, 2014). Within this scope, several players were consulted and a number of recommendations made for the future, of note: i) the importance of developing strategic spatial benchmarks to improve coordination between the various land management instruments and intensity integrated land-use approaches; ii) the need to develop spatial benchmarks for sectoral policies, namely as regards utility and public services of general interest; iii) the importance of having a governance structure to monitor management of the implementation and operation of the PNPOT (Marques, Veneza, & Maia, 2019).

In August 2016 (Figure 1), the government decided to amend the document in force³, taking into account the drafting of a new action plan for 2030. Amendment of the public spatial planning policy arose due to the need to create an operating, monitoring and assessment system capable of stimulating the implementation of policy, guidelines, directives and measures. Thus, the PNPOT should be considered a strategic benchmark for the territorialisation of public policies and the planning of spatial investments financed by national and Community programmes.

Work to amend the PNPOT was carried out based on a collaborative system of civic and institutional participation. Under technical, scientific and political coordination, the PNPOT was drafted by a large technical team with more than 60 members, including people from the department of national territory, universities and regional coordination committees. Several ministries also collaborated in this process, nearly 40 representatives from the various areas of the Portuguese Government (Focal Points systems), who engaged in multi-sectoral consultation, bringing and debating different views and ways of designing the territorialisation of sectoral policies.

An Advisory Committee, comprising approximately 20 representatives from civil society and businesses organisations and trade unions, associations, professional bodies and Portuguese city and parish associations, also collaborated on the amendment of the PNPOT, bringing to the process the problems and concerns of civil society as regards spatial planning. Thus, over 20 months, a team of about 120 people cooperated continuously, holding more than 150 thematic or cross-cutting meetings (Figure 1).

The PNPOT is a Diagnosis document (DGT, 2018a), focusing on spatial interventions between 2007 and 2017 as a means to update analyses carried out in the preceding PNPOT and taking into account change factors (climate and environmental, socio-demographic, technology and economic changes). It ends with a summary of the major spatial planning issues, reflecting the scientific and technical analyses carried out and the views of the technical community and those of civil society.

The technical and scientific analyses were carried out as a collaboration between producers of scientific knowledge (University of Porto and University of Lisbon) and the technical teams from all

³ Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 44/2016, of 23 August, establishing the strategic guidelines for the amendment of the PNPOT, through a collaborative and decentralised system based on focal points and an Advisory Committee.

Ministries (most notably the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Planning and Infrastructure). The analysis of the perception of spatial planning problems was based on a survey sent to representatives of scientific, technical and political communities (of note, local authorities, city and town councils and parish councils), and to a significant number of institutions representing the corporate and professional world, and society at large (this topic is discussed further below).

The interviews conducted for this study revealed that design of the strategy and action plan to support strategic spatial development goals (DGT, 2018c) was underpinned by active cooperation from the network of focal points (as previously mentioned, a team with different sectoral views). This team designed a Spatial Agenda, divided into 50 Policy Measures, arranged into areas of intervention (Nature Domain, Social Domain, Economic Domain, Connectivity Domain and Spatial Governance Domain) and into Spatial Systems (Natural System, Social System, Economic System, Connectivity System, Urban System and Critical Vulnerabilities), to help boost the effectiveness of the Plan or to improve implementation of spatial policies.

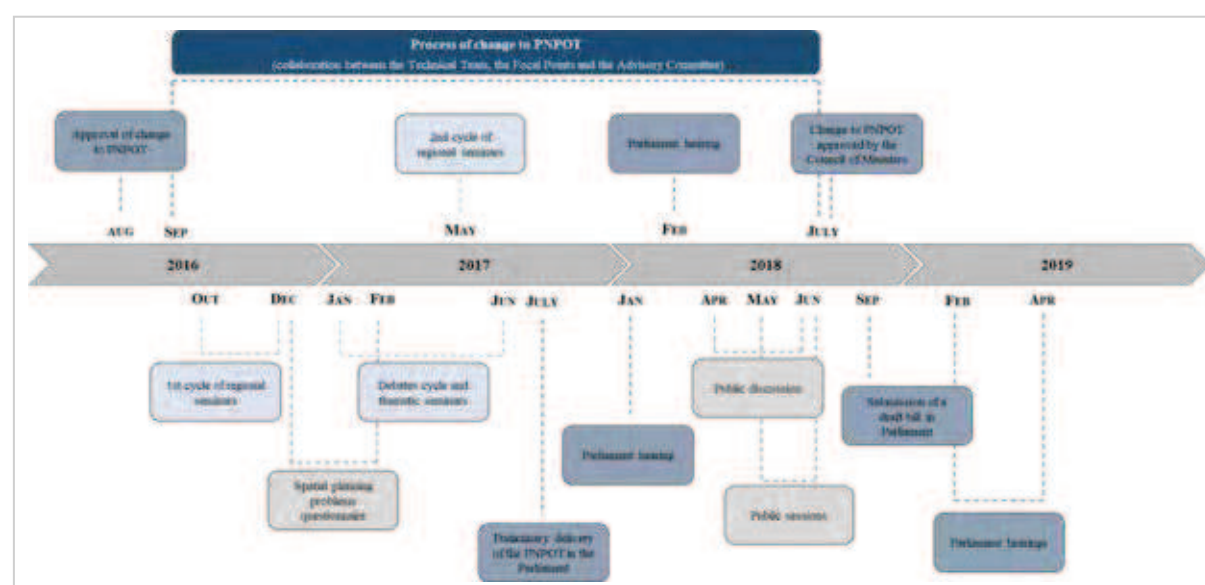


Figure 1: Timeline of the PNPOT amendment process (2016-2019).

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on interviews conducted during the PNPOT amendment process.

In political terms, the process was monitored by the Assembly of the Republic. In January and February 2018, political leaders and technical experts were invited to a public hearing held by the “Environment, Spatial Planning, Decentralisation, Local Government and Housing” Committee, which monitored the implementation of this LMI. These initial hearings were aimed at clarifying and discussing methods to be used in the planning process and to share some information from the initial spatial assessments. Special attention was given to the perception of spatial planning problems, based on the results of the aforementioned survey. Other meetings with representatives from different ministry departments of the Portuguese Government were also held during the process, in which topics specific to their respective areas of expertise were discussed. In mid-July 2017, a preliminary draft of the amendment was submitted to the Assembly of the Republic such that political and

institutional consultation could continue, and the final version drafted, and subsequently submitted for approval (Figure 1).

2.2. PNPOT: to what extent was it a participatory process?

According to the directives of the White Papers published by the Commission of the European Communities (2001) and the Committee of the Regions (2009), the widespread participation during the entire policy process (from design to implementation) will help instil greater confidence in the final outcome and in government arenas (EU, 2001, 2009; Vale, 2007).

The planning process must be participatory, democratic and decentralised. To this end, it is crucial that several opportunities for interaction between all stakeholders be promoted throughout the process (Gaspar, 2007; Healey, 1997). As Gaspar (2007) argues, this effort to strengthen participation and engagement between the various stakeholders must first take place among the team coordinating the process and only then can it be extended to “external” stakeholders, whether ordinary citizens or operators from public or private sector organisations.

Based on these assumptions, the results of the interviews conducted allowed the authors to determine that during work carried out to amend the PNPOT, several public consultation initiatives aimed at civil society were promoted, as well as intersectoral consultation processes. Some of the initiatives are then summarised and an initial assessment is made.

2.2.1. Consulting civil society

Engaging citizens in the design of policies is based on the assumption that all those who are affected by a particular decision should also be given the opportunity to participate in taking the respective decision (Marques et al., 2019).

Just a few months after work began, a national questionnaire survey of the Portuguese population’s perception of spatial planning problems was created, in a dynamic analysis between 2007 and 2017. Based on the 24 spatial planning problems identified in the first PNPOT (Figure 1), the population was questioned (between December 2016 and February 2017) as to the extent to which each of the problems previously identified had been resolved or had worsened.

The respondents were also invited to indicate new problems or problems that had not previously been identified. Published online by central and regional departments of the Central Government, metropolitan areas and intercity communities, municipalities and parishes, business associations, professional bodies, trade unions, higher education establishments and research centres, the survey was widely disseminated and was completed by 7,298 individuals. Worthy of note is that 29% of respondents work in public administration and 23% are linked to universities and research centres. A total of 40% of respondents stated that they are involved in an activity related to spatial planning and/or development (DGT, 2018b; Marques et al., 2019).

The majority of respondents considered that the severity of spatial planning problems has not changed since the first PNPOT (2007), failing to see what has effectively been achieved with this public policy. There is also no apparent awareness of the impact of the design of several sectoral policies, many of which were established at European level. On the other hand, the absence of a spatial

planning monitoring system and the lack of spatial information were highlighted as significant barriers to land management.

Nine problems stood out in negative interventions (exacerbated problem), particularly soil degradation and the risk of desertification, depopulation and demographic and socio-economic disempowerment. As for the more positive changes (resolved or mitigated problem), most noteworthy are water quality degradation and the poor management of water resources, uncontrolled expansion of urban areas, carbon-energy intensity, significant dependence on imported primary energy resources, the lack of external visibility of economic functions, and the lack of resources and basic technical skills for spatial planning.

To keep citizens permanently engaged in the process, the PNPOT online platform was designed (<http://pnpot.dgterritorio.pt/>), where information on the status of ongoing work, seminars, debates and other events held was published, in addition to other documents (reports and legislation).

2.2.2. Promoting thematic and regional public discussions

In keeping with the plan to pursue a participatory process that promoted several opportunities for interaction between the stakeholders involved in the process and society, more than 20 thematic public debates and seminars were held. In an extended consultation processes, key to spatial assessment and designing the spatial strategy, these sessions were attended by a significant number of technical experts and specialists from the different spatial planning areas – geography, engineering, architecture, urbanism, among others –, as well as political representatives and representatives from civil society. It was an interdisciplinary and multi-level discussion.

At the end of 2016 (Figure 1), the first of two cycles of regional discussions were held at the offices of the Regional Development Committees and where matters related to the climate crisis, the urban system, the circular economy, landscape and tourism were discussed. These were primarily of a sectoral nature and brought together specialised experts from different regions of the country.

The second cycle was held in 2017 and focused on the territorial changes that occurred over the past 10 years. This session identified the need to take a forward-thinking approach to the climate crisis, demographic changes and to the dynamics associated with technological change and with the ocean as a resource.

The first half of 2017 also saw several discussions held between experts and thematic seminars, promoted and held by different Portuguese institutions and associations. Public debates were organised by *Associação Portuguesa de Geógrafos* [the Portuguese Association of Geographers], *Associação Portuguesa dos Arquitetos Paisagistas* [The Portuguese Association of Landscape Architects] and *Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas* [the Portuguese Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests]. These thematic sessions focused the discussion primarily on three major concerns: what are ecosystem services and how to organise them; demographic trends and the social and spatial impacts thereof; and technological challenges and their impact on the economy.

At the end of the six-month period, a national seminar was held to discuss forward-thinking spatial planning, where several keynote speakers brought insights from the past and designs for the future of spatial development, and discussed key issues for the coming decades: socio-demographic dynamics,

territorial impacts of the climate crisis, assessment of water resources, economic outlook, among other issues.

2.2.3. Promoting a participatory discussion of the proposal

Public discussion, although an intermediate form of participation for citizens (Healey, 1997), in an instrument the scale of the PNPOT, is worthy of note due to the huge number people that comprise the panels and are involved therein (Vale, 2007). In compliance with legal requirements, the PNPOT was put to public discussion between 30 April and 15 June 2018 and the following put to consideration by the citizens: (i) proposal for amendment of the PNPOT (Strategy and Spatial Model, and Action Plan); (ii) opinions issued by the National Territory Committee and the Advisory Committee; (iii) the Assessment report which underpins the strategic options.

During this period, nine public discussions were held countrywide to promote greater dissemination and discussion of the documents as well as greater citizen engagement.

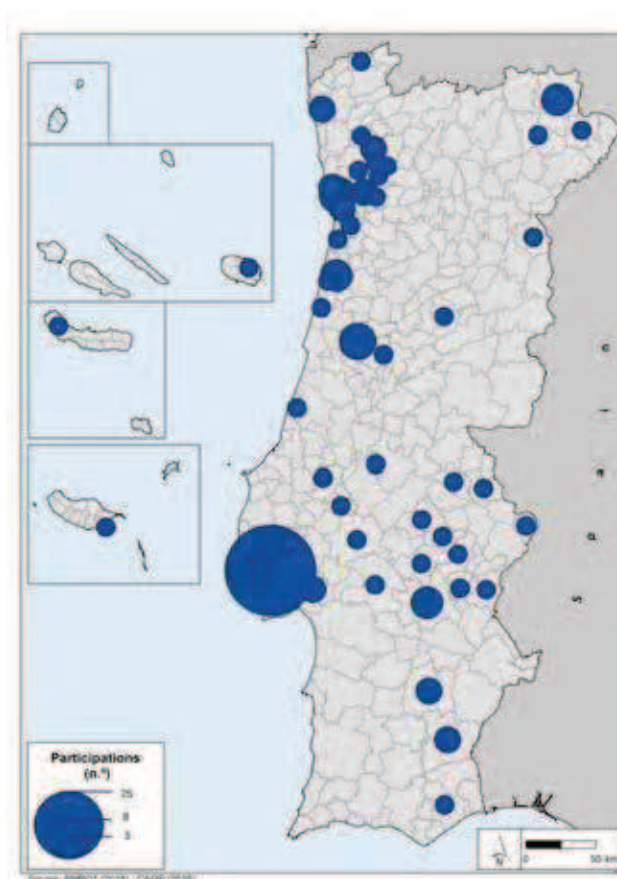


Figure 2: Contributions during the public discussion of the PNPOT, per municipality.

Source: Adapted from the DGT. (2018b). PNPOT | Amendment. Public Discussion - Weighting Report. Technical proposal for the amendment of the PNPOT. 13/07/2018.

The significant participation of organisations representing the sectors and territories, civil society organisations, technical experts and citizens in the public sessions, nearly 1,000 participants, enabled

the debate to be held and the collection of a wealth of input to improve the content of the documents under consultation. The involvement of civil society during the period of public discussion is also reflected in the number of written contributions made, over one hundred, submitted from across the country (Figure 2). According to the Public Discussion Weighting Report (2018), active participation was primarily by municipalities (38%) and private individuals (33%), particularly those with higher education (95%) (DGT, 2018b). Territorially speaking, participation was greater in the municipalities located in the north-west of Portugal, in the metropolitan area of Lisbon and in the Alentejo region.

Taking into account contributions made, all information in the documents that were put to public discussion was either improved or substantially revised. As regards the weighting of contributions made, most were welcome (11.1%) or partially welcome (57.4%), whereas 22.2% of contributions were deemed to already be included in the documents and only 1% of contributions were considered unwelcome (DGT, 2018b) (Figure 3).

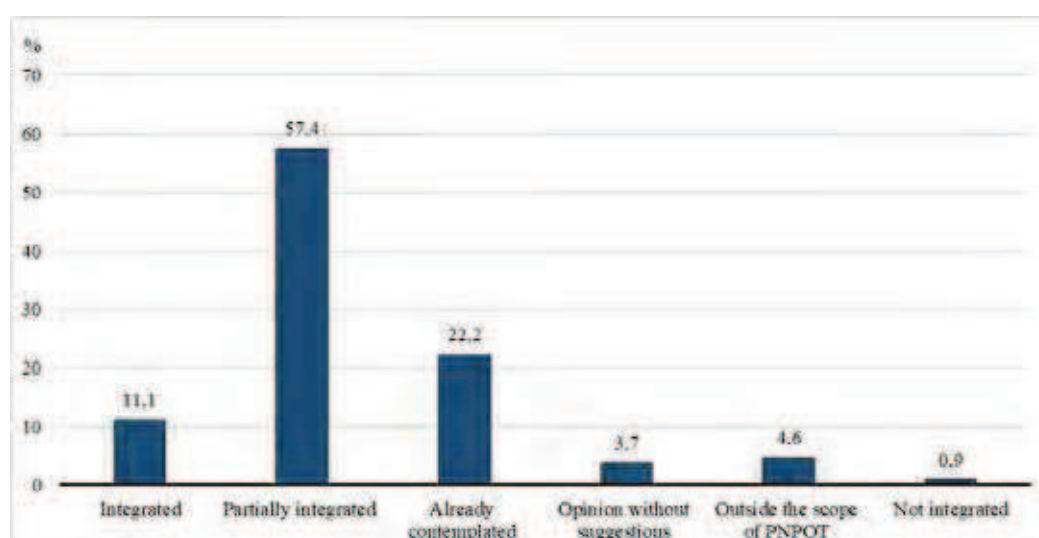


Figure 3: Weighting of the contributions made during the public discussion of the PNPOT.

Source: Prepared by the author, based on information from the DGT. (2018b). PNPOT | Amendment. Public Discussion - Weighting Report. Technical proposal for the amendment of the PNPOT. 13/7/2018.

Analysis of the information from contributions made during the public discussion, included in the Public Discussion Weighting Report, highlights that the majority of participants agreed with the contents of the documents (67%), making only suggestions for improvement or minor changes. This analysis identified a few aspects related to the concerns and different views of citizens as regards territorial culture and challenges in spatial planning.

First, concerns related to the ability to implement the governance model envisaged in the PNPOT are highlighted, in particular as the guiding strategic framework for financial options and coordination with the National Investment Programme (PNI) and the next Community framework. The need to boost interaction between the various areas of public policy governance, focusing consultation on the challenges in spatial planning, is also emphasized. As regards the urban system and territorial organisation, society pointed out the importance of cooperation between regions, prioritising network organisation by empowering territorial subsystems. The importance of services of general interest and

investment in the development and quality of regions is also stressed. Stimulating connectivity between the various areas continues to be a major concern.

In short, citizens are being made aware of the enhancement of strategies and policy measures to address some current issues: the urban hierarchy, the country's different levels of infrastructure development, the protection of environmental resources (water and forests), economic competitiveness and improvement of spatial knowledge. The primary focus is on investment and the importance of Community funding, setting aside issues related to the operation, monitoring and assessment of the proposed measures.

On 14 July 2018 (Figure 1), the final version of the documents was approved in an Extraordinary Council of Ministers, with just a few changes requested. The task assigned to the technical team is expected to be concluded at the end of July. The final version of the document (now entered as a draft bill) includes the weighting of the Public Discussion and the outcome of the Council of Ministers. The draft bill was submitted to the Assembly of the Republic in September 2018 for consideration by the different parliamentary groups, which will vote in favour of or against the bill. This is an unusual procedure in Europe, as Portugal is one of the few countries that submits public spatial planning policy for consideration by the Assembly of the Republic. The authors, therefore, believe that it is a procedure that validates the policy measures included in the Action Plan, as they are not only approved by Government officials, they are also endorsed by the parliamentary groups. Approval of the PNPOT in the Assembly of the Republic enacts it as law.

2.2.4. How the Assembly of the Republic promoted participation

Consideration of the PNPOT draft bill by the Assembly of the Republic was, once again, incumbent upon the Committee that oversees the implementation of the LMI. In addition to work meetings and the discussion between its members, public hearings for discussion between the various representatives of civil society and the scientific and technical community were also held. Thus, between February and April 2019, five hearings were held, attended by approximately 20 organisations (civil society and business organisations, trade unions, regional coordination departments, universities and research centres). At the end, the scientific coordination body was heard, followed by the policy coordination body.

An analysis of video recordings provided by the Assembly of the Republic⁴ highlights the ambiguity of the perception of citizens and a somewhat lack of information and territorial culture. The large number of representatives from institutions heard demonstrates the difficulty or inability to combine different topics and develop macro narratives of key spatial planning issues. Testimonials were, primarily, an individual or sectoral view of the problems, often falling outside of the scope of the LMIs, and there were rarely views focused on aligning interests. In the end, several contradictions, territorial cultures and a general lack of awareness of challenges faced were apparent.

⁴ Available at: <http://www.canal.parlamento.pt> (accessed in May 2019).

Conclusions/Final Discussion

Since the beginning of the 1990s until 2011, spatial planning in Portugal, with its ups and downs, developed positively, that is, it went from simply regulating land use and rental policies, to adopting a more strategic and forward-thinking approach. This outlook is, primarily, related to public regional development and environmental policies (most notably the Basic Law of Spatial Planning and Urbanization (1998), the drafting of the PNPOT (2007) and a few PROT). However, since 2011, faced with the economic crisis, positive development stagnated and spatial planning was no longer considered as important as other public policies. This step backwards came at a cost as a result of several factors, in particular: (i) the emergence of spatial planning as an independent domain, historically very recent; (ii) the lack of an adequately widespread and autonomous academic and business community; (iii) Community policies have a considerable influence given the scale of public investment involved, leading to greater public exposure (Ferrão, 2014; Marques & Veneza, 2013; Marques et al., 2019).

In Portugal, the guidelines and strategic spatial development options are outlined in the National Spatial Planning Policy Programme (PNPOT), approved in 2007. Recently (2016-2018), the PNPOT was revised, the process of which is summarised herein. Pursuant to law, and under technical, scientific and political coordination, at the beginning of the process a technical team was put together which, together with a Focal Points system and the Advisory Committee, drafted the Programme's documents (Assessment, Strategy and Spatial Model, and the Action Plan).

Work was conducted by a large team of more than 120 people who cooperated on a continuous basis (over a hundred meetings, dozens of workshops and thematic consultation seminars and debates were held, in addition to hearings held, at the end, in the Assembly of the Republic). Ministries of the Portuguese Government worked in collaboration towards the territorialisation of the policy measures included in the PNPOT Action Plan.

Public participation in the process was also significant. Interview data shows that, during the work carried out to amend the PNPOT, several public consultation initiatives aimed at civil society were promoted, which saw significant involvement. A questionnaire survey of the Portuguese population's perception of spatial planning problems was conducted, which was answered by over seven thousand people. A PNPOT online platform was designed to keep citizens permanently engaged in the process.

Public discussion is one of the legal requirements for participation required for public policies. During this period, public discussions were held countrywide. An analysis of the results reveals significant participation in the public sessions of organisations representing the sectors and territories, civil society organisations, technical experts and citizens, nearly 1,000 participants in total in public sessions and a hundred written contributions with proposals and suggestions.

Following approval of the PNPOT in the Council of Ministers, the draft bill was submitted to the Assembly of the Republic for consideration by the various parliamentary groups. To this end, public hearings for discussion with different representatives of civil society and the technical and scientific community were also held.

Thus, generally, assessment of the PNPOT amendment process is positive as regards the collaborative and participatory process carried out. The concerted effort between the technical team, focal points

and Advisory Committee contributed towards ensuring the final proposal was technically, scientifically and politically sound, as a result of successful cooperation and the sharing of knowledge and lessons learned. Similarly, the period of public discussion (through public sessions and written contributions received) was key to improving and consolidating the final documents. The final discussion and approval by the parliamentary groups of the Assembly of the Republic will enact the PNPOT as law.

However, pressing political agendas and the need to approve the PNPOT in time to influence the preparation of the new Community framework accelerated the process and prevented citizens from understanding the complexity of the documents drafted. The participation of civil society is essential in the learning process and in building the population's territorial culture.

Therefore, in the future, citizens must be encouraged to engage in identifying and solving problems, and in meeting territorial challenges. Spatial planning in Portugal is still not co-creation, the result of significant interaction between the State, civil society, the private and third sector, in a constructive and collaborative process. Society still does not interact or come together around a set of values and consensus. As such, public policy measures for spatial planning should seek to empower society to build these values and consensus, and create environments conducive to processes that effect change. The role citizens play is vital, not only to identify problems, but also causes and possible solutions (Marques, et al. 2019).

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