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REGIONAL PAROXYSMS IN PORTUGAL: TOP-DOWN OR BOTTOM-UP DEVELOPMENT?

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Abstract

The current European development paradigm implies a strategy which takes people and territories (people-centred and place-based policies) into account. Nevertheless, financing such a strategy entails following pre-established objectives. This text explores the “schizoid” character resulting from this duplicity in the Portugal 2020, presenting a systematization of developmental paradoxes according to three levels of analysis: European mega-regions; national regions; and intra-regional processes. As a corollary, it is proposed that regional development can be understood in terms of two major problematics (‘follow the people’ vs. ‘follow the money’ and evidence-based policy vs. policy-based evidence) and two developmental traps (the money trap and the territory trap). It is concluded that the Region as a development territory reveals a strategic, administrative and sociological fragility.

Keywords: Portugal 2020; Territorial Development; Region; Regional Paroxysms.

Introduction

In a framework of the transformation of cities into city-regions, the articulation between top-down and bottom-up approaches, as well as urban and regional inter- and intra-systems, have been described as the main challenge to multiscale and polycentric governance (FERRÃO, 2013; SÁ MARQUES; ALVES, 2010). In the 2014-20 Community programming cycle this challenge has been particularly highlighted by the emphasis placed on the implementation of the European Union (EU) Cohesion Policy following a ‘functional’ regional approach. Given the structure and the political-administrative framework in Portugal, it was anticipated that this approach would constitute a serious test to the limits of the institutional capital of the territories (MOURATO, 2013). Therefore, the result was a paradoxical development model in which the formulation of a more people-centered and place-based policies (strategy for bottom-up valorization of territorial potential) imposed a funding methodology that followed pre-established objectives (top-down programming and financing of sector clustering). This raises the following question: to what extent is such a paradoxical development model a result of institutional (in)capacity and/or multi-scale governance processes and procedures?

This “schizoid” character of top-down means/procedures, that which turn themselves into the development goals/objectives of the Portugal 2020 implementation, have already been discussed as (strategic) ‘territorialization’ vs. (instrumental) ‘neoinstitutionalization’ (FERREIRA; SEIXAS,

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2017). This became clear through the first Integrated Territorial Development Strategies (ITDSs) of the Portuguese regions NUTS III that introduced the territorial translation of multiscale development which shows a map of top-down and bottom-up options with a rational difficult to understand (DIAS; SEIXAS, 2018). In this text, it is proposed that the elaboration of the ITDSs, as central documents for the access to EU funds for the Inter-municipal Entities (IME) – Metropolitan Areas (MA) and Inter-municipal Communities (IMC) – is the latest evidence of a set of paradoxes which result from a history of dissonant European and national views (path dependency). The purpose of this paper is a retrospective of such dissonances and their effects, aggregating them into six major paradoxes:

- 1) A proposed European polycentric development (desired or duplicitous) vs. a real European and national monocentric development;
- 2) A development of European transnational regions vs. a development centered on the national(s) metropolis;
- 3) A development based on the endogenous potential of the regions (people-centered and place-based) vs. a programming development/cascading jurisdictions;
- 4) A national strategy development (nonexistent) vs. a development of an European strategy (access to funds);
- 5) A development centered on functional regions vs. a development centered on administrative regions;
- 6) A development centered on strategic regional players/stakeholders vs. a development centered on partisan-municipalist rational.

The article problematizes such paradoxes within a framework of ‘functional regions’ at three levels: 1) European mega-regions; 2) inter-regions at (inter)national level; and 3) intra-regional instrumental level. Since that the ultimate tension is ‘follow the people’ vs. ‘follow the money’ expressed in political documents, we focused on the Porto Metropolitan Area (PMA) as a ‘learning case study’ of how governance of access to funds has conditioned the place-based strategy.

The paper is organized into two main parts. In the first section we problematize the concept of Region in the three mentioned levels, opening to the understanding of the paradoxes of territorial development in the Portugal 2020. This section is complemented by the case study of PMA. In the second and last section it is proposed that the paradoxes are not overcome in the implementation of territorial approaches in the Portugal 2020, configuring the ‘territory’ and the ‘funds’ two development traps which place the strategic documents in an essential tension between paradigmatic and pragmatic development.

The New European Development Paradigm and the Portugal 2020

The emergence of city-regions shows that cities have become both transnational economic corridors (mega-regions or megalopolis) and functional regions (metropolitan and inter-municipal regions): macro and meso city networks levels seek a place in the hierarchy of regional economies to compete at global and local levels. These transformations correspond to two processes of socio-spatial translation of development visions in the face of globalization:

- a) relating the metropolis and metropolization with the hierarchical and network perspectives; and
- b) bottom-up responses (alter globalization), relating the endogenous potential of territories with new perspectives such as flows and global dynamics of reterritorialization (SEIXAS, 2012).

Therefore, the ideas of ‘metropolis’, ‘megalopolis’, ‘metropolization’, ‘economic corridors’, ‘super-city’, ‘city-region’, ‘functional regions’, among others, appear as attempts to find the appropriate conceptual framework to address the multiple scales of translation of development agendas into a multilevel governance framework. These translations make it necessary to rethink ‘what are’, ‘wish are’ and ‘what is the role’ of the new Regions. This paper proposes three levels of analysis, each with two essential tensions or paradoxes, as a way of understanding the articulation between the supra and infra scale in the translation of territorial development. Such matrioska evolution process is the context in which we seek to understand the infra-regional scale and its development and governance problems.

European Mega-regions

In the second half of the twentieth century, with the new geopolitical context stemming from the end of Second World War, the planetary model supported by imperial or colonial economies began to decline. Meanwhile, new economic networks supported by transnational corridors or megalopolis were discovered/invented in the northern hemisphere (GOTTMAN, 1957; 1961). This new economic and political geography was first identified in the United States, but at about the same time Gottman identified it in Europe. Regarding the United States, Gottman states:

I should like to use megalopolis to describe a particular region which differs from other regions in the country (and in the world) in the size and rhythm of urbanization. This region extends along the northeastern seaboard of the United States from a little north of Boston to a little south of Washington, or from southern New Hampshire to northern Virginia. (GOTTMAN, 1957, p. 54).

Still in 1957 Gottman mentions the existence of two mega-regions in Europe that may resemble the American megalopolis: England itself (Britain without Scotland, Wales and Cornwall) and an oceanic commercial facade of northwestern continental Europe extending from Amsterdam to Paris (GOTTMAN, 1961, p. 569). Already in 1961, reflecting on what he had published four years earlier, he states the clear existence of a region from Amsterdam to Brussels, Lille and Liège. It also states that the Amsterdam-Lille axis goes to Rhur and passes through Maastricht and Liège. And towards south, from this Benelux-Rhur triangle there are connections to Pas-de-Calais. In the same text, Gottman (1961) is already aware of the existence of a paradox between economy and administration (multiscale vs. multilevel development) when he indicates the “conflict between the administrative and political map on one side and the circulation and integration of the real interests of the other” (GOTTMAN, 1961, p. 566). The ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) was constituted in 1957 on the above identified economic corridors, and – as Gottman has written – such economic multilateralism was already in friction with the modern tutelary figure of the nation-states.

The jump from an Economic Community to a Political and Social Community took 30 years more. A political awareness of European territory in the 1990s also implied the perception of a second paradox: a territory that represented the political-economic union but lacked social cohesion. A ‘new regionalism’ emerged as a possible response to this paradox, centered on polycentrism and city-region, and their polarization and spillover capabilities. Development is then discussed from this new policy framework: firstly sustained in the emerging system of ‘global city-regions’, thus associated with a hierarchy of interpenetrating territorial scales of economic activity and global-local governance relations (SCOTT et al., 2014); and secondly with the process of rescaling of the state intervention to intermediate levels, such as metropolitan and inter-municipal regions (DAVOUDI, 2009).

The 2010-15 crisis in Europe (which followed the 2008 crisis in the United States) led to reformulations in this regionalism. Spillovers are reconsidered and the ‘diversity of the Regions’ is assumed, but their existence itself is a problem, for instance in Portugal. The city-region was even thought as the trigger for new governance arrangements. Within the European framework, the concept of ‘(euro)governable city’ (OLIVEIRA; FERREIRA; DIAS, 2019) has already been proposed as evidence of the opening of the city policy system to an inter/transnational level of governance and its challenges. The idea is that, today, thinking about the city and development necessarily implies multi-scale and multilevel rationalities, resulting on the need of identifying the network and the hierarchy on each case. Networks make possible access to a place in the hierarchy, and their creation depends of new territories as functional spaces. Therefore, networks correspond to the re-founding of old national hierarchies as a result of new transnational and global networks. Such re-founding is primarily political-administrative because it is through multilevel governance in development policies that new regulatory scales are created at the local/sub-regional level by which the coordination of actors and public intervention (reterritorialization) is enabled. This means that territorial governance is only possible if the institutional conditions for the integration of processes and procedures between different levels of governance are first available for the activation and effectiveness of the new territorial scales.

This brief story reveals the fragmentation of the so-called ‘cohesion triangle’ – economic, social and territorial – on which political sovereignty and social old hierarchies of the nation state was supported (COVAS, A.; COVAS, M., 2013b). Portugal is an example of this. The coastalisation and metropolization of the country has been translated into an archipelago-shaped territory with local and regional economies scattered among numerous desertified and unpopulated territories. Accepting such coastalisation, metropolization and fragmentation as development scenarios (FERRÃO; SÁ MARQUES, 2003), this should be firstly understood in a political-administrative way

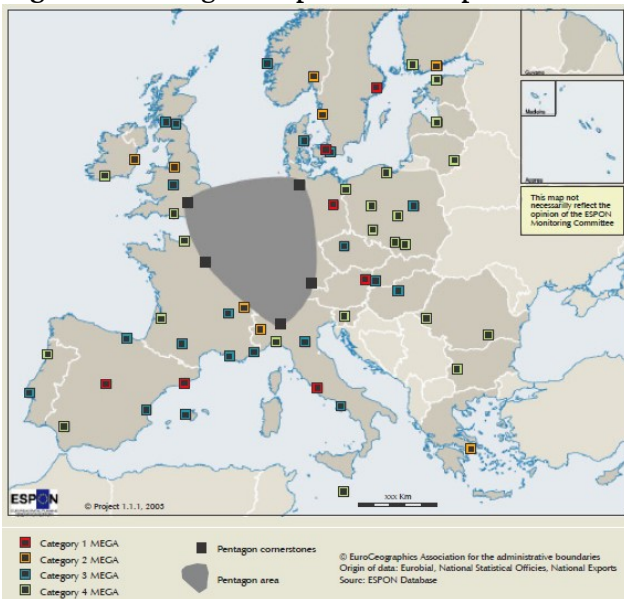
and only afterwards, in a territorial way. As Covas and Covas (2013b) point out, the unequal way in which the national territory is occupied translates the “noise” between bottom-up and top-down processes created by two existing logics that command the distribution and access to power: partisan and political-administrative. Taken together, these logics have contributed to a political map of compartmentalized, clientellar and bureaucratic territory in which territorial governance is very difficult to be effective (COVAS, A.; COVAS, M., 2013b).

The "three cohesions" are, moreover, the same as those provided by the Treaty of Lisbon and promoted by the EU Cohesion Policy, the main single market monitoring policy. Though there are several rational grounds, in Europe of the EU one should consider that there is a European Policy. However, a strict European territorial policy is relatively recent. Telegraphically its emergence and consolidation can be summarized in the following chronology (SEIXAS, 2012): (1) 1975-1989, slow awareness of the European dimension of space planning; (2) 1990-1999, emergence of the European space development strategy that culminated in the production of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP); (3) 1999-2007, contrasting developments in the Commission and the Member States; and (4) 2008-2009, return to the Commission's interests towards a convergent view with the Member States. In this history, Cohesion Policy has been an important instrument, especially through the regulatory guidelines associated with the Structural Funds. A shared vision of territorial development resulted from this process: a Europe united in diversity; a Europe of “all regions”; a model of “territorial cohesion, polycentric and sustainable” (SEIXAS, 2012).

One of the aspects that seem to have contributed most to the slow and troubled process of affirming a European space development policy is the fact that the territory is understood by the Member States as a sort of ultimate stronghold of national sovereignty (FERRÃO, 2004). Some authors already predicted that this idea of consolidating a Europe made up of Mega-regions could increase economic and political integration in Europe and should not be detached from a broader intention to reconfigure the governance architecture of the Community space (Ferrão, 2004). This process was accompanied by a decline in the political and economic power of the Member States and a corresponding growth of those regions. Summarizing, there are three macro-level spatial development models that may be identified (SEIXAS, 2012):

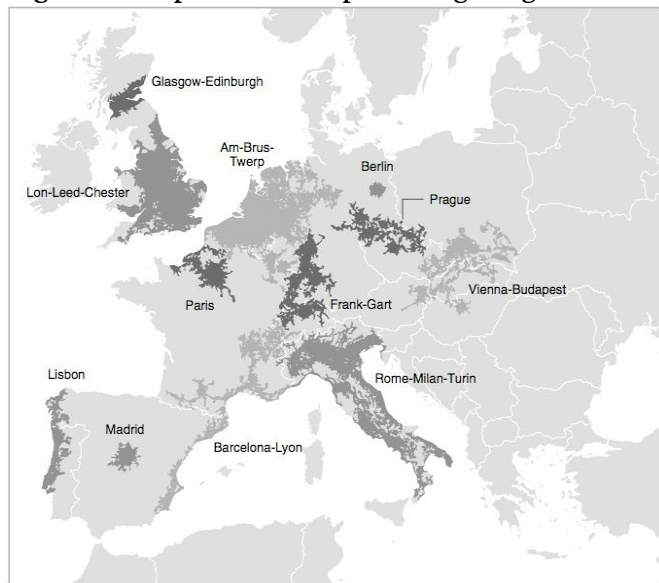
1. A monocentric Europe-diagnosed model of the “Pentagon”, also called “The Core Area of Europe”, as a response to global challenges;
2. A model of federal-type political strategy: the Europe of the Mega-regions as a territorial unit in which the legitimacy of acting is granted. That is, the “institutionalization of a European Planning”;
3. A model of a desired scenario of Europe cohesive in the polycentrism of urban networks and in the Diversity of Regions to which the 2007 and 2011 Territorial Agenda points out.

Figure 1. Pentagon Map of the European MEGAs



Source: ESPON (2004)

Figure 2. Map of the European Mega-regions



Source: Florida, Gulden e Mellander (2008)

Regarding the first model, the “Pentagon” (which at the time of the EDEC publication concentrated 50% of European GDP) has been Europe's only “global economic integration zone” (ESPON, 2004). In Figure 1. it is clear that the Pentagon area coincides with an International Metametropolitan Region comprising five 1st level Metropolitan European Growth Areas (MEGAs) from four countries. However, this map characterizes four categories of MEGAs, making clear that beyond the Pentagon it would be to the east that there was a “geography of possibilities” for the production of new networks of European centralities (SEIXAS, 2012). Nevertheless, in the ranking of world mega-regions presented by Florida, Gulden and Mellander (2008), the same European map (Figure 2) seems to show that there were also possibilities on the south. The case of Lisbon megaregion appears in 33rd place in the ranking of the 40 largest world mega-regions and 9th position in the European ranking, ahead of mega-regions like Berlin.

Table 1. Ranking of the European Mega-regions

Mega-region name	LRP 2000 (US \$ Billions)	LRP Rank (40 Global)	LRP Rank Europe
Am-Brus-Twerp	1500	4	1
Lon-Leed-Chester	1200	6	2
Rom-Mil-Tur	1000	7	3
Frank-Gart	630	10	4
Barcelona-Lyon	610	11	5
Paris	380	17	6
Vienna-pest	180	25	7
Prague	150	27	8
Lisbon	110	33	9
Glas-burgh	110	36	10
Berlin	110	37	11
Madrid	100	39	12

Source: adapted from Florida, Gulden and Mellander (2008).

This map features a closer portrait of polycentric Europe. However, such map cannot be understood except as a replication development model of the European center. Not only no European or national strategy has ever considered the Lisbon mega-region, but furthermore these maps resulted more from Member States domestic development of their metropolitan regions than from the existence of an idealized European strategy (MEDEIROS, 2016). In this process, the use of the Structural Funds increased cleavages between regions rather than combating them, reproducing within the Member States the same diagnosis of “a competitive centrality versus a poor and vulnerable periphery” (SEIXAS, 2012, p. 169) which was taking place at European level.

Paradox 1: A proposed European polycentric development (desired or hypocritical) vs. a real monocentric development. A European “Diversity of Regions” agenda within a practice that reproduces a competitive center vs. a dependent periphery or a second-level polycentrism, which is expressed at European level and is replicated at national level.

Paradox 2: A development of European transnational regions vs. a development centered on the national(s) metropolis. No European or national strategy has ever considered the mega-region of Lisbon (the Lisbon-A Coruña axis, as we may rightly call it), a fact that reinforces an internal logic of sub-national regions that replicate the logic which the EU tried to establish for the European level.

National Level Inter-Regions

Recently there has been a change in the European discourse in which “territory” has replaced the “space” as the basis of development planning (MEDEIROS, 2016). This shift has been driven by a view that territory can be configured as capital and thus can be used to activate local and regional economies from a bottom-up perspective. It is not certain, however, that this is a strategic change and no longer a step in the aforementioned process of institutionalizing a European Planning. Indeed, the replication of the European multilevel governance model at regional/local level seems to have created a specific pattern in most Member States: the political-administrative

regions have become the level responsible for formulation of the development strategies; and inter-municipal cooperation the way to implement common projects (FEIO; CHORINCAS, 2009). Such a pattern configures a city-region design that, unlike 'global city-regions', allows for a scale of proximity of territories and people and thus creates a functional approach. The main argument around this 'new regionalism' is that by involving actors with strategic relevance in a given territory, the combined territorialities of these actors makes possible 'bottom up territories', more adjusted to local realities than existing political-administrative jurisdictions. Moreover, by involving a diversity of actors (public and non-public) in variable geometries, this model enables potentially innovative ad hoc solutions to specific problems, as well as greater legitimacy of actions (OLIVEIRA; BRENDA-VÁZQUEZ, 2016). However, for this to happen it is necessary that the existing institutional structure is able to articulate and integrate these territorial based solutions with the strategies defined by the above levels.

This framework supports the so-called place-based policies (BARCA, 2009), through which the EU has sought to promote a new approach to regional policy aimed at mobilizing endogenous resources in the regions. In the context of the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy, it is unclear whether this regional paradigm shift is a response to the paradoxes already identified, seeking to mobilize a solution that minimizes its consequences, or a set-up of a new strategy where the sub-regional level became privileged rather than the mega-regions. This issue seems to be highlighted by the change in the redistributive rationale centered on the reduction of economic disparities between different regions that characterized Cohesion Policy, making the pave to one where growth opportunities in all types of territory and regions are now considered (OECD, 2009; 2011).

In this context, the endogenous potential of territories and bottom-up responses has been a reaction process of peripheral territories to deterritorialization promoted by the competitive centralism model. In Portugal, this is clear in the 2 other models that overlapped those of the Metropolis and Metropolization (SEIXAS, 2011; 2012): (3) the 'Sociocultural Intermediation Model' (in the late 1990s, early 2000s, with the bet on culture, innovation and heritage, as factors of territorial development due to concepts such as 'detraditionalization', 'urbanism by formatting' and 'discursive reconfigurations'); and (4) the 'Creativity Model' (from 2000 onwards, by associating the economy with the creative industries in particular in low density zones, based on concepts such as 'creative hubs', 'creative clusters', 'creative neighborhoods' and 'creative municipalities'). What is new, therefore, is the recognition of these processes at EU level and the (re)orientation of Cohesion Policy towards enhancing them.

Considering the existing realities and past experiences in Portugal, the changes introduced in the current community cycle, according to a functional logic of the region, foresaw a serious test of the institutional capital present in the territories (MOURATO, 2013). What happened in the implementation of the Portugal 2020 has confirmed that prediction. The importance of the territorialization of public policies has become explicit with the *ex-ante* conditionalities defined by the EU to have access to part of the funds. These implied, firstly, the introduction of a set of new territorial-based instruments, standing out the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs) whose objective was to promote the creation of functional regions for greater integration between interventions and financing.

The institutional structure created to meet these new requirements was based on the newly consolidated IME (NUTS III): MA and IMC (Figure 3.). These entities were identified by the Portugal 2020, the name given to the Partnership Agreement adopted between the Portuguese State and the EU for Structural Funds operations in the 2014-2020 period, as the privileged level for the integration of interventions and the establishment of coordination relations between actors of various territorial levels.

Figure 3. IME map: MA and IMC (NUTS III)



Source: INE (2015) cfr

In line with the Intelligent, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth pursued by the Europe 2020 Strategy, these principles have been organized according to four thematic areas: (i) Competitiveness and Internationalization; ii) Social Inclusion and Employment; iii) Human Capital; and iv) Sustainability and Resource Efficiency; as well as two transversal domains: i) Public Administration Reform; and ii) Territorialization of Interventions. Despite the above *ex-ante* conditionalities, the ITIs were implemented to correspond to the political and administrative boundaries of NUTS III, instead of the functional approach advocated by the EU.

This option seems to reflect which has been the internal culture of funds application influenced by a centralism-municipalist tension that historically characterizes the territorial organization of the Portuguese State (OLIVEIRA; BREDA-VÁZQUEZ, 2016). In addition, regional development in Portugal is still envisaged through a mainly administrativist logic which results of a late democratic regime marked by European influence, the partisanship of the state and partisan reluctance in order to open the political system to a substantive participation, resulted in a strong distancing from citizens to political power (CABRAL, 2006). On the other hand, one of the major programming problems identified relies precisely in a deficit of a strategic dimension in Portugal (MARQUES, 2017). Precise policy choices are needed and the objectives of interventions should be prioritized and taken for an appropriate time horizon, which may not necessarily be the one of Community programming. In the Portuguese case, the rule has been to develop strategies only in the preparation phase of the various documents that are required for the transfer of previously decided financial packages to the country.

Paradox 3: A development of endogenous potential of the regions (people-centered and place-based) vs. a programming development/cascading jurisdictions. There is a structural centralism-municipalist national culture of fund implementation. Furthermore, although at European level territorialization is the recommended approach, only 11% of funds have been allocated to place-based projects (FERREIRA; CATARINO, 2018).

Paradox 4: A National Strategy Development (Nonexistent) vs. a European strategy development (the fund options). In Portugal, there was never a prior national structural policy of its own, capable of joining forces in a collective project. European efforts to bridge this absence have only reinforced the bureaucratic apparatus surrounding such absence.

Multilevel and territorial development governance is not possible without a shared national vision of the strategic importance of the regions. Therefore, the use of funds has never been a collective and institutional learning project, neither a reflective one, able to be assumed as a horizon of expectations. A culture of the diversity of regions, as well as local and regional economies, implies receptiveness to intraregional governance procedures, which has not been the case.

Intra-Regional Instrumental Level

The operation of the Portugal 2020 was carried out through 16 Operational Programs (OPs), of which we highlight the 5 Regional OPs corresponding to NUTS II in the Continent. These programs were prepared by the respective Regional Coordination and Development Commissions (RCDC), technical entities under the supervision of the government. At the subregional level (NUTS III), the implementation of the ITIs implied two other instruments: one of Participated Strategic Planning, with the elaboration of the aforementioned ITDSs by the IME, linking the priorities and strategies for each of the NUTS III with those of the respective regional higher level OPs (NUTS II); and another for contracting these interventions, called Territorial Development and Cohesion Pacts (TDCPs), consisting of a single financial envelope per NUTS II. According to the number of NUTS III by NUTS II, this created a situation in which inter-municipal collaboration for the implementation of ITIs meant that these entities had to compete with each other.

The ITDSs, based on a participatory territorial diagnosis, implied the involvement of the actors considered strategically relevant in each NUTS III. However, the actors selected for this process corresponded to those represented in the executive and deliberative bodies and in the respective advisory body of these entities, the so-called Strategic Councils. Saying that, it was also depending on political-administrative territories (NUTS III) that the relevant actors were selected and not as a result of 'functional' criteria capable of creating the territories for the territorialization of interventions.

Thereafter, the proposals from each ITDS were evaluated by a Commission made up of representatives of the Agency for Development and Cohesion (AD&C), the Managing Authority for the OPs; and the RCDC as well external experts. Together they checked the consistency of ITDSs with the regional strategy (the OPs for each NUTS II). Following this review, the ITDSs were also considered in the context of specific meetings of the respective Intersectoral Coordinating Council, with the participation of AD&C to adapt the initial proposals to align with the cascading programming. Once recognized and approved, the ITDSs provided the strategic framework for other lower-level territorial interventions. The bureaucracy of this whole process can already be understood as evidence of the constraints of a top-down alignment required to development instruments. Summarizing the process:

- The Portugal 2020 national program had to be in line with the Europe 2020 strategy;
- Each Regional OP had to be in line with the Portugal 2020 national program;
- The ITIs (ITDSs, funded by the TDCPs) had to be in line with the respective Regional OP.

Paradox 5: A development centered on functional regions vs. development centered on administrative regions. Among many other complexities, the current European model of territorial development reveals a tension between the bureaucratic obligation of 'cascading programming' and the importance of activating local and regional economies from a bottom-up perspective.

Paradox 6: A development centered on strategic regional players vs. a development centered on partisan-municipalist logic. This tension is clearer when we add to the bureaucratic obligation of programming, the prevalence of the municipalism-centralist rationale of following the money in relation to a rationale resulting from a true regional territorial diagnosis.

The intra-regional level is instrumentalized throughout these paradoxes. In this context, the case of the implementation of ITI in the PMA can serve to understand the "schizoid" character of the territorial approaches of Portugal 2020 which has been proposed in this text (FERREIRA; SEIXAS, 2017).

Staged Territorialization': PMA as a Learning Case

The PMA is an emblematic case of the tensions created between the elaboration of the ITDSs at the NUTS III level and their funding at the NUTS II level, since it had to compete with another 7 IME. As mentioned above, in the preparation phase of the current Community cycle, a new

instrument was introduced: the ITIs. According to the definition of the national program and the Regional OP, ITIs “are models used in the design and implementation of NORTH 2020 which take the specificities of the region's territories and involve their actors in public policy management” into account (NORTE2020, n.d.). Therefore, this instrument seems to be in a midway between an old, top-down model and a new, more bottom-up model. The operationalization of this idea, however, took place through a complex institutionalized network, where the roles and responsibilities of each participant in the process were not clear. Expressing this, it was stated that:

[...] in the NORTH2020, these models are part of the Integrated Territorial Development Strategies, defined at NUTS III level and promoted by the IMC and PMA, in articulation with the other relevant actors for regional or local development. (NORTH2020, n.d.).

Here, attention should be drawn to the peculiar use of the term “promoted”, which may mean an emptying of the responsibility of IME, as it does not appear to be by chance that a verb is not used as “operationalized” or “implemented”. It is also important to mention, as it is important in reinforcing this idea of ‘neoinstitutionalization’, that the concept of ITIs would not be a starting point for the definition of the policies, but rather a point of arrival, indicating a result from a bottom-up procedure.

For example, the PMA drew up a background document that was expected to shape the NUTS III territorial strategic. This document, the Territorial-Based Strategic Plan (TBEP), constituted “the result of the territorial assessment carried out as part of the preparation process for the next Structural Fund programming period” (AMPORTO, n.d.). Summarizing, PMA undertook a territorial diagnosis to guide a strategic action framework that would maximize and optimize the intervention impacts of the Structural Funds, during the 2014-20 period. Recognizing this aim, a set of guiding principles of work was agreed among the municipalities. However, this document reveals already a concern with an alignment to financial agreements at the higher scale. Nevertheless the territorialization of policies refers “favoring the involvement and participation of the most relevant institutional partners and whose action is crucial at all stages of the regional development process” (AMPORTO, s.d.), in turn, TBEP aims to:

[...] focus analysis and evaluation, as well as later strategy and action plan, on the Europe 2020 priorities, achieved by objectives set at European, national or regional level, thus ensuring the required strategic coherence and alignment. (AMPORTO, n.d.).

This cautious phrase writing comes from a political scenario that was very present in the formation of the Regional OPs. In May 2015, a leading newspaper on these issues reported that the RCDC-North President assumed a negotiating framework and a critical view of the mayors, “RCDC-N President Emídio Gomes expects that the agreement on Community funds by the municipalities within the framework of Portugal 2020 is completed by the end of June (2015)” (CCDR-N, 2015). Still in the same article, he added that “a negotiation phase” was ongoing, accepting that the municipalities and IME were “concerned” with the schedule, but guaranteed that there was no delay in “the municipalities agreements” (CCDR-N, 2015). However, this evident tension was originated in the confrontation which had previously been revealed to exist between the different levels of decision – the governmental and the local. Just a month before this RCDC-N situation point, the Secretary of State responsible for EU funds revealed where the problem lay in the contractual arrangement between territorial approaches and investments. Castro Almeida said in a threatening tone in March 2015 that “inter-municipal communities must present an action plan identifying 75% of investments to be made by 2020” (MUNICÍPIOS, 2015) – obviously referring to what would come to be the applications of the TDCPs. But more importantly, it pointed out that the government would indicate the financial allocation available for each priority axis of the new European funds so that IMEs can submit their applications. He concluded by adding, “that those responsible (that is, mayors) do not fall into the “temptation” to “put money out of established priorities” (MUNICIPALS, 2015).

From the political scenario presented, it becomes clear that who defined the objectives, the criteria, the priorities, the endowment and the contractualisation was the government. The IMEs were tasked with writing a policy document that, while aligned with the predefined instrumental process, could present an image of true territorialization of policies. The PMA ITDS is clear on this issue by referring:

[...] in adopting as Strategic Objectives for the PMA the Thematic Objectives set by the European Union for the next Structural Funds programming cycle, a decision which, despite

conditioning the strategy, ensures coherence with the Europe 2020 strategy by expanding funding possibilities proposed interventions. (AMP2020, 2014, p. 22).

The proposal of this text is to argue that the political documents (Portugal 2020, Regional OPs, TBEP, ITDS and TDCP) are evidences of this duplicity between a territorial proposition of development presented in one document (TBET), then partially contradicted in another (ITDS) which is a mere maximization of access to funds. This we call a 'staged territorialization'. Such a history of community funding in which the rationality of funding tends to override the rationality of the strategy is already diagnosed by national evaluators. An overly rigid concept of territory in the contracting process based on "political-administrative boundaries (e.g. districts and municipalities) and/or statistics (e.g. NUTS II and NUTS III) does not facilitate an adequate definition of the scale of public policy" (ROMÃO; MONTEIRO, 2017, p. 691).

Development Problematics and Traps: The Region as Fragility

An evaluation of the implementation process of the new regional development paradigm implies, for us, a multilevel analysis, setting up two problematics and two traps that we will address in this last point and which should be the subject of attention in future investigations.

1) The first problematic is between the paradigm and the pragmatics or a narrative of 'follow the people' and 'follow the money'. If the paradigm is the polycentric development, centered on territories and people, the pragmatics of development are largely the 'follow the money'. So, 'follow the money' or 'follow the territories' and people is a problem with no easy solution.

2) The second problematic is between evidence-based policy and policy-based evidence (see, for example, MARMOT, 2004; SHARMAN; HOLMES, 2010; SANDERSOM, 2011; BROWN, 2014). It is within this ambivalent framework that ITDSs were produced which characterize, in principle, a people-centered and place-based policy. These should be evidence-focused rather than merely political documents, supported by research done with universities and experts in the territories, their communities, cultures and people.

In turn, these two problematics also entailed two traps:

1) The territorial trap: The various tensions between territories (implicated in the necessary translation of multilevel governance instruments) influence policy making, implying a needless mismatching between the territories that should be funded by regional policy and those that actually are. The territorial trap translates into several aspects, which may be pinpointed into three main ones:

- a. **The constitution of regions that frame development as 'sub-regions'.** The territories to be targeted by projects (NUTS III) are but fragile sub-regions, dependent on other regions (the NUTS/ Plan Regions) which in turn are merely extensions of a national government strategy. Thus, the regions which frame development were themselves largely constituted to 'follow the money' (funds) and were not effectively constituted as 'Regions' with a strong territory culture;
- b. **The lack of equity between regions, even at the same statistical level.** Territories, apparently in identical situations (NUTS III) which are not, in fact, since some NUTS III are also NUTS II while other NUTS III must compete with each other for being within the same NUTS II.
- c. **The lack of legitimacy of such regions vis-à-vis their internal entities (municipalities) to which they are eventually held hostage.** The sub-regions are clusters of municipalities and, to a large extent, are ultimately held hostage to these; specifically to their hierarchy and their specific political party configurations.

2) The funds trap: the documents were made against the background of the funds but its evaluation turned out not to be based on the evidence of such documents (perhaps because some of the problems of the process were perceived). Rather, 'fezization' of EU funds was applied (pre-established practices of money distribution that favor stronger municipalities). As illustrated by the duplicity presented by TBEP and ITDS in the case of the PMA, the funds trap is evidenced by the fact that documents reifying the upstream objectives (by Regional OPs), what leads to question the value of such processes (Table 2.).

Table 2. Paradigmatic vs. Pragmatic Development

Documents/Instruments	TBEP	ITDS
Conceptual tension	Paradigmatic Perspective	Pragmatic Perspective
Influence on translation	External (EU)	Internal (central government)
Formulation and implementation mobile	People and Territory	Funds and Results
Drafting type	Evidence-based Policy	Policy-based evidence
Development Paradigm	Territorialization	Neoinstitutionalization

Source: authors elaboration.

Finally, the paroxysms enunciated in this text have the Region as fragility as a corollary at three levels, which we now enumerate:

1. Strategic fragility. The lack of clarity of the regions as the center of the development programming. NUTS III (IME) should be the central scope of strategic regional development programming. However, this programming has to be lined up with the Regional OPs of the 5 Plan Regions (NUTS II). Although this is a national issue, there are NUTS III which coincide with NUTS II where the problem can be somehow minimized, depending on the hierarchy of municipalities and their party distribution (e.g. Metropolitan Area of Lisbon and Algarve IMC). In the case of PMA, this case is aggravated by the profusion of IME and legal variation – while PMA has a certain legal framework, the remaining 7 IMC have a slightly different one (Law 75/2013, of 12 September). Therefore, a position of competitiveness between IMC and between them and PMA, aggravated by RCDC-N mediation, transforms Planning tools into discursive bases of political discussion and investment plans into multilevel institutional confrontations.

2. Administrative fragility. A second aspect, which is already evident in the previous point, yet goes beyond, is the legitimacy of the new Regions for integrated development programming. First of all the question arises from the socio-legal constitution of these regions. Regionalization in Portugal was always a problem solved by maintaining the centralism-municipalist solution, weakening the intermediate regions between the central and municipal administration (OLIVEIRA, 2013). Although Plan Regions exist with changes since 1969, and having 25 years of the legal existence of the MAs and 13 years of the IMCs, the legitimacy of such regions emerges as fragile. If the Plan Regions are largely a continuity of the government, the MA and IMC are in turn so limited that they are sometimes considered as ‘sub-regions’, evidencing their dependence on the Plan Regions; and other times as IME (inter-municipal entities), evidencing its dependence on the municipalities. Thus, the centralism-municipalist political solution holds strongly. This undermines the legitimacy and autonomy for these regions, which in fact must be the scope of strategic development programming.

3. Sociological fragility. Finally, effective strategic programming is not possible if such a project cannot be transformed into a truly collective process, capable of being taken over by institutions, organizations and individuals as their own, i.e. capable of becoming a collective commitment. Given that, sociologically, political power tends to be personalized in Portugal, the centralism-municipalist solution largely translates into a Prime Minister-Mayor duo. These are clearly socially and administratively recognized characters unlike the RCDCs presidents or MAs and IMCs bodies. Moreover, in most cases, MAs and IMCs do not constitute a clear cultural identity that brings together individuals, organizations and institutions in a collective project. Thus, true regional cultural identities need to be built, but this is obviously not a political priority.

Thinking about the regions and placing individuals as well organizations in this collaborative process is fundamental for the territories to become cognitive and reflexive actors capable of learning and, finally, able to be the center of integrated strategic programming. Unfortunately, the administrative view has been dominant, as well the centralism-municipalist thinking of a personalist type. Moreover, the evaluation of public policies in Portugal is scarce, and there is also a lack of effective participation in this evaluation (FERRÃO; MOURATO, 2010; RODRIGUES, 2012). All of this contributes to an ongoing neo-functionalist and governmental paradigm of efficacy and the management of results over knowledge creation, political accountability, public information and governance quality in regional development.

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