

De la Evaluación Ambiental Estratégica a la Evaluación de Impacto Territorial: Reflexiones acerca de la tarea de evaluación

Joaquín Farinós Dasí (ed. y coord.)

De la Evaluación Ambiental Estratégica a la Evaluación de Impacto Territorial: Reflexiones acerca de la tarea de evaluación

(From Strategic Environmental Assessment
to Territorial Impact Assessment:
Reflections about evaluation practice)

Joaquín Farinós Dasí
(Ed. y Coord.)

** Revisión de las traducciones de los textos originales en
inglés a cargo de María Paola Ruiz Córdoba*

Contenidos

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7 Evaluation and Spatial Planning in Portugal: From legal requirement to source of policy-learning and institutional innovation

João Ferrão¹

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Portugal has a weak tradition as far as public policy evaluation is concerned. In fact, the latter arose almost entirely as a response to external demands associated with programmes involving international or European Union funding or legal requirements. In this context, the evolution of evaluation in the field of spatial planning, which is not a formal European Union competency, has followed its own particular course specially when compared to other public policies far more exposed to normative exogenous factors. In reconstituting the history of this development we can see that over a period of 13 years the aims of evaluation in the field of spatial planning have become increasingly broad, growing from a simple assessment of policy conformity to a preemptive impact assessment and later on to an evaluation of territorial dynamics, and planning processes and practices. This widened scope has meant that evaluation in spatial planning is nowadays part of a larger universe of evaluative practices that focus on the territorial nature and impacts of specific public policies. This chapter highlights both the advantages and the tensions of that incorporation, and proceeds to a critical analysis of the purpose of the Territorial Impact Assessment instrument and the conditions for this tool to be adopted in Portugal. Assuming a constructivist approach, the need to transform spatial planning evaluation into a source of policy-learning, institutional innovation and citizenship is stressed as a crucial challenge for the near future both at the European and the domestic level.

Introduction

In Portugal, public policy evaluation is only two decades old. Originally implemented as a requisit for the access to both international and mainly European Union funding

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programmes, it has evolved strongly influenced by external and coercive factors (i.e. EU regulations and directives). In particular, spatial planning policy evaluation has had a relatively late and singular start. At first influenced by non-EU sources, and despite the fact that spatial planning is not a formal competency of the EU, it has been through the growing europeanisation of spatial planning processes and the strong influence of both EU environmental and cohesion policies that the development of evaluation in the field of spatial planning in Portugal has taken place. This chapter will critically review this development process.

In this sense, this chapter will: identify the key changes that took place since its legislative framing in 1998; detail the institutional contexts that conditioned such changes; discuss existing tensions and future perspectives. Particular attention will be given to a possible adoption in the near future of territorial impact assessment instruments (TIA) and the potential obstacles it will face in a country that still lacks a consolidated culture of public policy evaluation, and in a policy field whose borders with other transversal yet more powerful policy fields (i.e. environment and cohesion) are not politically stabilized.

Structure wise this chapter entails five sections.

The first section will illustrate the origins of the evaluation of public policy in Portugal.

The second section will review the evolution of evaluation in the specific field of spatial planning and identify its contemporary development challenges and tensions.

The third section will succinctly introduce the TIA and critically analyse the potential advantages and disadvantages in Portugal taking on this policy evaluation instrument in the current institutional and cultural frameset.

The fourth section will address the slow yet apparently irreversible setting in of a culture of evaluation in the field of spatial planning in Portugal and comment on how the eventual adoption of the TIA would contribute to its consolidation.

Finally, the fifth section will conclude that the future of the TIA in Portugal as an autonomous evaluation instrument will depend mostly on external decisions taken at the EU level or on strong leaderships at the Ministry responsible for planning. The underlying message here is that it seems preferable that the EU pushes forward the definition of soft law mechanisms that promote the integration of the territorial dimension in the existent instruments for integrated evaluation, developing a holistic and stable evaluation framework and a minimum shared approach to be adopted by all member-states in the demanding post-2013 period.

1. The origins of public policy evaluation in Portugal

It is only recently that public policy measures, or private-sector initiatives affecting the public interest, have been subject to evaluation in Portugal. Given that the country lacked significant production in the field of evaluation theory, early evaluation projects arose mainly as a response to the demands of international or EU funding programmes, and focused largely on methodological aspects associated with the adoption of procedures, which at that time were new to Portugal.

The pioneering publications on evaluation date from the early 1990s and relate to specific programmes: the Local Employment Initiatives Programme (*Programa ILE - Iniciativas Locais de Emprego* (Baptista and Henriques, 1992), the HORIZON Community Initiative (Pegado *et al.*, 1996), the Public Administration Training Programme (PROFAP – *Programa de Formação da Administração Pública* (Pedroso *et al.*, 1994), etc. At this stage the main focus was on methodological aspects as reflected in the title of the special 1996 issue of the journal “*Sociologia. Problemas e Práticas*”, significantly called “Evaluation Methods.”

As Gonçalves (2010:355) reminds us, it was only in 1998 that the first public sector conference on evaluation took place, under the auspices of the National Administration Institute (*Instituto Nacional da Administração*), the national body responsible for training public sector managers and officials.

In fact, it was in that decade that the evaluation of public policy first emerged as a self-contained field in Portugal. This new context accounts for the publication of the first articles which sought to summarize and transpose into the Portuguese reality the debates and experiences of other countries, in terms of used methodologies (Rodrigues, 1993; Capucha *et al.*, 1996; Perestrelo and Caldas, 1996) and in specific areas of implementation, first in the labour market (Pedroso, 1992) and education (Estrela and Nóvoa, eds, 1992), and later in a variety of fields: urban renewal (Costa and Guerreiro, 1993), social work (Monteiro, 1996), regional policy (Ferrão, 1996), etc.

The start of this period can be said to have been marked by a document drawn up by two foreign specialists (Quévit and Marquez, 1990), on the ex-ante evaluation of the impact of the first Community Support Framework applied in Portugal (1989-93), at the request of the then minister for Spatial Planning and Administration.

The evaluation of public policies has changed considerably in recent years. The number of evaluation exercises has multiplied and there has been a far greater diversity of aims, applications and methodologies used. In fact, the very nature of the evaluation process has changed. In the meantime, officials have acquired technical expertise and specific epistemic communities have emerged, usually organized on the basis of the field in which expertise is applied (e.g. environment, education, training, social affairs, health, regional development, etc.) or in relation to specific instruments (e.g. environmental impact assessments).

The website for the National Strategic Reference Framework Observatory (*Observatório do QREN - Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional*),³ the body responsible for monitoring the use of EU structural funds in Portugal, contains a series of studies, guides and other evaluation documents. Although these are specific to its sphere of action, they are a good illustration of how much progress has been made over a period of only twenty years.

Even though there has been resistance to change and significant differences between areas of application, evaluation increasingly ceased to be just a response to external (mainly EU) demands. It gradually turned out to be part of a newfound public sector

3. www.observatorio.pt

organizational culture and even a response to citizens who had both become more demanding and were less trustful of public institutions.

2. The evaluation of public policy in the field of spatial planning

The history of evaluation in the field of spatial planning in Portugal has to be seen in the light of two narratives which only recently have crossed paths: the history of spatial planning as a public policy and the history of the evaluation of public policy.

While spatial planning is not a formal EU competency, it is clear that the development of policy evaluation in this field was slower off the mark than in other fields far more exposed to a direct EU influence, and that the first steps taken here were not based on legal or regulatory requirements imposed at the European level.

Formally, the story begins in 1998, with the approval of the Territorial Planning and Urbanism Act (*Lei de Bases da Política de Ordenamento do Território e de Urbanismo* - LBOTU*), at the end of the decade in which evaluation became established in several public policy areas in Portugal. In the words of one of the experts responsible for drafting the act, the way in which the scope of evaluation is enshrined in the LBOTU reflects not so much an EU influence but rather the work of the OECD, namely its Directorate of Public Governance and Territorial Development, and the Swiss Confederation's Federal Law of 1979 (Gonçalves, 2010).

Subsequent developments can be mapped according to the manner in which the scope of evaluation in spatial planning, hence too the range of its purposes, gradually increased. Consequently, its application, in practice, evolved beyond a simple assessment of policy conformity (results versus objectives) to a preemptive impact assessment (preventive analysis of potentially adverse impacts) and later on to an evaluation of territorial dynamics (systematic monitoring of territorial trends and dynamics) and planning practices and processes (participative, collaborative and deliberative planning, institutional learning). The following is an overall analysis of that development and the factors that influenced it.⁵

4. Law 48/98, of 11 August 1998.

5. In addition to the references cited in the bibliography, this article draws heavily on the presentations and discussions which took place at the conference entitled "Evaluation of Spatial and Urban Planning Policies in Europe and in the National, Regional and Municipal Spheres" (*Avaliação das Políticas de Ordenamento do Território e de Urbanismo no Espaço Europeu e nos Âmbitos Nacional, Regional e Municipal*), organized by Ad Urbem and held in Porto on 26 and 27 November 2010. The relevant conference documents have not yet been published, but most of the Powerpoint presentations can be accessed at <http://www.adurbem.pt>.

2.1. Deciphering the past: foundational factors and recent dynamics

Underlying normative references for spatial planning: conformity evaluation

The Territorial Planning and Urbanism Act (LBOTU) was approved in 1998, establishing a coherent system of land management made up of national,⁶ regional⁷ and municipal⁸ instruments (in essence, plans). This legislation pioneered, in the European context, the obligation to evaluate and monitor spatial planning policy.

Under article 28, evaluation of spatial planning policy has to be based on "Spatial Planning Status Reports" ("*Relatórios sobre o Estado do Ordenamento do Território*" - REOT), to be submitted every two years by the Government to the National Parliament, by Regional Boards to the Regional Assemblies⁹ and by Local Authorities to the Municipal Assembly, describing how planning policy instruments under their respective jurisdictions have been applied. In essence, this is an exercise to determine whether results match objectives, and to ensure that different plans and policies are properly co-ordinated (i.e. vertical coordination between local, regional and national planning instruments; horizontal coordination between spatial planning instruments and sectoral policies with a relevant territorial impact).

As far as monitoring of spatial planning policy is concerned, Article 29 provides for two mechanisms which would be set up in 1999 in the form of an Observatory and the National Territorial Information System (SNIT - *Sistema Nacional de Informação Territorial*). In fact, it was the Legal Framework for Territorial Management Instruments (*Regime Jurídico dos Instrumentos de Gestão Territorial*) of 1999,¹⁰ which would set out the regulations and purposes governing both these mechanisms, and allocate them a key role in the production of technical arguments to justify proposals to change or revise the various territorial management instruments.

Although this new legal framework goes into greater detail, evaluation is still essentially an analysis of conformity, which seeks to ensure that the aims of each territorial management instrument are achieved through improved execution (i.e. results more in line with predefined objectives), proper co-ordination with other policy instruments, and appropriate revisions if there have been, in the meantime, significant economic, social, cultural or environmental changes.

6. National Spatial Planning Policy Programme (*Programa Nacional da Política de Ordenamento do Território*) and Sectoral Plans (*Planos Sectoriais*).

7. Regional Spatial Plans (*Planos Regionais de Ordenamento do Território* - PROT): 5 in mainland Portugal and 1 in each of the Autonomous Regions, the Azores and Madeira.

8. Municipal Territorial Plans (*Planos Municipais de Ordenamento do Território* - PMOT): Municipal Master Plans (at the municipal level), Urban Development Plans, and Detailed Plans.

9. Regional Boards and Regional Assemblies were never formed. They had been envisaged as part of the proposed Administrative Regions in mainland Portugal, but this idea was rejected in a referendum in 1998. These bodies were therefore replaced by the Regional Co-ordination and Development Committees and by Regional Councils, respectively.

10. Decree-Law 380/99, of 22 September 1999.

Evaluation was thus introduced into spatial planning as a *management tool*, aimed at improving the quality and maximising the effectiveness of territorial management instruments (i.e. plans). Seen in this way, the focus of evaluation is of course on the instrument (the *plan*), not on the territory to which it applies, the people and communities affected, or the institutions involved in drafting, carrying out and monitoring the plan. Pinho (2010) and Oliveira and Pinho (2009, 2010a) consider this perspective as a reflection of a rationalist approach to planning, focused on the preparation of plans and on the operational aspects of their implementation. In truth, this perspective reflects the modern technocratic positivist paradigm dominant at that time not only in the field of planning but in public policy and its evaluation as a whole (Ferrão, 2010a).

The powerful influence of environmental policy: preemptive impact assessment

Spatial planning is not a EU formal competency. Despite this fact, several authors have recognized the increasing convergence of ideas and practices in this field, in countries having different institutional cultures (Dühr, Stead and Zonnevel, 2007; Farinós Dasi (Ed.), 2007; Adams, 2008; Böhme and Waterhout, 2008; Waterhout, Mourato and Böhme, 2009; Ferrão, 2010a). However, these authors do question how deep and lasting some of the processes of relative harmonization now taking place will be.

In contrast, there is a EU policy for the environment. Its coercive nature requires the compulsory transposition of EU environmental directives into each member-state's national law. National governments are therefore more exposed to external decisions, and the effects of those decisions are more quickly felt.

It was precisely in this context that evaluation as preemptive analysis of potentially adverse impacts achieved special significance in Portugal.

The Legal Framework for Environmental Impact Assessments (*Regime Jurídico da Avaliação do Impacte Ambiental*) for public and private projects having potentially significant effects on the environment¹¹ was approved in 2000, thus transposing into national law a EU directive of 1997.¹² The preamble to the Decree-Law establishing this legal framework mentions that environmental impact assessments are a fundamental preemptive instrument in environment and spatial planning policy. The approach adopted is to focus on potential impacts, with the aim of avoiding, reducing or compensating for negative impacts.

The actual content of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) varies, but it always includes spatial planning aspects. The aforementioned legal framework defines the minimal content requirements of the EIA, which necessarily include the location of the project under review and the site description in terms of population, landscape, soil, fauna and flora.

In 2007, and likewise as a result of the transposition of a EU directive,¹³ plans and programmes in addition to projects became subject to an environmental impact assessment, under a new legal framework for environmental assessments.¹⁴ All spatial plans and programmes became subject to this type of environmental assessment, which is more strategic in nature. For the sake of greater coherence and rationality of government action, environmental requirements resulting from environmental assessments had to be taken into account, from that point onwards, in the drafting and approval of such plans and programmes.

Bodies charged with drawing up plans and programmes are required to ensure that any resulting measures are incorporated into those plans. It is the duty of the responsible entity for the plan or programme to determine the scope and contents of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): mandatory nature, type of information to be analysed, detail of analysis, etc. The outputs of a SEA of a given plan or programme must be taken into account in the EIA of projects that fall within the remit of these plans or programmes. This procedure will guarantee a greater coherence between plans, programmes and projects. It will also simplify the EIA processes of projects that fall into this group. However, the results of the SEA are not mandatory. In the case of a conflict, the responsible public entity must justify why the EIA of a specific project failed to take into account the guidelines of the SEA of the plan or programme that encompasses it.

The requirement for preemptive assessment of the environmental impact of projects first, and plans and programmes subsequently, inevitably had an effect on the way evaluations were carried out in the field of spatial planning in Portugal.

As with the previous type of situation – conformity evaluation – normative factors influenced the way these evaluations evolved. But unlike conformity, the focus of evaluation is now on the *potential impact* of plans and programmes, not on the plans and programmes themselves. Evaluation is still seen as a management instrument, but from a preemptive rather than from an executive point of view. Spatial planning evaluation thus became somewhat more strategic, although strongly biased in favour of environmental sustainability.

Three years after the abovementioned EU directive was transposed into national law, Strategic Environmental Assessments have been applied to various types of territorial plans: Regional Plans, Municipal Plans and Special Plans (Conservation Area Plans and Lagoon Plans, for example).

A survey carried out by DGOTDU in 2010, on approved municipal territorial plans in mainland Portugal which had been reviewed or altered in the period between 24 September 2007 (the date the new legislation came into force) and 21 April 2010, found 40 instances in which a SEA had been carried out. Soares (2008) has undertaken an in-depth analysis of the benefits of the SEA Report which accompanied the revision of the Master Plan for a suburban municipality in the Greater Lisbon area (Vila Franca de Xira) and Ferreira (2009) has done a comparative analysis of 25 cases in which a SEA

11. Decree-Law 69/2000, of 3 May 2000, Article 1. Environmental impact assessments for projects were previously governed by Decree-Law 186/90, of 6 June 1990.

12. Council Directive 97/11/CE of 3 March 1997.

13. Council and European Parliament Directive 2001/42/CE of 27 June 2001.

14. Decree-Law 232/2007, of 15 June 2007.

had been applied at the municipal level: 14 revisions of Municipal Master Plans, 6 new Urban Development Plans and 5 new Detailed Plans. However, it is still too early to make a rigorous assessment of the effects of this new requirement in terms of spatial planning.

Regardless of the benefits which may arise from drawing up SEAs for territorial plans currently in preparation or being altered or revised, it is important to underline how this practice required institutions and professional communities to work together while having different cultures and legal and technical backgrounds. An excellent example of the types of problems and tensions which can arise between institutions and professional communities which do not have enough experience of collaborative work was the somewhat complex production process of the Guide to Environmental Assessments for Municipal Territorial Plans, jointly prepared by the national authorities for spatial planning and environmental policy (DGOTDU and APA, 2008).

From the normative references of spatial planning policy to the imperatives of complexity and public demand: the evaluation of territorial dynamics

Any spatial planning policy is based on the presumption that systematic monitoring and assessment procedures are in place for the evaluation of territorial dynamics. The three mechanisms provided for under the law – the National Territorial Information System, the Observatory for Territorial Planning and Urbanism, and the Spatial Planning Status Reports at the national, regional and municipal levels – are the key elements in those procedures.

The Action Programme of the National Spatial Policy Programme, approved by the National Parliament in 2007,¹⁵ reasserts the importance of those various mechanisms and recalls that intervention under the programme should take into account “current territorial dynamics” (MAOTDR, 2007:235).

Unfortunately, although the Observatory for Territorial Planning and Urbanism has been formally set up, it is not yet active. The National Territorial Information System is still in a consolidation phase, while very few authorities have produced Spatial Planning Status Reports. Moreover, the delay in the operational kick-start of the Observatory for Territorial Planning and Urbanism and the yet subpar development of the National Territorial Information System mean that there are no clear guidelines at this stage for the elaboration of the Spatial Planning Status Reports at the municipal level. Acknowledging this gap, Prada (2008) proposes a methodological framework for the production of the necessary spatial planning status reports taking stock of the ones already produced and the Annual Monitoring Reports developed in the United Kingdom. Prada outlines a common assessment structure, yet sufficiently flexible to take on the existent territorial diversity.¹⁶

15. Law 58/2007, of 4 September.

16. The proposed report structure includes: Introduction (outline of the current municipal planning; territorial and monitoring system outline); Assessment of Territorial Status (analysis of the municipal territorial system); Assessment of the strategic planning framework (analysis of the municipal planning system and planning policies); and the Final Considerations (analytical summary, setting of future goals and policy measures to be implemented, and improvements to the monitoring system) (Prada, 2008: 99-100).

The need for permanent and multi-scale evaluation of territorial trends and dynamics arises not only from the need to meet legal requirements, but also from the gathering complexity, diversity and unpredictability of modern societies. However, to successfully evaluate territorial dynamics implies the existence of a harmonised system of indicators, to give us a systemic vision of the reality of Europe, its member-states, their regions and their localities. Recently the Directorate-General for Spatial Planning and Urban Development (*Direcção-Geral do Ordenamento do Território e Desenvolvimento Urbano*), at the national level, the Regional Co-ordination and Development Committees, at the regional level, and the municipalities, at the local level, have committed to the establishment of systems of indicators or even observatories, to enable them to undertake systematic evaluations of territorial dynamics.

A number of different factors justify that commitment from public authorities, some of them technical, such as the possibility of common usage of geographical information technologies, some cultural, such as the dissemination of more collaborative work practices, and others political, such as the conviction that the public pays increasingly close attention to the activities of central, regional and local government.

In actual fact, the importance of this commitment is increasingly recognized by political decision-makers, the media, and even citizens in general, perplexed as they are by situations such as extreme weather events (i.e. droughts, floods, tornadoes), the persistent depopulation of the hinterland, dramatic coastal erosion, and the sudden departure of foreign-owned corporations which until recently employed thousands of people.

However, the persistence of a top-down and sector-based organizational culture in many parts of the civil service makes it difficult to share the necessary information and to work together on common solutions. It is no surprise that the evaluation of territorial dynamics is faced with institutional, cultural and even technical obstacles that are impossible to ignore.

Unlike the two previous situations – conformity evaluation and preemptive impact evaluation – the importance with which spatial planning bodies have recently viewed the evaluation of territorial dynamics is not so much the result of external and legal factors, but of the recognition of two facts. First, that today's world is more complex, diverse and unpredictable, which implies the need for more strategic planning. And secondly, that citizens have to some degree lost trust in institutions, while some academic sectors, non-governmental organizations, and the media have become more demanding; this requires making more information available and being more transparent.

The concepts of evidence-based policy and evidence-based evaluation, as such, are still in their infancy in Portugal (Figueiredo, 2010). But the need, by conviction or out of necessity, to adjust development paths, to make political options legitimate, and to be accountable is increasingly recognised among public bodies. To ensure that these aims are met, there is a need for current territorial trends and dynamics to be systematically evaluated. In this case it is the *territories undergoing change*, whether or not they are affected by plans and programmes, which are the target of the evaluation exercises.

2.2. A new strategic and integrated vision of spatial planning: the evaluation of planning practices and processes

As in many other countries, spatial planning policy in Portugal has evolved from a physical, normative and static view of regulation of land use to a more strategic, comprehensive, and procedural vision of territorial development (Ferrão 2010a).

In a country where there is little theoretical debate on the ideas and the mission of spatial planning policies, this shift is the outcome mainly of the coming together of various “Europeanisation” factors, each having a variable impact but which tend to reinforce each other mutually:

- The “ESDP effect”, i.e. the influence of the principles, visions and concepts adopted in the ESDP – the European Spatial Development Perspective (CE, 1999), drawn up by the European Commission together with senior public officials and political decision-makers from all the member-states over a period of some 10 years;
- The “Community Initiatives effect,” i.e. the influence of the ideas that underpin initiatives such as URBAN (for urban areas), Leader (for rural areas) and INTERREG (for border areas);
- The “practice emulation effect,” i.e. the adoption of strategic spatial planning ideas then under development in several European cities, especially Barcelona when it was getting ready for the 1992 Olympic Games, which had a direct influence on the first strategic planning experiments in Portugal (Ferreira, 2005); and
- At a much lower level, the “ESPON effect,” which, although it is a later arrival and is mainly confined to academic and specialist circles, reflects the fact that ESPON (the European Spatial Planning Observation Network) has established a position for itself as a significant transnational platform for the production and dissemination of information and knowledge on the whole of the territory of the European Union.

The combination of these different effects has given rise to new ideas on spatial planning and, of course, to new approaches to evaluation in the field of spatial planning.

On the one hand, the fact that plans are now more strategic in nature, especially at the regional level (Regional Spatial Plans), means that they are assessed using methods developed in the context of the evaluation of EU funded programmes, in particular the Regional Programmes. Oliveira and Pinho (2010d) stress how the gap which existed initially between planning evaluation and programme evaluation gave way to a strengthening of the bond between them, under the increasing influence of programme evaluation methodology on spatial planning evaluation¹⁷.

17. There are two national evaluation-related professional associations in Portugal: the APAI – *Associação Portuguesa de Avaliação de Impactes* (<http://www.apai.org.pt>), which is part of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) and constitutes a debate platform on the EIA, SEA and other impact assessment instruments, and the *Associação Portuguesa de Avaliação* (<http://avalportugal.wordpress.com/>) - focused on public policy, programmes, projects and organizational evaluation - similar to the American Evaluation Association, the European Evaluation Society, etc. Significantly, the members of the planning epistemic community have no relevant position in either of these associations.

In this context, it should be recalled that during the 1990s Directorate-General XVI of the European Commission (Regional Policies and Cohesion) promoted a number of debates and published a series of documents and guides to evaluation (The MEANS Collection – *Means for Evaluation Actions of a Structural Nature*). These had a decisive influence on the evaluation of programmes and policies in member-states which had no previous evaluative experience. From that moment on, and in less than twenty years, there was considerable progress, as can be seen from an examination of the online resource for the evaluation of social and economic development called EVALSED (EC, 2008). It is this richer vision of policy and programme evaluation which is the main influence on the field of spatial planning today.

Amid this mix of influences, perhaps the most interesting case is the PPR – Plan, Process and Results - methodology developed by Oliveira and Pinho (2009, 2010a, 2010b and 2010c) to assess municipal plans. This methodology adopts an integrated vision based on several criteria, which reflect the elements of ex-ante rationality of planning (plan drafting stage), performance of the planning process, and matching results with objectives (plan implementation phase)¹⁸. This methodology has been tested in the two main Portuguese cities, Lisbon and Porto.

At the same time, the more strategic and comprehensive nature of spatial plans meant using new ways of communicating, exchanging information, sharing knowledge, participation, deliberation and governance, involving a wide range of stakeholders in central, regional and local government, the corporate sector, non-governmental organizations, and the public as a whole.

This broader involvement inevitably presupposes pro-active management of the ways in which actors are mobilized, policies are co-ordinated, contradictory interests are conciliated, and consensus and compromise are achieved. This is reflected in both the purpose and practices of evaluation (Breda-Vázquez and Conceição, 2010; Breda-Vázquez, Conceição and Móia, 2010). This shift reflects the influence of the post-positivist approaches to the design and evaluation of public policies. The positivist and technocratic modern paradigm is partially replaced by approaches of a procedural, participatory and constructivist nature (Ferrão, 2010a). Without downplaying the evaluation of results, impacts and dynamics this approach also includes the evaluation of decision-making processes, policy learning and innovation, and the institutional and professional practices.

A sequential analysis of the Regional Spatial Plans (*Planos Regionais de Ordenamento do Território* - PROT) approved in recent years illustrates this trend: To the evaluation of conformity, impact prevention and the territorial dynamics monitoring, a series of new evaluative concepts and practices are being added in line with both the evaluative

18. Ex-ante plan rationality dimension (4 criteria): internal coherence of the plan, plan relevance to the city, plan interpretation of the planning system, and external coherence; Planning performance dimension (3 criteria): public participation in the plan making and implementation, plan utilization in decision-making, and commitment of human and financial resources; Conformance of results dimension (2 criteria): effectiveness (plan results) and direction for the urban development process (Oliveira and Pinho, 2010c).

procedures that hail from the regional development programmes and the participatory, collaborative and deliberative spatial planning principles.

In the Algarve PROT (2007), three main aspects of the strategic evaluation procedures are put forward: the evaluation of the extent to which results match objectives; an impact evaluation aimed at defining preemptive measures and corrective or minimizing actions; and the evaluation of the relevance and suitability of strategies, this latter aspect reflecting a vision which is closer to the evaluation criteria used in programmes which are EU co-funded. One can recognize that the evaluation approach in this PROT was basically confined to the previously referred concepts of conformity, impact prevention and the territorial dynamics monitoring.

The West and Tagus Valley PROT (2009), which includes a self-contained section on territorial governance, provides for a formal organizational structure of Monitoring, Evaluation and Management. Amongst other aspects, this structure aims to ensure that different stakeholders are involved and committed to agree together on a common place-based strategy, and to “actively promote relationships between the community, regional and local government and the central government”. In this case, the evaluation approach highlights the relevance of the processes of participation and negotiation between different actors. Concurrently, so does the Alentejo PROT (2010), which includes a Management and Control System, which ensures joint agreement between sectors, co-ordinating of sectoral plans, programmes and policies which impact the territory, and tying in with municipal and local development policies.

Finally, the Greater Lisbon Area PROT (made available for public discussion at the end of 2010) goes one step further, arguing that the proposed system of indicators should aim at establishing a channel of permanent communication between the various development actors and help to empower them.

A similar vision is to be found in the National Strategy for Integrated Management of the Coastal Zone (ENGIZC - *Estratégia Nacional para a Gestão Integrada da Zona Costeira*), approved in 2009 (MAOT, 2009). The ENGIZC sets out a model of governance based on three complementary platforms: i) negotiated political agreements involving the relevant ministries (inter-ministerial co-ordination platform); ii) co-operation between departments with coastal management responsibilities (policy co-ordination platform); iii) and bringing in universities and other research institutions to produce interdisciplinary scientific knowledge useful for monitoring the coast and for training in the coastal management field (knowledge platform). Cutting across all three of these platforms is a fourth one, which disseminates the results of monitoring procedures and makes relevant information available to all the bodies involved and to citizens, thus paving the way for more informed policy-making and public participation.

Fifteen years ago, Ferrão (1996) stated that evaluation should not be confined “to a more or less sophisticated set of technical and bureaucratic conformity procedures; rather, it should be a process whereby the various types of actors involved are collectively motivated and given the ability to learn” (p. 29). That concern is now being enshrined in various territorial management instruments (plans, programmes, and strategies). It is generally recognized today that the evaluation of plans and their impact, and the evaluation of territorial dynamics, need to go hand in hand with the evaluation of forms

of communication, the exchange of information, the sharing of knowledge, participation, decision and governance. It is also recognized that the aims of these forms of evaluation should be to empower the organizations involved, and the public, and to make them aware that these processes will bring the benefits of collective learning, institutional change and social innovation.

It is not enough, therefore, to evaluate the practices and processes associated with the design, implementation and monitoring of the various instruments of territorial management. The evaluation exercise itself must emerge as an important source of policy-learning and social innovation, especially for the bodies responsible for the instrument being evaluated, for the institutions and actors with which they interact, and for the citizenry as a whole.

In this context, particular significance attaches to the knowledge brokerage processes, instruments and techniques used between research communities and policy-makers and, more generally, between the various stakeholders involved. Sheate and Rosário (2010) draw on examples from the United Kingdom and Portugal (including the ENGIZC) to analyze how strategic environmental assessments, using appropriate practices for communication and dialogue, may help to establish a climate of trust between the various stakeholders, thus facilitating a broader exchange of knowledge between them, and generating processes of mutual learning and institutional empowerment.

2.3. Questioning the present: on the verge of a new stage of development?

The trends analyzed above show that evaluation in the field of spatial planning in Portugal in 2011 seems to be on the threshold of a new stage of development. There are a number of reasons for this.

First, the closing of the cycle during which the fundamental instruments of spatial planning in Portugal were being put together – The National Spatial Planning Policy Programme and the Regional Spatial Plans – has made it possible not only to provide national and regional guidelines for local government and sectoral policies, but also to shift the focus of attention from the drafting of plans to the processes of monitoring and evaluation (Figueiredo, 2010).

Secondly, the idea of evaluation as a merely reactive and discontinuous process, responding to external demands of a coercive and generally normative nature, is giving way to a culture in which evaluation is seen as a process which practitioners are willing to make continuous for different reasons, such as the need to account for options chosen and to make them politically legitimate, or bringing forward solutions which are appropriate to increasingly complex and unpredictable contexts.

Thirdly, the new conception of evaluation has emerged closely tied to a more comprehensive, proactive and strategic vision of spatial planning, which tends to complement the traditional stance of physical and normative regulation of land use.

Finally, evaluation as it is currently undertaken in the field of spatial planning reflects the coming together of a number of different influences, some of them internal (the evaluation of plans' technical and legal conformity and the evaluation of territorial

dynamics), others external, originating mainly in the fields of the environment (preemptive impact evaluation) and social and economic development (evaluation associated with the management of EU structural funds).

A new institutional context, a new evaluation culture, a new vision of spatial planning, increasing cross-fertilization with evaluation practices and processes developed in other domains: these seem to be the key ingredients of a new stage in a development path which reflects two separate but increasingly interconnected historical narratives – the history of spatial planning as a public policy and the history of public policy evaluation.

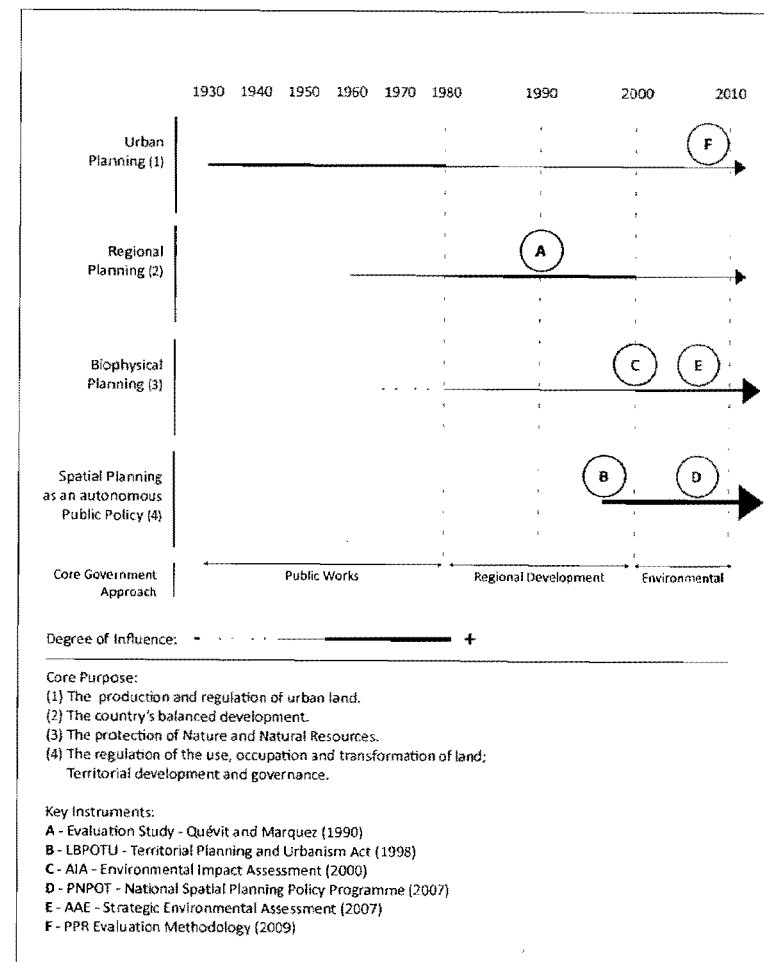
Figure 1 identifies the more significant instruments in the history of evaluation in the field of spatial planning, in the context of what may be regarded as the three parentages of current spatial planning policy (Ferrão, 2010b): urban planning, regional planning, and biophysical planning. These three parentages precede spatial planning as an independent public policy, but co-exist today within it in different degrees of ambiguity, overlapping and tension. As such, they continue to represent dynamic influential forces in the wider context of public policies affecting or relating to territory and their respective evaluation systems and processes.

In effect, the evaluation of the territorial management system, as legally established in 1998 in the Territorial Planning and Urbanism Act (LBPUTU), has become part of a wider universe of territorial evaluation, which includes not only the public policy of spatial planning but also the evaluation of territorial development strategies and policies and the evaluation of sectoral policies which have a strong territorial impact.

This universe is bigger than the specific field of spatial planning. In fact, a continuum exists, in terms of objectives, approaches and methodologies, between the evaluation of spatial planning policy and the evaluation of other policies that have a relevant territorial nature or a strong territorial impact. The *Territorial Review* of Portugal carried out by the OECD (2008) or the analysis of public policies having a territorial impact, initially drawn up as a background report for that OECD publication but subsequently revised and brought up to date (Figueiredo, ed., 2010), provide the evidence for that continuity.

We are nevertheless still a long way from the widespread acceptance of a culture of evaluation, under which evaluation is regularly practiced by institutions and continually demanded by the public. And the prevailing vision, even among bodies with formal responsibilities in this field, is still relatively conventional. If the organizations that have responsibilities in spatial planning are to adopt a culture of strategic evaluation, then there must be a change in the attitudes and behaviours of political decision-makers, technical administrative staff, and even evaluation specialists. However, there is some resistance to such change and conflicts of purpose, approach and method between the different epistemic communities involved. This explains why several authors are critical or even disbelieving in this context (e.g. Gonçalves, 2010; Costa, 2010).

Figure 1. The Evolution of Evaluation in Territorial Planning in Portugal



3. The TIA from a Portuguese perspective: issues and opportunities

The previous sections have outlined the background of evaluation as a component of spatial planning policy in Portugal via the introduction of its key influences and development stages. In addition, a brief portrait of contemporary evaluative practices and the legislative framework has been outlined. The following sections will examine

the TIA (Territorial Impact Assessment) and highlight the two core issues perceived as central to the validity of this evaluation instrument. Finally, the scenario of potential application of the TIA in Portugal will be reviewed, underlining the anticipated obstacles and necessary conditions for it to be accomplished.

3.1. What impacts to assess?

The notion of territorial impact assessment (TIA) can be traced back as far as the late 1960s, and its evolution has been thoroughly detailed in the literature (e.g. Zonneveld and Waterhout, 2009; Hague, 2010). Largely developed amidst the policy interaction between the EU and its member-states, the primary rationale behind territorial impact assessment exercises has been the notion that if any EU-made policy, either spending or regulative, carries a territorial impact at the member-state level then the latter should be examined in order to better inform the process of decision-making. However, the notion of what constitutes an impact is far from straightforward.

The difficulty in determining and describing impacts sits with the need to determine by what standards we are guided, and the nature of the impacts themselves. Actually, the design of a territorial impact assessment instrument is hindered by the wide array of sources of information available and the fact that it is impossible to isolate a specific impact in order for it to be accurately measured. But if we succeed in doing so, we must then develop a scale of values with which to compare our assessment results. And here lies a core problem of the TIA, the lack of a set of clear standards as regards territorial quality. Unlike the strategic environmental assessment exercises, which have a clear set of targets (i.e. air pollution levels, energy consumption, etc.), the notion of territorial quality is far from being defined. Furthermore, there is little debate about it (Zonneveld and Waterhout, 2009). It is something of a paradox to be discussing the evaluation instrument without clarifying in advance the terms of that same evaluation. In the end, a qualitative interpretation of the outcome of the evaluation process will have to be made.

Another difficulty in determining the full extent of the territorial impact of EU policies relates to their direct or indirect nature. As far as direct territorial impacts are concerned, i.e. impacts with a physical dimension, we can envisage a straightforward assessment process. However, when we consider indirect impacts, namely those that affect changes in territorial governance, then we are faced with a much harder challenge. Behavioural changes are at the core of any shift in territorial governance patterns. But how do we assess them?

Any evaluation framework will first have to take into account that there will be no single policy responsible for a behavioural shift. The most likely scenario is that a series of EU policies promote a consistent set of practices and governance solutions that have an impact on domestic policy environments. In addition, how do we calibrate an evaluation instrument to pick on eventual shifts in governance patterns? Above all, such an assessment requires a time frame that allows for the influence of a set of policies to embed into the knowledge pool of domestic actors and consequently promote behavioural change.

Any impact on governance systems depends on a deep-rooted reaction by an epistemic community, since these are impacts on standard practices, routines and ways of doing things. To promote change in what is to all intents and purposes an entrenched institutionalised behaviour should be perceived as very stressful. Consequently, filtering out such impacts is an extremely complex process probably unsuited for a streamlined evaluation approach such as the TIA envisages.

3.2. Is the TIA truly necessary?

There is no consensus on the TIA. In fact, as argued by Zonneveld and Waterhout (2009), there is actually some strong opposition to the development of an independent TIA instrument at the EU level, and the road ahead should be the integration of territorial elements into the existing European Commission's Integrated Impact Assessment instrument. The latter was created by the EC in 2002 following the European Council meetings of Gothenburg and Laeken in 2001. This new instrument, which replaces the former single-sector type assessments, takes into consideration simultaneously the economic, social and environmental effects of proposed policies. It also envisages the enhancement of the quality of European policy through better-informed policy-making processes. The production of Impact Assessment Guidelines (EC, 2005), recently reviewed (EC, 2009), allowed to clarify the principles, procedures and key analytical steps that the integrated impact assessment exercises must follow.

The rationale underpinning the opposition to the development of an independent TIA instrument at the EU level is closely linked to the efforts at the Commission level to streamline assessment procedures and the development of good governance (Zonneveld and Waterhout, 2009). Besides, the existence of the TIA is not, *per se*, a guarantee that all the relevant territorial issues will fall under its scope. In other words, territorially significant policies may not be considered if they do not possess a directly identifiable territorial dimension, which is to say that all indirect territorial impacts will not be examined by the TIA.

Furthermore, there are additional difficulties in a potential implementation of the TIA, such as the very nature of EU directives and the implications of their transposition into domestic policy environments. The high degree of detail in terms of objectives and expected outcomes, particularly in environmental policies, is to a significant extent crippling the member-state's ability to comply (Zonneveld and Waterhout, 2009).

Thiel (2009: 1138) correctly states that "besides several technical and data problems of modelling land use impact, it seems to be unlikely that land use will become a significant dimension of Impact Assessment and modelling as it is confronted with an unfavourable institutional environment at the European level". Perhaps the debate about TIA, on the eve of a post-2013 new policy-cycle that will have to take the principle of territorial cohesion into account, may result not in a new evaluation instrument but rather in the creation of a more favourable institutional environment towards a broader consideration of the territorial dimension in the existent European Commission's integrated approach to impact assessment.

Concurrently, the EU may lay down a 'soft' non-structural approach to an integrated evaluation practice that contrasts with the narrow, sectoral and biased nature of the majority of the existent evaluation instruments. In this sense, the EU should promote a holistic and stable evaluation framework and a minimum approach sharable by all member-states. The opportunity for such 'soft' approach to be fruitfully implemented presents itself with the upcoming post-2013 financial programming period. The EU could act now in order to pre-emptively promote the existence of a new generation of integrated impact assessment instruments that take on board a territorial component. This new generation of evaluation instruments must take into account the EIA and SEA requisits, avoid the duplication of evaluation exercises, and contribute to the development of shared visions between different policy sectors.¹⁹

All in all, we can argue that there is no conclusive evidence to support the need for the TIA and that there is perhaps as yet unexplored scope for manoeuvre on how to enhance the capability of integrated impact assessment instruments to consider territorial impacts. Nevertheless, and regardless of the shape it may take, any form of territorial impact assessment must be perceived as an exercise in policy learning and institutional innovation. This implies a need for greater clarity in the evaluation methodologies to be used, and their effective appropriation by the epistemic communities and institutional bodies on the ground that will carry out the evaluation process *per se*.

4. The TIA in Portugal: thinking ahead

The discussion of a possible implementation of the TIA in Portugal is a multivariable equation with a less than predictable outcome. The near future in this matter is closely dependent on five inter-related factors: first, the political options chosen at the European level; secondly, the political stance at the national level; thirdly, the power relations between different epistemic communities; fourthly, the institutional capacity for change and innovation under strong institutional stress; and the fifth and final factor, the degree of pressure from civil society for the enhancement of evaluation as a policy instrument.

As far as the first factor is concerned, at the EU level, the issue at stake is how territorial cohesion framed within the treaty of Lisbon will be taken into consideration in the context of the new cohesion policy under the next programming period for EU structural funds (2013-2020). Neither the Europe 2020 strategy (CEC, 2010a) nor the Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion (CEC, 2010b) shed much light on the matter. Theoretically speaking, we can anticipate a multitude of scenarios, including variables such as whether the TIA will have to be mandatory or not, what its exact scope will be (i.e. projects of relevant size, plans, programmes, etc), to which stage of the plan-cycle is the evaluation process applied (i.e. *ex-ante*/policy development or *ex-post*/policy implementation, enforcement and legitimisation), what its nature will encompass (i.e. normative instrument for preemptive impact assessment or a strategic

framework for territorial governance embodying the principles of territorial cohesion), and finally what the context of its implementation will be (i.e. exclusively projects and instruments with EU co-financing or the overall set of investments, plans and programmes with a relevant territorial impact).

As far as the second factor is concerned, much of the outcome of a possible application of the TIA in Portugal is closely linked to the political ownership of spatial planning policy at the government level. In fact, historically speaking spatial planning, as a public policy, migrated from the designated Ministry of Public Works (Urban Planning) to the Ministry of Regional Development (Regional Planning, similar to the French concept of *Aménagement du Territoire*), and later on to the Ministry of the Environment (See Figure 1). These shifts in political ownership have determined that planning, as a public policy, evolved in a scenario of increasing multiple competing influences, in particular as a result of EU environmental and cohesion policies. In this sense, the eventual application of the TIA is closely linked to the future political ownership of spatial planning in Portugal.

The third factor to be taken into account if the TIA instrument is to be implemented in Portugal refers to the power relations between the different epistemic communities potentially involved in the process. If we take into account the competitive stance between the environmental and cohesion policies, the latter encompassing the objective of territorial cohesion, then we may argue that the epistemic community closer to the territorial issues may well look upon the TIA as a counterpoint to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This scenario would mean that the same project, plan or programme would have to undergo both evaluation processes simultaneously, leading to an even more complex and time-consuming process of development and approval of spatial planning instruments. The alternative, the combination of both TIA and SEA into a single evaluation instrument, would certainly be rejected by the environmental policy epistemic community, unless such a combination is in fact a simple add-on to the existing SEA. Nevertheless, the impact of the power relations between the two epistemic communities is not confined to the performance of evaluation instruments as discussed in this third factor. In fact, these power relations under the form of lobbying pressures can be traced back to the political options at the EU and national levels described under the two previous factors.

The fourth factor determining the outcome of the implementation of the TIA in Portugal is the ability of central, regional and local government bodies to take on board and apply the new evaluation instruments. The contemporary context of financial and economic crisis has speeded up the process of rationalisation of public services, leading to the abolition and merging of different departments, overall cutbacks in the number of public servants, and an enforced halt to career development plans. Under this intense institutional stress, it will be particularly difficult to consolidate a culture of evaluation if it is not possible to ensure sustainable policy-learning dynamics. Furthermore, we have to anticipate the possible overlap between the TIA and ongoing domestic territorial evaluation programmes. We may be overloading the epistemic communities and institutions involved (institutional fatigue), thus weakening the underlying purpose of the evaluation process.

19. E.g. The Integrated Impact Assessment of the Spatial Development Strategy for the Greater London (Greater London Authority, 2009).

Last but not least, the fifth factor relates to the potential public pressure from civil society for the enhancement of evaluation as a policy instrument. According to Gonçalves (2010: 370-371), this pressure should emerge from the existence of 'a network of entities of civil society specifically designed to promote the advance of available knowledge concerning the evaluation of public policies with a territorial impact'. The purpose of this network is twofold. It would seek to overcome the inaction of the state as well as to promote a politically democratic evaluation instead of a purely technical one, i.e. an evaluation that takes into account citizens' opinions of the policy under review. These networks may also contribute to the consolidation of existing forms of participatory planning and promote a concept of spatial planning based on pluralism, equity and social justice (Cabral, 2010).

In retrospect, evaluation as a component of spatial planning policy has developed amidst a set of conflicting influences from other policy fields, mainly environmental policy and cohesion policy. In this sense, the progress of evaluation as a crucial component of spatial planning policy is closely linked with the emergence of an epistemic community which, although open to innovative evaluation concepts, keeps a sustained focus on spatial planning as an autonomous and renewed field of public policy. In this framework, the new approaches and methodologies, developed collaboratively in international research networks, will gain in significance, alongside the growing Europeanisation of practices and competencies transferred to the domestic policy arena via the socialisation of Portuguese entities in transnational cooperation environments.

The need to address the future of the TIA in Portugal is of undeniable value in this context. However, there has to date been hardly any domestic debate on the benefits and limitations of the TIA. In fact, and although it corresponds to an old aspiration of spatial planning experts, there is little reference to the TIA apart from the generic statements under the political support given to non mandatory EU initiatives such as the First Programme for the Implementation of the Territorial Agenda of the European Union (DGOTDU, 2008), which states the need for territorial impact assessments of sectoral policies to be carried out.²⁰

5. Concluding Remarks

Evaluation as a component of spatial planning in Portugal currently stands at a crossroads. We are nevertheless in a position to outline the factors that may influence the direction in which it will evolve in the near future.

To begin with, we must take into account the track record of the practice of evaluation within the Portuguese spatial planning policy context. Evaluation practices in this specific context have been increasingly defined by the influence of other policy fields. The lack of autonomy of spatial planning as a public policy in Portugal can be significantly justified by the fact that, unlike other fields of public policy, spatial planning

has until now remained outside the set of formal competencies held by the European Union. Consequently, it has been less exposed to direct exogenous influences transferred via EU directives and other coercive-like means. However, it has been widely exposed to being hijacked by other fields of public policy (e.g. environmental policy, regional policy) that evolve within a clear EU normative framework. These circumstances have determined how the rationale underpinning the use and the importance of the processes of evaluation in the field of spatial planning evolved in Portugal from an evaluation of legal and technical conformity to a preemptive evaluation of impacts, and later on to an evaluation of territorial dynamics and planning processes and practices.

In sum, we can argue that there is a maturing culture of evaluation in spatial planning in Portugal. But this trend is still in its embryonic stage of development as a result of a short-lived tradition of evidence-based policy-making.

There are nevertheless identifiable clues to a shift in terms of the philosophy behind the purpose and use of evaluation as a policy instrument in Portugal. For example, there is a growing recognition of the limits to the use of evaluation as a reactive and discontinuous process, largely imposed by exogenous influences of a coercive and mostly normative nature. In fact, there is evidence of the emergence of a new culture of evaluation, closely linked with the growing need to enhance the accountability and political legitimacy of public policy options at the domestic level, as well as to bring forward adequate solutions to growingly complex and unpredictable development scenarios. In addition, this emerging new culture of evaluation is growing alongside a more proactive and strategic approach to spatial planning which complements its more physical and normative land use regulatory tradition.

Despite this trend towards change in the culture of evaluation in Portugal, there are still significant obstacles to be overcome if spatial planning, as a public policy, is to benefit fully from evaluation as a source of policy-learning and institutional innovation. To start with, there is a persistence of sector-based and vertically hierarchical organizational behaviours throughout the Portuguese civil service. This silo culture hinders significantly the sharing of information and the development of common solutions, and hence the building-up of policy monitoring and evaluation systems. For instances, the evaluation of territorial dynamics, which mobilizes multiple data sources, faces a series of institutional, cultural and even technical obstacles that add to a scarcity of human resources, a factor not to be underrated. In addition, existing systems tend to either overstretch their scope to unrealistic levels or seem oblivious of the society and decision-makers whom they are expected to inform. Furthermore, there is a need to streamline existing sets of indicators in order to allow for a systemic, multi-scalar understanding of European, national, regional and local levels.

Overcoming these obstacles requires a reflection on what are the conditions for this to happen. First and foremost, a change must take place in the attitudes and behaviours of political decision-makers, public officials and even evaluation experts if the resistance to the prospect of fact-finding evaluative processes is to decrease. It is also an issue of attitudes and behaviours that partly defines the tensions between the distinct epistemic communities involved in the evaluation process. In fact, although there is little debate in Portugal on the purposes, concept and processes of evaluation in spatial planning,

20. See Line of Action 2 ("To influence EU key dossiers and to give a territorial/urban dimension to sectoral policies"), Action 2.2 ("Scope the territorial impacts of sectoral policies together with sectoral policy-makers and jointly analyse the introduction of territorial impact assessment in policy process").

different epistemic communities use distinct approaches and methodologies and compete among themselves to control very specific niches of the evaluation market, mostly linked to the performance assessment of EU instruments and policies.

So what does the future entail? As addressed in this chapter, there is an emerging new source of influence with strong potential to act as a catalyst for a further entrenchment of a culture of evaluation in the field of spatial planning in Portugal. Here we refer to the TIA. However, as we have argued, the implementation of the TIA in Portugal is not a certainty, nor is it a guarantee of a *de facto* change in the present culture of evaluation. The future seems strongly dependent on political options taken at the European and national levels; power relations between the different epistemic communities involved in the evaluation processes; and institutional capacity for change and innovation in a context of strong institutional stress.

Hence, the potential future adoption of the TIA in Portugal, and to a large extent of evaluation as a crucial component of spatial planning policy, rather than a methodological issue, entails a political option involving judgments on policy-learning and institutional innovation as public priorities, and territorial cohesion and governance as guiding principles for public action and cooperation on territorial matters. In this sense, the trackrecord of evaluation of public policy in Portugal suggests that the adoption of the TIA will only happen either as the result of an external influence (EU) or as the result of a strong political leadership at the Ministry responsible for territorial issues.

However, there is arguably no conclusive evidence to support the need for the TIA and in foresight the most plausible scenario, and probably the most desirable one, is the explicit introduction of a territorial dimension in the existing EU integrated impact assessment instruments. The opportunity presents itself in the upcoming new policy-making cycle, from 2013 onwards. In this context, an important role can be developed by the EU, promoting a holistic and stable evaluation framework and a minimum approach sharable by all member-states.

Regardless of the shape it may take, any future form of territorial impact assessment must be perceived as an exercise in policy learning, institutional innovation and citizenship. This is crucial to guarantee a more intelligent relationship between the territorial cohesion objective, the need to reinforce the coordination of sectoral policies with relevant territorial impacts, the development of efficient forms of territorial governance, and finally the use of innovative approaches to spatial planning policy evaluation.

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