



Proceeding Paper

Contributions of Territorial and Multilevel Governance: The Case of a Strategic Urban Development Plan in Trás-os-Montes, Bragança (Portugal) [†]

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Abstract: This paper focuses on one of the instruments provided by the municipal sphere to solve problems in integrated territorial public policies, namely the Strategic Urban Development Plan (SUDP). Considering the starting question, “What lessons can we draw for the construction of governance models in the territorial development processes of historic city centres in low-density cities?”, the following objectives were defined: understanding territorial and multilevel governance; capturing the contribution of governance types to the SUDP in Trás-os-Montes, Bragança; analysing the case study through the anchor projects carried out; and understanding the involvement of municipal technical managers in its implementation.

Keywords: governance; territorial; multilevel; cities; historic centre; regeneration; strategic urban development plan



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1. Introduction

The plurality of studies on the development of territories reveals their constant transformation based on the economic, social, and political processes that shape and surround them. The territorial scale has become a priority, especially in the political-institutional field, where the surrounding space and geography have emphasised planning at the government level, providing a turning point in public policies. The territorialisation of public policies, namely territory-centred policies, has become a paradigm to be followed. It is based on the need to know and exploit the potential knowledge of a territory and to invest and build institutions through a process involving local actors. Thus, these policies coincide remarkably with those focused on people (people-based policies).

This paper studies an integrated territorial strategy, namely the Strategic Urban Development Plan (SUDP) carried out in the Bragança municipality, the northern interior of Portugal, more specifically, in its historic centre. Once some of the interventions under the SUDP in Bragança were completed, we sought to understand the interventions carried out, reflecting on the governance practises used and trying to respond to the multiple uncertainties that revolve around territorial development. In scientific terms, expanding the understanding of urban development processes in historic centres is urgent. Therefore, we established the territorial and multilevel governance model's influence in Bragança as an object of investigation.

2. Territorial and Multilevel Governance: Concepts and Assessment Dimensions

Territorial governance is defined as a form of “territorial collective action, based on the openness and transparency of the process itself, co-operation/coordination between actors (horizontally and vertically), and on a more or less explicit framework of subsidiarity” [1] (p. 35). This means territorial governance mechanisms must involve not only the community and local organisations but also public and private organisations with the power to influence innovation, such as universities, businesses, and non-governmental organisations. Territorial governance, therefore, depends on the capacity to organise the joint work of these actors in the territory. Thus, the territorial approach to development is required in governance dynamics and understanding the multilevel governance process associated with the territory. The authors warn that multilevel governance must be complemented by “concern about the understanding of territorial arrangements” [2] (p. 51).

There is evidence of three dimensions in territorial governance: the strategic dimension (related to the objectives and strategies of partnerships), the operational dimension (the organisation and management of the structure), and the relational dimension (leadership and participation in the partnership) [3]. Figure 1 presents a set of dimensions summarising territorial governance’s analytical components and which were applied to this methodological proposal.

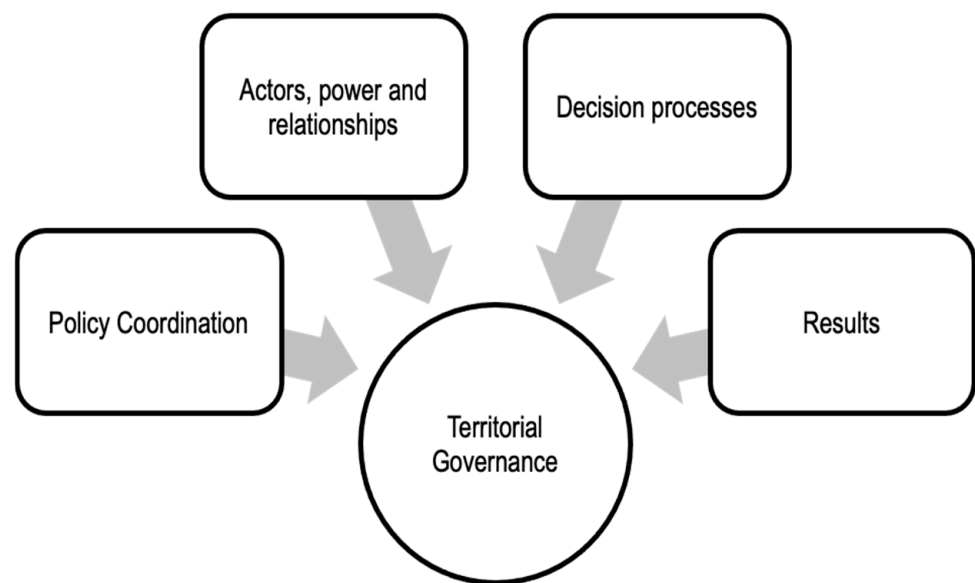


Figure 1. Evaluating the dimensions of territorial governance. Source: [4].

3. Methodological Background and Case Study Context

In the present research, we decided to implement a qualitative methodology in a scientific context. A territorially based instrument was studied, reflected in the SUDP (Table 1). Data collection was conducted in July 2022 and between March 2023 and May 2023, including an analysis of secondary sources extracted from municipality reports, national and regional statistics, and opinion pieces. We decided to select three interviewees based on their proximity criteria to the object of analysis. The interviews were semi-structured and addressed to the Director of the Department of Municipal Services and Construction (DMSC), the Director of the Logistics and Mobility Division (DLM), and the Director of the Construction Division (DC). The three interviews were encoded from I1 to I3.

Table 1. Methodological framework.

Paradigm	Phenomenological and Interpretative Nature
Methods	Qualitative method, case study
Data collection	Interviews with those who assumed leadership roles in the implementation of the SUDP
Techniques	Documentary analysis of secondary sources, program guidelines, instruments, and reports
Analysis Techniques	Discourse analysis
Case	SUDP (six regional cases)

Own elaboration.

The analysis of the interviews valorised discourse analysis. The subsequent analysis was based on the municipality’s technical documents, online news about the works in progress in the city, and the assessment and perspectives of three experts responsible for the design, instruction, execution, and management of the operations/projects.

4. Results and Discussion

According to [3], the management of the development of historic centres can be based on a triangle of efficiency–sustainability–cohesion. This triangle challenges the urban system, emphasising the need to rethink territorial and multilevel governance models, understood as the system of relationships between institutions, organisations, and individuals, ensuring collective choices and their implementation [3]. Multilevel territorial governance will require the creation of structures and, above all, rethinking the relationships between existing structures. Table 2 shows that the discussion of the results considers the dimensions of actors, powers, and relationships; decision processes; and policy coordination [4]. Each of the dimensions has several criteria, and each of the requirements was analysed about its intensity of influence (X—weak to XXX—strong). This table format was chosen for better interpretation.

The authors propose an evaluation matrix on territorial and multilevel governance based on analysing three dimensions: strategic, relational, and operational [3]. The coordination of policies and instruments was decisive for analysing the *strategic dimension*. The intervention of the MB was prioritised in terms of promoting the economic sector, in articulation with urban regeneration projects. It is understood that, as a public entity, the municipality must create conditions for the economic function to settle and develop sustainably. Incorporating a young population in the centre will generate specific needs that must be met to convert it into a set of desirable places to live for an extended period. In this sense, incorporating public spaces, mobility, local commerce, and public services is essential. However, the three interviewees mentioned the lack of private initiative as a negative aspect of the UDP interventions. In the *relational dimension*, the three interviewees, regarding the complementarity and involvement of actors in the development of the SUDP partnerships, believed that this involvement occurred and the partnerships were efficient. At the local level, key public and non-profit organisations, the Higher Education Institution, residents, and retail businesses were involved. Real-time contact platforms were created, receiving communications and alerts from those sharing the spaces and encouraging participation. In the *operational dimension*, the municipality considered that the guiding vision of the SUDP would have to focus on investments that promote economic dynamics and services, adequately complemented by urban regeneration and public space actions such as those associated with mobility.

Table 2. Results of the evaluation of the territorial and multilevel governance of the SUDP.

Dimensions	Criteria	SUDP
Actors, powers, and relationships	Distribution of responsibilities and competences	XXX
	Relation integration	XXX
	Decentralised integration	XXX
	Active participation in civil society	XX
	Flexibility of actors and institutions in the face of change	X
Decision Process	Representativity	XXX
	Democratisation of decisions	X
	Data collective responsibility, with actors contributing to common ends	XXX
	Actions legitimised by cooperation, negotiation, and sharing	XX
Policy Coordination	Network governance	XX
	Decentralisation of policies	XXX
	Horizontal integration	XXX
	Vertical integration	XXX
Territorial Governance	Effectiveness and focus on results	XXX
	Embracing a variety of interests	XXX
	Maximising the effects of policies on society and territories	XXX
	Interaction and collective learning	XX
	Actors as subjects of collective action	XXX
Multilevel governance outcomes	Focus on improving social cohesion and socio-economic development	XXX
	Territory as a reference framework, with the potentializing of territory	XXX
	Horizontal integration (inter-organisational agreements)	XXX
	Horizontal integration (social actors)	XXX
	Vertical integration (intergovernmental agreements)	XX

(X—weak influence to XXX—strong influence), Own elaboration.

5. Conclusions

This article makes several main contributions. Firstly, it is expected that the knowledge from the study will be helpful and fruitful for municipal actors, serving for the development of other strategic urban development processes. The comparative analysis highlights three common topics: development and territorialization based on local problems with integrated intervention, multi-institutional coordination, and horizontal and vertical communication. Secondly, this work was intended to aggregate the practical and scientific components, strengthening the knowledge of territorial development. The last contribution is related to the conviction that this work has shown that the territories and their municipalities will find development opportunities, whether through municipal projects or public policies reflected in community territorial development instruments. Finally, applying the governance assessment tools to several historic centres of low-density cities covered by the SUDP would be a challenge for the future.

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