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Regionalization in Portugal - The new Spheres of Political Power

Dr. Rui Estêvão Alexandre¹
Prof. Dr. Eduardo Pereira Correia²

Abstract

The definition of an political and administrative map of Portugal is a matter whose concerns lies in the first half of the nineteenth century (1835/36), when after a huge and complex debate, the country became divided on three types of administrative units – districts, municipalities and parishes.

Nevertheless, even before that configuration of the earlier administrative map, Mouzinho da Silveira had created a division (1832) also in three levels, which divided the country in *provinces*, *counties* and *municipalities*, following the model developed by Napoleon.

Considering both projects already mentioned and a few creations and extinctions of municipalities and parishes, the conclusion we reached is that two centuries after the first major effort to organize the Portuguese political and administrative map nothing significant advanced.

It is important to understand whether the current structure and *status quo* existing between the different levels is still functional and that the creation of another administrative level - Regional - would bring efficiency and effectiveness to the political process.

Another considering point we pretend to observe, is the emergence of news spheres of political power, as a result of the regionalization, which one's will raise in another political balances.

¹ PhD candidate in Political Science, Associate Researcher Observatório Político.
<http://www.observatoriopolitico.pt/investigadores/investigadores-associados/rui-estevao-alexandre>

² PhD candidate in Political Science, Associate Researcher Observatório Político.
<http://www.observatoriopolitico.pt/investigadores/investigadores-associados/eduardo-pereira-correia>

1 – Introductory Remarks

In this article we will discuss the theoretical problem of Regionalization as a leverage factor of the emergence of new centres of political power. The political dynamics of States cannot be separated from its historical and social dynamics, therefore the presentation of new concepts or different perspectives about the organization of the national territory will always have as a background the relations of *status quo* existing between cities, districts or regions. These relations are characterised by the need to measure forces between the institutional and political actors of a region when comparing to others but also by ensuring that it will not be called into question, at least decisively, a certain degree of social status quo whose existence leads to the construction of different social constructions of reality.

The historical facts which are known from the 1832 reform of Mouzinho da Silveira of the map and of the administrative system of local and regional authorities was the base to set the time period for our analysis.

The developments and setbacks of the region's map reorganization progress in Portugal will be our concerns, and we will take into account the factor that have been influencing the reality which is currently known, whether they have a political nature, through national or international influences, or organic nature.

It is also our intention to realize how a substantial reform in the administrative map, involving the redefinition of roles and competences of the various levels of power and public action, may influence the social and political legitimacy of the process of implementation of public policies in these regions.

Finally, we will justify the relevance of this study at a time when the country is faced with the eminence of structural reductions in budgetary and financial administration of the State, so the Portuguese University should address the needs to rethink the entire public administration building, there is a view to make it a more efficient and more easily seized by the citizen.

2- The role of the State in the construction of public policies

"Public Policy is whatever governments chose to do or not to do." (Dye, 1998)

Portugal, peripheral country in the framework of the European Union, has its largest natural border in relation with the Atlantic. Fruit of the close relationship with the source of sustainability that the sea represents, is historically a country facing the maritime exploration. First for reasons of political strategy, colonial and related discoveries, then by economic reasons relating to exports or imports.

This strong maritime identity, assisted by multiple other factors, turned the interior of the country, an eminently isolated space when comparing to large urban centres, which are located along the coast, causing profound inequalities in terms of economic and social development of the people of the interior. However, as Valente de Oliveira stated "is in the interests of the country's coastline, so you don't see the quality of life deteriorating, which encourages the

development of interior promoting cohesion policies and strategies" (Oliveira, 1997).

In Portugal the State never failed to present itself as the guarantor of the balances in society through its regulatory and Interventional action promoting public policies and programmes to reduce the sense of isolation caused by the distance in relation to the centers of power and decision-making. But not always the reality becomes as objective as it does when it is thought of and designed.

In this way, Wayne Parsons conceives social reality as a space where two spheres of political influence cohabit, one public and another private (Parsons, 1995). The idea of the existence of a public sphere, which aims at solving the communities' problems, assumes a counterpoint with a private sphere whose purpose is to maximize profit.

The fact that only the State has responsibility of designing fit answers has led the public understanding that only he could fit in the responsibility to regulate behaviour, manage and organise the paperwork, collect taxes or fees and, finally, respond to social imbalances through the distribution of benefits (Dye, 1998).

This notion of public accountability on the part of the State, is defined according to David Easton as that authority rests with the State to allocate values to society as a whole (Easton, 1965). However, this allocation of values must always be understood in terms of a State "functionalized and impersonal", in which public actors act as representatives accountable that territorial political society.³

The need felt by Member States to ensure a social welfare to its citizens were drawn that a set of policies whose objective would be the creation of a welfare State, which according to T.H. Marshal, should provide a direct impact on the lives and welfare of citizens (Caeiro, 2008). In this sense, Parsons argues that the emergence of enlightened social policies, the question of reformulation of the human condition. (Parsons, 1995)

The implementation of a policy is an ongoing process and is also constructive. A policy is being built as it is applied, and is being applied as is being built (Anderson, 2006). That is, the implementation is the construction of politics with additives by a whole range of meanings and symbolism.

However, the implementation of programmes or policies should be subject to a process of assessing the impact of the implementation of the policy, in order to realize the goals drawn initially is being met through the implementation of the programme.

The impact assessment can be very important at various times in the life of a political programme. At the time of formulation of policy, it should be a pilot

³ It should be made clear that, in spite of the references generically made the responsibility of the State as a public actor, this responsibility should be allocated to political actors with public responsibilities, says Professor Marcelo Caetano in his Handbook of political science and Constitutional Law.

project with the aim of understanding, preliminary form, the definitive programme effects that will have this type of evaluation may be even applied to projects which are underway, allowing a constant redefinition of how this is being managed, to ensure that the goals will be achieved initially envisaged (Rossi, 2004).

In any case in which the impact analysis is applied, there will always be prerequisites outlined previously so that the evaluator, when making your observation, has a vision of the original situation that may be comparable with that if you get after the implementation of the programme or the implementation of the policy.

When forming the relevance of the investigation it is essential to consider the importance of the progress of scrutiny during the implementation process, the analysis of the progress made towards the goals outlined, as well as to perform adjustments in inputs invested (Rossi, 2004).

New planning policies, which result in the emergence of new centralities, political and social implications certainly imply how public policies are implemented. The creation of new centres of decision and responsibility for administering territories while maintaining a long existing structure, will lead to significant social changes whose outcome may influence the process of implementation of public policies or programs. For this reason, superseding application to make any regionalization project would be very useful to implement in to extract a pilot project facilitators teaching for the project.

The fact that it is the State's responsibility to devise public responses meant that it was understood that only he could fit in the responsibility to regulate, manage and organise bureaucracy (Dye, 1998). This responsibility of the State, represented in their high places long-standing policies, is headquartered in Lisbon. The capital comes complaining to each other for a long time the uniqueness of decision on all matters relating to the work of the administration. As Eça de Queirós stated, in Portugal the power lies between the arcades and St. Benedict.

From production to the legislative definition of political projects with substantial relief to the State in general, and particularly for the regions, everything is brought to the tight machine sieve administrative and capital policy. Often the definition of political projects is done in an Office of strategic studies without a verified consultation of local actors.

Starting from the following preliminary definition "*Implementation (...)* means just what Webster and Roger say it does: to carry out, accomplish, fulfill, produce, complete⁴" (Pressman e Wildavsky, 1984), we assume hat the process of implementing a public project starts long before the publication of the legislation that gives body, even though it is not finished at the time of publication.

Therefore, the needs or problems encountered locally or regionally are placed in view of the need to give the impression to the central administration that their participation in the definition of the decisions is absolutely fundamental to the definition of public policies better suited to the specific problems of each region.

Having that said, with production capacity and legislative authorization for regional investment, would be to "promote the welfare of the people" (Oliveira, 1997). But the welfare of the people depends not only on being able directly and exclusively elected legislate and implement their budgetary ceiling. And also depends to a great extent on the objectives and strategy outlined on the basis of the critical mass and the endogenous resources existing in the region.

Given the relevance of different types of implementation, we will discuss the influence of the various levels of stakeholders so that they can develop profiles of influence both at policy makers, of street-level bureaucrats, or middle range in the course of the implementation process.

3- The regionalisation in Portugal – traces of a project

Throughout the national historical debate the between decentralised and centralised perspective ha been frequent. These different perspectives, incessantly subjected the interests of secular or religious organizations, classes, influential families or even by the relative weight of certain regions, formed over the centuries to conduct policy and the way they set the Portuguese administrative map. The periods of strong centralisation of power, often on *water lilies* hands, mean relative decentralization.

If in some cases to centralize would reinforce the power and the nation's identity, as was the case until the late Middle Ages, in others it would mean reducing the power of decentralized political centre Portuguese, as if observed during the "Filipino" period. Later, the plasticity of the State back to feel following the centralizing policy that ends with the Consulate of Marquês de Pombal and empties in the timid liberal monarchy tested decentralisation. Would not come to last this last phase of decentralization since would suffer some setback with the governance of João Franco.

More recently, with the Republican transition, resumption of administrative decentralization signals that are undermined with the establishment of the New State.

Even today, after much technical and scientific debate, one questions the latent of decentralizing the political power and decision-making capacity.

From the long debate regarding this topic, two definitions of decentralization arise.

The first one with a legal nature, which asserts that just as there are other public legal persons, being irrelevant how they are elected or appointed in their bodies and the degree of autonomy with which they carry out their

functions so that you're in the presence of a decentralization process. The other definition has a political-administrative character which means that decentralization arises when the decentralized authorities are elected freely and meet their mandates according to the law (Rocha, 2005).

When neither of these perspectives is satisfactory, arises the notion of administrative deconcentration, which consists in allocating the State central administration services, skills, delocalized – these are usually confined to the seat of power. This substitute decentralization aims to allow the relocation of services by country, nevertheless maintaining decision-making capacity in the capital.

The political regime that came out of April 25, 1974, in reaction to the administrative system that existed until then, opted to define a set of measures leading to the reorganization of the administrative-political map of Portugal that caused decentralization in the decision-making power.

In the speech that presented the "draft Regional Administration" of 1976, the then Minister of Internal Affairs, Lieutenant-Colonel Manuel Brás da Costa, stated that "*the discussion of the advantages of adopting a decentralized model from the point of view of the ability to promote and develop formulas of participation of the people, both from the point of view of its compatibility with the technical means of the country that we are, is arguably one of the focal points of the debate which is now beginning.*" (Projecto de Administração Regional – 1976, pp. III)

Through the draft submitted, the 1st constitutional Government assumed that the dissolution of centralized power webs in Lisbon, through "*manipulation by those whose personal interests are implicated (...) that implementation of this project will inevitably lose*", which would lead in the sense of morals of political action and, above all, to the improve of the living conditions of the population of the interior. Thus, "*the democratization of Portuguese life need to find new solutions to the institutional government level – actually structures and democratic attempts to democratize the nonsimple autarchism*" existing at that time. (Projecto de Administração Regional – 1976, pp. IX).

It is based on this concept which will be introduced into the Constitution of the Republic (Article 255) the principle of decentralized political structures, whose definition of powers, composition and competencies would be later detailed by law.

The process is shy and not always effective. Only in 1979, through the DL 49479 is initiated the decentralization process, with the establishment of Regional Coordination Committees (RCC 's) who were endowed with administrative and financial autonomy.

In 1991, by the Law 5691 (Framework Law of Administrative Regions), the regional powers increase regarding their ability to obtain revenues such as by charging municipal taxes.

However, the path of the regions suffers, in 1998, a major setback with the results of the referendum in which the Portuguese are called upon to decide on the existence of regions in Portugal and on their compliance with their specific region

The creation in 2000 of the Regional Directorates for the Environment and Regional Planning (DRAOT), has put some functions that would compete on CCR 's in dependence of the Ministry of the Environment and Country Planning (MAOT). According to the law these "are aimed at decentralized and effective administration". However, with regard to financial and administrative autonomy of these organs is occurring a step backwards when comparing to the Framework of Laws of the Administrative Regions.

Already in 2003, with the approval of the Law – 1042003, the DRAOT and CRR are extinct and a Committee of coordination and Regional Development (CCDR) is created instead. These performances have established major assignments, as for example at the level of regional charging fees, fines, among other forms of finance and that they had intended to promote the development of the regions. The CCDR's De-concentrated Services are named by the Ministry of Cities, Land Management and Environment and has administrative and financial autonomy.

In 2007, the Government regulated the powers of the CCDR and reaffirmed that these are peripheral Services of direct administration of the State, within the framework of MAOTDR, with administrative and financial autonomy. Now to reaffirm that they are under the direct administration of the central State, the seat of power is tightening the reins at any regionalist momentum.

In recent electoral processes the issue of regionalization has been approached cautiously by the major parties. Even within the governing parties there is no defined arc of doctrine. There are more or less clear positions that, depending on political leaders, are exposed to a greater or lesser extent.

4 - A perspective regarding New Power Centres

Whereas the process of defining a new political-administrative map, are we once again in a position to submit a new draft of regionalisation to Portugal? Is the political country and the *status quo* of power interested in resetting of relations of forces through the decentralization of State powers?

There were these issues that led me to deal with this matter and ask myself how the emergence of new centres of power, result of a clearly decentralizing effect process, may influence the social and political legitimation of public policies.

Thus, it is important to understand the dynamics of power resulting from the regionalisation process whether towards central power facing the new regional power, either to local power facing regional authorities. In other words,

the legitimacy conferred to new regional power body is crucial so that their action is effective and produces the expected effects.

The role of this intermediate level of power will be largely the instilling notions of streamlining of investment at regional level but also, on the other hand, to motivate the local actors to act more effectively in the implementation of public policies. Defining regional strategies of development might be the way to rationalize public investment and to come up with the strengths and weaknesses that merit a higher incidence of investment by regional authorities in the map.

In order to do so it is essential that the regionalisation process takes a properly clear form from a legal point of view-for administrative so that it is recognized as political process facilitator element. If, conversely, these regional actors remain wounded in their inventories by a lack of legitimacy (public or political), it will matter to analyse which results may arise from that.

In this PhD project will focus in the Alentejo region, adopting it as a case study. This region has been at the forefront of the regionalisation process protection as a factor of promoting sustainable development, as necessary and desired, and belonging to a derivative from desertification that has plagued.

However, and despite the consensus opinion among the various political actors of the three districts (Portalegre, Évora and Beja) that regionalisation would bring a positive impulse to the region, the understanding on the following model differs between representatives of Councils, of coordination and Regional development or even political parties, depending on their district of origin. According to leaked Central Places theory, developed by German Walter Christaller, to explain how different places are distributed in space, the hierarchy of each of the districts, or district capitals will depend on the number and relevance of services it provides.

A particular urban centre provides goods and services to a surrounding area bounded by the scope of its influence. The border of a central place is both more extensive the greater your ability to focus on other more or less services. In addition, the populations tend, according to the author, the focus on proximity services. However, when it comes to the interior, and in case the Alentejo, a region already so deserted, we understand what effects may result from concentrating on a single point on the seat of power and provision of services.

On the other hand, the creation of a new administrative structure, with extended powers when comparing with existing ones will lead to a certain extent a lengthy process of institutionalization and habituation. However, *"the institutions involve (...) historicity and control. The reciprocal actions of crime are built during a shared history. They cannot be created suddenly. The institutions have always a story, which are products. It is impossible for a proper understanding of an institution without understanding the historical process in which it was produced (Berger and Luckman, 2004)."* However, starting from these statements, it is clear that any process of creating new centralities political-administrative must be based very evidently throughout the historic building common to the region.

The basic strategy will have to go through finding lines of action involving the three districts in an integrated but subtle way and taking in account its specificities.

The work we have been developing will consist, therefore, on speculation that underlies the existence of a regionalised frame in Alentejo and realize from it which scenarios would be accepted or not by the regional social and political actors. Based on these scenarios we will try to realize what influence different perspectives will have regarding the legitimacy of public policies, be they national or implementation only implementation at local and regional level.

Final Considerations

Since this is a question that is on the table of the scientific and political debate we will be sensitive to the arguments that are being served, be they favourable or contrary to the process of regionalisation. Here we expose some that have been relevant to that issue would travel from a personal curiosity's orbit to a common sense for a frame and a scientific approach.

A strong rationale used by most of those who do not wish to see regionalised Portugal is that of losing relevance with the idea of a unitary State. Examples are given for comparison with other similar systems existing in the European Union itself. It turns out that the European political reality has influenced decisively the relative weight of the Member States, on the one hand, and on the other the very ability of States ' action within national borders. In this way, and recognizing that the cohesion strategy defined by the European structures passing through a Europe of regions, makes sense to want to perpetuate a building structure of the State in the way that wholly new dissonance at European level?

Another argument against the regionalization project is that the State might be at risk of central State action in matters which relate only to this, as the health care system, the map of national roads, among other examples. We realize if a regional management system of this type of infrastructure may or may not be beneficial to the State.

On the other hand, there are those who justify that Lisbon will lose influence on decisions and that it will open the door to corruption and the multiplication of costs. Lisbon will lose influence in fact from the moment that the regions are provided with the powers to legislate, collect taxes and tax monitor the executive action of the regional governments. But Lisbon is not longer capital nor to largely influence the decisions, starting with the allocation of powers to the regions. In this respect I believe that the biggest fear is the notion of many senior leaders losing their small fief not legitimized power.

But not all are bad arguments. Among those who are defenders of the project we realize at what level and what is the willingness to build consensus with regard to submission of a different administrative-political map of the currently existing one. With the loss of influence of some districts to others, as a result of the installation of the seats of regional power and the provision of services, it is important to understand what strategies could be used for that, as seen by the theory of Central Places, let us not create large regional centres on the other hand cities annihilating so far were district capitals and therefore service delivery centre. It should also assess that efficiency gains and efficiency at the level of implementation of public policies if they will make effect with the creation of regions. We will also realise, from the point of view of rationality of administration costs, if the creation of an intermediate level of governance will bring more costs to the political process or if, on the other hand, will be a means to achieve lower costs through more rational investment.

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