From Lisbon to the South. A Sustainable Territory?

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Abstract: In order to illustrate the specific territorial characteristics of the Southern regions of mainland Portugal, this text seeks to assess some of the conditions for the sustainability of this territory using two very different studies, focusing on diverse objectives, as empirical references. In this context, this article provides an analytical framework structured around the notions of Territory, Patrimony and Culture. Finally, this study contemplates diverse dilemmas in a schematic fashion, which reflect some of the themes that are essential for studying issues pertaining to the sustainable development of Southern Portugal.

Keywords: Sustainable development; Territory, patrimony and culture; Sustainability dilemmas; Lisbon and South-West Portugal.

Context

The main challenge faced by this article[1] was to illustrate the paradigmatic and specific characteristics of the Southern regions of mainland Portugal, on the basis of two research projects that were undertaken at different times, with different objectives and distinct technical and scientific methods. The first of these studies focused on Lisbon while the other study contemplated the South-West regions of mainland Portugal. Since they were two research projects with different objectives, as has been mentioned, they also focused on different analytical aspects. Thus, the approach used in the first study enabled the identification of significant geographical, historical and cultural divergences between Northern and Southern Portugal. The second study focused on a very specific empirical area, the sector of tourism, and its analysis highlighted an approach that focused on the sustainable development of the South-Western regions of mainland Portugal.

Although they were based on different objectives, as shall shortly be seen, these approaches revealed many complementary aspects, from the point of view of this article. The first study

enabled one to frame and contextualise the following approach to achieve the objectives of this article. In any case, it must be emphasised that this text does not merely summarise the aforesaid studies but instead seeks to illustrate this same challenge. This also explains the structure of this text, which begins by providing an analytical overview of some key subjects concerning the notions of territory, patrimony and culture. The second part of this article then focuses on illustrating this challenge. Finally, this text then examines the specific nature of Southern Portugal based on diverse questions and dilemmas, especially from the perspective of the essential need for territorial sustainability.

Territory, patrimony and culture – a triangle for sustainability

Within the framework of one of these aforesaid research projects (cf. VMF *et al*, 2008)[2], the issue of sustainable development and conditions for effective territorial sustainability proved to be a key aspect, in this case regarding the South-West region of mainland Portugal. This article thus once again entails some of the analytical perspectives that partially ended up by effectively playing a structural role, not just in the development of those research projects, but also in terms of the territorial sustainability of the subject of this research. As will become evident, of these perspectives, those that pertain most directly to the objective of this article have been specified, particularly those concerning territory, patrimony and culture, thus configuring a triangle of sustainability for the region in question.

Territory and sustainability

Nowadays, there exists a widespread consensus that closely articulates economic and social issues with the notion of territory. It is thus a long way from a concept in which the material space was, as such, a kind of "no man's land", a supposedly inert base upon which it was acceptable to merely project the respective economic activities and corresponding social outcomes. It is therefore possible to admit that the transition from this conception of the material space - about which, as it is known, there exists a longstanding geographical tradition

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[2] This was a research project, commissioned by Portugal Tourism, about *Sustainable Tourism Development* on the South-West coast of mainland Portugal. This study was co-ordinated by the author of this article and was carried out by the following researchers: Joana Chorincas, Aida Valadas de Lima, Eduardo Limbert, Paulo Lopes Ferreira and Edgar Rocha. Thus, many of the observations that will subsequently be presented here refer to the final report compiled by this research project and are thus the result of the efforts of a group of authors although, obviously, the author of this text is solely responsible for what is presented herein.

- to the notion of territory, corresponds, precisely, a moment of a paradigmatic shift that highlights this notion of territory as an entity that has been "built by society" or, in other words, as a fundamental component of economic and social actions.

Having said this, it is clear why it is possible to view territorial, economic and social issues - with their respective analytical specifications - as a paradigmatic central systematisation, especially in the context of this research. Against this backdrop, this study used an approach that, by playing with these three analytical vectors, provided an empirical context for the territorial, economic and social situation in mainland Portugal, so as to illustrate the basic issues studied herein. In effect, the "constructed" nature of the territory, in the sense of its transformation by economic and social actions, as mentioned above, thus paves the way for the diverse processes of the differentiation and segmentation of this same territory. As is known, amongst other aspects, this approach enables one to define conditions of territorial concentration and dispersion, to detect forms of intense or scattered urbanisation and to identify more rarefied spaces within the respective settlements, i.e. to ascertain greater or lesser asymmetries in the occupation of the territory.

In a final analysis, these transformations in territorial organisation and order are inextricably intertwined with economic and social changes. In effect, during the past two decades, these changes have in a large measure been quite significant in the case of Portugal, on account of the nation's integration into the political and institutional framework of the European Union. It is obvious that processes of globalisation and closer ties between peoples intensified during this period, not just in economic terms but also in social and cultural terms. This augments the tendency towards a standardisation of the rules that govern the functioning of economic and financial markets and also has an impact on the lifestyles and habits of individuals and societies.

This tendency towards standardisation is not, however, homogeneous and nor does it have the same effects, whether positive or negative, throughout the territory. Thus, the approach used to examine territorial asymmetries, which comprises a comparative analysis of the distribution of properties and resources, also corresponds to one of the first overviews of the economic and social segmentation of the respective territory. The processes of concentration along the coast and the situation of the interior regions of mainland Portugal, which have been a distinctive hallmark of Portuguese settlement for at least more than four decades, likewise reflect these same territorial asymmetries in an emblematic fashion, as has been demonstrated on another occasion (cf. VMF 2007). Significantly, it was almost as though this more global

and asymmetrical vision of mainland Portugal was "reproduced" on a smaller scale, namely in the context of the area studied by the aforesaid research project, more specifically in the South-West region of the Portuguese mainland. However, this rejects a dual vision of the territory, which does not imply ignoring the eventual specific economic and social characteristics of the different national spaces. It is simply necessary to keep in mind that many of these "specific" territorial characteristics are precisely the result of the aforesaid asymmetrical framework.

Other situations have been mentioned above at the level of territorial organisation, more precisely in terms of the concentration or dispersion of the population and economic and social activities. Significantly, this area of study, owing to its scale, inevitably presents this dual territorial condition, albeit, in comparative terms, at a fairly rarefied level. However, for this very reason, here too, the sustainability of the territory in general and in the area under study in particular, implies rejecting a dual vision. On the contrary, articulating spaces of greater concentration and more scattered sites not only contributes towards a greater equilibrium of the territorial organisation but also plays a direct role in the very sustainability of its development.

The development of such a stance is also in conformance with the new position on urban agglomerations that, in stark contrast to a traditional perspective of a vertical and polarised "urban network" hierarchy, propounds instead the fecundity of "networks of cities" as a horizontal structure that is more equitable and offers a more balanced territorial perspective. In other words, this stance is based on the articulation of a network of urban agglomerations, irrespective of their administrative statute and their economic, social and territorial dimensions. As is evident, the functioning of this network of agglomerations is inextricably linked to questions pertaining to mobility and accessibility, as a way of guaranteeing the necessary connections between these agglomerations in safe conditions that offer a high level of quality (comfort, costs, etc.).

If issues pertaining to territorial asymmetries directly question models of territorial reorganisation, on the other hand the problems mentioned above regarding forms of concentration and dispersion of populations and activities question the need for a *poly-nuclear* perspective of agglomerations, thus seeking, as has just been seen, a network of these different territorial implantations. In this way, ultimately, it is the very sustainability of the territory that is at stake.

History and patrimony

Within the territorial framework described above, references to patrimony, irrespective of whether it is public or private, secular or religious, urban or rural etc. are an increasingly constant feature, both in the context of an ostensibly erudite discourse, as well as in terms of everyday practices involving common sense. It is, really, a sign of the present times, which also encompasses some aspects of culture, although it is not always clear what is meant by patrimony. Apparently it is almost as though, once again, everybody was talking about the same thing or as though, by some strange coincidence, everybody had embarked on a discovery of a past that had been "lost" until then, albeit buried in our collective unconscious awareness. However, irrespective of such misunderstandings and this so-called awareness, there is no doubt that, in general, society is today far more attentive of and more concerned about questions of heritage and patrimony. It is therefore important to examine these issues for this very reason, so as to provide clarifications about what might be at stake in this context.

Thus, at the outset, the notion of patrimony is essentially organised through a dual historical and cultural dimension that, in close articulation, configure this same notion of patrimony. However, such a statement, which is really a point of departure, is, as such, manifestly insufficient in terms of identifying, referencing and projecting this patrimony. On the other hand, when this same statement is interpreted in a very literal manner, it tends to entail a politically perverse effect, by restricting this notion to a particular social and culturally isolated vision, observing "from far away" while simultaneously mythifying this very same patrimony as though, in the ultimate analysis, it was an isolated albeit important "museum piece". This kind of perverse effect, which tends to multiply almost as though it were a "fashion", thus ends up by consolidating a profoundly restrictive vision of the social and political condition of processes of production and the appropriation of the said patrimony (cf. VMF, 1998).

As is well known, there is no doubt that, when considered in general terms, patrimony encompasses, from the very outset, a historical dimension, in the sense that it is the result of multiple sedimentations and diverse processes over the course of its more or less long existence. However, if patrimony was reduced to this historical vision – albeit a vision in which, paradoxically, history, i.e. the history of those sedimentations and those processes, would perforce end up as a limited vision – then in such conditions this same patrimony would always be viewed as the past, if not an ancestral past. In other words, as something that

is inert in its supposedly majestic antiquity and hence lacks any chance of being fully inserted into the economic and social dimensions of the present while being inexorably relegated, in the future, to being a mere museum piece, as mentioned above.

On the other hand, as is evident, patrimony also has a cultural dimension, being the result of certain cultural standards, sets of values and representations, dominant tastes and symbols, in addition to the ideological role that patrimony is explicitly or implicitly supposed to bring together and represent. However, the diversity of vectors that constitute this cultural dimension is, in itself, mutable at different levels of expression, in much the same way in which the cultural magma in which it is inserted is also mutable, within a broader framework of societal changes. In such a context, the cultural dimension of patrimony, as one of the aspects that constitute the structure of this patrimony, inevitably accompanies and is part of the changes at a social and cultural level.

Thus, history and culture constitute two of the fundamental dimensions that identify and immediately provide references for this notion of patrimony. However, in this context, the dimensions that accompany, as mentioned above, the historical and cultural processes of social and political change refute a historical and evolutionary vision, on the one hand, as well as a culturalist and elitist vision, on the other, of those very processes of change. This is the reason why it is preferable to talk of *historicity*, as a way of emphasising the cultural models that, in a more implicit rather that explicit manner, confer a historical and cultural sense and cohesion not just to the past and the present, but above all with regard to the future of this very heritage. In such a framework, the notion of patrimony is inevitably an integral part of approaching our everyday social and political life and therefore does not constitute something that is external to our everyday existence, which could perhaps be "visited" or could purely and simply be ignored!

These observations could seem overly banal, if not downright redundant, to those who have been reflecting about questions of patrimony or, at the other extreme, could seem overly academic to those who are interested in very operative terms in preserving and improving patrimony, irrespective of the historical and cultural aspects that, as has been mentioned above, constitute this very patrimony. It would be opportune to admit that any of these two extreme types of assessments entail added risks, namely to the patrimony itself. Since this is not a paradox, it is possible to summarise this statement by admitting that a better identification of patrimony requires an understanding of the factors and the historical and

cultural dimensions that configure it and that a greater conservation of this patrimony implies an awareness of the contexts and the social and political implications that influence it.

Culture and identity

The above approach to this patrimony, which refuses to situate the said patrimony in the "museum of history", as mentioned above, thus constantly projects it into the future, participating actively in the processes of social and territorial identification. In their turn, these processes can be understood better, especially within the framework of a matrix to characterise an identitary typology. Actually, keeping in mind that the discussion about socio-spatial identities, in terms of their intrinsic relational condition, only makes analytical sense and is pertinent in operative terms within the framework of certain identitary systems, this matrix thus seeks to encompass four main elements of these systems – a global and local scale, on the one hand, and the points of view of the subject and the object, on the other hand, as has been described in detail on another occasion (cf., especially, VMF, 2004, pp. 90 onwards). As a systemic matrix, such an approach allows one to characterise diverse identitary processes (through diverse analytical mediations that do not need to be specified here), whose relational structure precisely configures a certain cultural model. Although it does not make sense in the present context to proceed with these analytical mediations it is undoubtedly necessary to duly and explicitly describe the said matrix of the identitary systems, using that notion of patrimony as a prime reference. This is a typological matrix with four elements, as mentioned above, grouped dialectically in pairs, according to the scales of reference or the perspectives of the approach.

In the first case, as is known, a global and a local scale nowadays constitute two fundamental references from a social and territorial point of view. This does not, however, exclude, for example, scales at a national or regional level. But in such cases, the reference framework has a distinct nature, more precisely it is an administrative and institutional framework, aloof from the formulation of culture and identity as an axis for analytical reflection and not merely an instrumental configuration. To provide a conceptual support for these dialectics between the global and local scale, amongst many other authors, one can cite the analytical position of M. Castells, when he evokes the dialectics of "spaces of flux", which are really situated at a global level, and the "spaces of places", when effectively pertaining to processes at a local level (cf. M. Castells, 1996, pp. 423 onwards). It must be emphasised that these dialectics between the global and local context occur both at a more general level – in the ultimate

instance in the actual context of processes of globalisation – and can also be applied to more specific (i.e. localised) levels, irrespective of the quantitative dimensions in play.

However this matrix also focuses on another set of dialectics, this time around the perspectives of the subject and the object. If the previous systemic relationship raised the question of the scales of reference of social and spatial relations, this now results in questioning, to put it simply, "who" relates to "what". In other words it seeks to relate in real terms, the dialectics that balance a plurality of subjects against a multiplicity of objects. If this plurality implies a manifest social and cultural differentiation of the subjects, this multiplicity separates the objects into diverse kinds that can be associated in schematic terms according to their basically productive projection or, reciprocally, according to their condition of being inserted into processes of social and spatial appropriation. Without delving into the diverse analytic mediations determined by the said systemic matrix – but nonetheless emphasising that these identitary situations are not immune to changes, and nor is it possible to invoke any sort of "essence" with regard to the system of identities in those spaces – one thus finds that the framework of the matrix invoked herein allows an understanding of the profound and heterogeneous relational complexity of the very system of social and spatial identities.

Territory, patrimony and culture are thus the three fundamental thematic areas, in the analytical context under discussion, that enable the configuration of a triangle of sustainability, in this case pertaining to the challenge mentioned at the beginning of this article. It is therefore an opportune moment to now proceed down this path, leading "From Lisbon to the South", in a quest for eventual specific characteristics. This same journey will also pave the way for a debate about the need to ensure the sustainability of this territory.

The South as a historical, cultural and territorial paradigm

Lisbon, an atlantic *finis terræ* and a mediterranean matrix

As a way of illustrating some of the presuppositions that really support the affirmation of the South as a historical, cultural and territorial paradigm, one can start by returning to some of the observations that enable us to embark upon this journey "From Lisbon to the South", in the wake of a specific research project which was mentioned at the beginning of this article

(cf. VMF, 2002)[3]. This is, however, a point of departure that obliges one to identify the point of origin of this journey.

Thus, at the outset, - or better still, as a first vision - Lisbon appears as a *water city*, given its close relationship with the *urban sea* that resulted in its origin and gave it a very specific identity, as has been described on other occasions[4]. This same condition, owing to its material aspects and the identitary project that it represents (or could represent) in Lisbon's urban and metropolitan mindset, undoubtedly constitutes an initial (and immediate) view presenting and representing Lisbon.

One can thus briefly recall the analytical trilogy that sustains this fundamental characteristic of Lisbon. In effect, setting out from the premise that waterfronts in maritime or fluvial cities constitute the very paradigms of water cities, this trilogy therefore paves the way for a *territorial frontier* (which should not be viewed as an "obstacle"), configuring a given *identitary symbology* and assuming a *historical and cultural projection*, in a set of dimensions that in overall terms allow the distinctive characterisation of these waterfronts.

These dimensions are naturally articulated with each other and the patrimonial ties of historical cities emerge in this context, as was also the case with Lisbon. This statement can be justified by likewise recalling that although maritime or fluvial historical cities have often faced situations of crisis, especially in terms of the economic and political framework, this did not occur at the level of their historical and cultural identity, whose continuity ended up by settling in sedimentary layers and being omnipresent in the patrimonial heritage of these historical cities, delineating, in fact, their very identity. Such an imagetic material quality leads one to question whether that urban and metropolitan sea, which identifies and symbolises this "city of two shores", constitutes (or could constitute) one of the fundamental elements of the image of the city of Lisbon.

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[3] This text constitutes a simplified version of a "preliminary outline", which was the initial document for an exhibition about Lisbon that was to be held at the Parc La Vilette in Paris in 2003 (which eventually never took place). It thus corresponds to a basic document prepared on the basis of an invitation from that institution, which made it possible to envisage how one could precisely *exhibit* or *display* the city of Lisbon. Naturally, the discursive logic of this document (which was undoubtedly reflected in the text that was published in the meanwhile) sought to follow the distinctive logic of a *script for an exhibition*, in this case an exhibition about the city of Lisbon, which, as is evident, does not necessarily coincide with the "exposition" of a specific analytical approach. Thus, as the script for an exhibition, it focused more on a methodological framework for the exhibition than on explaining the diverse empirical materials that justified any eventual analytical choice.

[4] One of the author's first references to approaching so-called *water cities* was in a paper presented at the *Conference Commemorating 450 Years of the City of Ponta Delgada* (University of the Azores, March 1997). On the other hand, this same paper ended up by developing into an initial text, presented at the *Festival do Imaginário* (Palha de Abrantes Association, Abrantes, November 1996). Finally, a slightly reformulated and more developed version was published in 1998 and was later included in a new book by the author (cf. VMF, 2004).

However, Lisbon as a *water city* also has dual historical and cultural conditioning factors, insofar as it has simultaneously (?) constituted itself as an Atlantic city, albeit with a Mediterranean matrix. Thus, these conditioning factors, especially the historical and geographical factors, have conferred a fairly heterogeneous societal framework upon Lisbon, aggregating into a complex "mixture" of multiple and varied individual behaviours, distinct modes and styles of social life and diverse cultural references that, in the aforesaid *societal magma*, end up by being fairly atypical in terms of any of the respective models of urban civilisation, when considered separately.

Effectively, as an *Atlantic city*, Lisbon is, in metaphorical terms, like a person on the brink of a ravine, ready to "set sail" or to "lament" those who have already left! It is, without a shadow of a doubt, a fragile condition: apparently it only exists in a situation of rupture, as though "all that sea was too much..."! But this situation of being a *finis terrae* (we shall return to this point later) is also a territorial hallmark, an identitary reference, in this fragility of leaving and staying. The impulse of departure thus clashes with the attraction of identitary roots. Lisbon's Atlantic aspect thus encompasses these "waves" of leaving and returning, as though it were a "no man's land", in which the maritime waves, participating in that territorial identification, stamp a movement of abandonment, of voluptuousness and of reconquest! In such an allegory, the "intention" of emigration outside the Atlantic is also implicit, which is almost always planned with the desire to return..., even if, in many cases, this never happens!

But Lisbon is also a *Mediterranean city*, albeit in a more diffused manner, owing to its climate, its light and, above all, its culture. This perception is more evident in the subtlety of its materials and its colours, in the lines of its edifices and the urban fabric, in its flavours and in the oscillation of its different moods. In short, it is far more visible in the material culture than in the framework of social behaviours, too "confused" and partially integrated into the permanent fluxes of "other peoples", given the city's great cultural openness to the "outside world" and to foreigners, not just owing to strictly tourist influences but in large measure due to economic and social reasons.

So where does this dual urban, historical and cultural societal condition come from – in an unequal dialectics, it is true – channelled by what can be considered to be a certain Atlantic "domination" but which, on another plane, also undoubtedly constitutes a kind of Mediterranean resistance? In the context of the Portuguese mainland, keeping in mind the civilisational and cultural framework in which it is inserted, it is possible to record a fairly precise territorial demarcation, which, as is obvious, is not exclusively a physical

demarcation, between the North and the South of the Portuguese mainland. This is the demarcation that allows one to sustain the influence of an Atlantic culture, especially in Northern Portugal, while in the South this influence is predominantly derived from a Mediterranean culture, especially based on an Islamic matrix.

Historians such as José Mattoso, geographers such as Orlando Ribeiro, archaeologists such as Cláudio Torres, amongst others, help establish this demarcation, placing the city of Lisbon, in a certain way, in a central space of *mediation* between this dual civilisational influence. At this level, however, these influences were undoubtedly shaped by the respective religious components. This induced José Mattoso to affirm that this demarcation, without implying an exclusive differentiation, was marked by two important politico-religious traditions, Christianity and Islam, and later also by the Jewish tradition (J. Mattoso *et al*., 1992). Likewise according to the same author, even though these religious influences could also have expanded to include other beliefs from 1147 onwards, after Lisbon was conquered from the Moors, it is clear that in the ultimate analysis, the Jewish-Christian religion ended up by predominating, albeit with somewhat distinct gradations and forms from the North to the South of mainland Portugal.

Thus this is a demarcation with profound cultural and civilisational roots and whose geographical expression seems to be relatively well delineated. Orlando Ribeiro has rigorously established this demarcation that, from a physical point of view, traces an oblique "frontier" right through the heart of mainland Portugal, along the Mondego River. In truth, "The Mondego can be considered to be the boundary between the two regions that are thus demarcated. South of this river the Moorish dominion was more profound and lasting, the reconquest was slower and came later. This was where the Portugal that was partially shaped by the Portuguese from the North commenced, from whom they acquired institutions, customs, the language and some shades of uniformity. A contrast in civilisations, climates and landscapes" (O. Ribeiro, 1945, 90). In preceding pages, the author was even more explicit when he affirmed that, "The contrast between the mountains and the deep valleys of the North and the monotonous plains of the South condition two human vocations. On the one hand, the isolation and the localism of a dense population, concentrated and sparse, where only one historical action stands out clearly – that of the Romans; on the other hand, easy and open paths, few people in large nuclei distant from each other. This has always been the broad doorway for the entry of all the Mediterranean cultural influences. (...)" (*op. cit*., 86). And, one would add, Lisbon undoubtedly has never ceased to be one of these doorways for *entry*,

not just for that Mediterranean influence but also, in an ultimate analysis, for that dual civilisational current!

This is also reflected in the position presented by the historian and archaeologist Cláudio Torres, who, in the context of the commonalities and differences of diverse civilisations, accentuated a significant set of the consequences of the territorial demarcation outlined above, this time in the context of the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, that mountainous massif, "That many Roman geographers imagined was an extension of the Pyrenees " (...) defines a great natural frontier between the North and the South of the Iberian Peninsula. It is a barrier (...) crossed at four main points, open since the dawn of time to military movements and the caravans of traders". And if each one of these "four great passes" was to constitute the "Backbone of the four Medieval nations that would decide the political future of the Peninsula" (cited by the author as constituting the kingdoms of Aragon, Castile, León and Portugal), that fourth and last pass links, precisely, "The routes from Galicia to the Lisbon-Santarém road " (C. Torres, 1992, 364), thus being at the origin of the formation of the kingdom of Portugal.

A "doorway", a "pass", so as not to see Lisbon, in terms of a historical and cultural reference, as a territorial *mediation* in that dual Atlantic and Mediterranean civilisational influence, in whose ancestral origins geography would have played a decisive role? On the other hand, such an influence is broadly illustrated through the "narrations" (whose historical reliability does not seem to be in doubt) of the Osborn and Arnulf Crusades (1936), on the occasion of the conquest of Lisbon, after a long period of Moorish rule (more than four hundred years) in that same place. One can, of course, allow for a certain exaggeration on the part of these narrators, when they transcribe alleged dialogues between the conquerors and the besieged, however, it is of little interest in the context of this discussion to debate the varying degrees of veracity. The observations that are relevant are, precisely, those that refer to the cultural and civilisational content of that clash (a reading of these accounts is highly recommended). To this end, these "narrations", as a documental and iconographic reference, help us to understand the said matrix of two cultures that were originally very different from each other. This difference is evident, albeit not exclusively, in multiple linguistic formations, in a framework of values, behaviours and social representations, in the area of beliefs and "destinies". In short, a cultural symbiosis that, however, nowadays makes it difficult to distinguish it from its original matrix.

In such a context, these multiple cultural influences are expressed, from a social point of view, in a relatively subtle manner, as has been mentioned above, and are profoundly

internalised somewhere in the "collective unconscious awareness" of Lisbon. Or, in other words, "vestiges" of this are visible in diverse areas of the city, i.e. the edifices, the alignment of the streets, the urban fabric itself, apart from an infinite multitude of so-called monumental elements, which end up by illustrating these different cultural influences, likewise corroborated by successive archaeological discoveries. In the ultimate analysis, as has been mentioned in the context of the supposed identity crises of water cities, at this level too, the Atlantic and Mediterranean civilisational ambivalence of Lisbon continues to feed the city's cultural matrix, in addition to a certain "aphasia" of the present and the possible vicissitudes of the future.

But Lisbon is also, as has been mentioned above, a *finis terrae*, situated in a "frontier" territory. It is Atlantic, above all, from a geographical point of view (not to be identified with physical geography) but it is also, as has been demonstrated, a Mediterranean city, in the sense of a specific historical and cultural demarcation. Thus, Lisbon must deal with diverse "frontiers": *material,* in this condition of being a *finis terrae*; *symbolic,* in the paradigm of its oceanic, maritime and fluvial waterfronts; *imaginary,* in the identitary processes of a city with "two shores". A "frontier" that, in an ultimate analysis, condenses this terrestrial condition with the city's aquatic projection, in a symbiosis between land and water, in which the historical and cultural condition of "leaving" and "returning" is constituted, in the final instance, as a metaphor of a city that lives, effectively, in a *finite* territory, i.e. where the land ends...and the sea really begins!

But this article had promised to leave Lisbon and head South. It is therefore time to enter, properly speaking, into this territory although, for the time being, one will only remain in the more specific territory of South-West Portugal. It undoubtedly represents a change in landscapes and also, as will become evident, a change in analytical nuances, not for historical and cultural reasons - whose fundamental references naturally remain the same - but above all due to the vicissitudes of the different logics of research processes.

The specific characteristics of the South-West in mainland Portugal

Within the scope of the project mentioned above (VMF, 2008 *et al*), the research that was carried out focused, as has been said, on the sector of tourism on the South-West coast of mainland Portugal. There is no need to provide a summary description of the research that was carried out but, keeping in mind the objectives of this article, one can highlight some

empirical elements that serve to illustrate these objectives. It is essential, from the outset, to emphasis a fundamental condition of the study that was carried out, which implied that all the research would take place using an approach aimed at sustainable development, which was naturally oriented towards the respective object of study. In the ultimate analysis, it is sustainability itself, in diverse analytical dimensions, which will be discussed here.

From amongst the diverse thematic approaches used by the project, one can succinctly describe some of the areas of analysis[5] that are most directly articulated with the present discussion. Such an exercise will help, at the end of this exposition, to question the initial challenge. As is obvious, our final inferences will not be conclusive or definitive but will instead, it is hoped, serve to illustrate this challenge.

Territory and economy

Retrospective summary

The South-West coast of Portugal comprises the council areas of Alcácer do Sal, Grândola, Santiago do Cacém, Sines and Odemira, located along the sea coast of the Alentejo province, and the council areas of Costa Vicentina, Aljezur and Vila do Bispo. The territorial proximity of the Lisbon Metropolitan Region, the spatial continuity with the Algarve, the vast maritime coastline and a relative proximity to Spain, all ensure that the South-West coast occupies a privileged position in the context of national and international articulation. This specific geographic positioning ensures that the region is naturally inserted into a territory that represents a confluence of the "Atlantic Arc" and the "Latin/Western Mediterranean Arc", which are part of the broad classifications of "South-West Europe" and the "Continental Diagonal", extending up to the Atlantic Ocean – this, in other words, dovetails with the location presented in the previous sub-chapter.

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[5] It has already been stated that this study was produced collectively, owing to which the following observations were based on the diverse investigations carried out by the set of researchers mentioned above. It must be noted, however, that there was a certain degree of specialisation in each of the thematic areas covered by the project, according to the respective disciplines of the members of the research team. In terms of the specific approach under discussion here, it must be emphasised that Joana Chorincas was the lead researcher in the area of the territory and the economy, while the co-ordinator of the study was the lead researcher with regard to patrimony and culture. Even though it is not analysed here (for the reasons cited above) it must be mentioned that with regard to the area of the Environment and Natural Resources, the research was headed by Eduardo Limbert. In any case, it would not be out of place to highlight the fact that the entire research team participated in and unanimously approved the final results that were presented, while, in this text, this responsibility can naturally only be imputed to the respective author.

With a little over one hundred and ten thousand inhabitants (2001), about three quarters of this population resides in urban areas that occupy a little over half the territory in question. The Costa Vicentina council areas are the least urbanised areas. It is above all along the Alentejo coastline that one finds a more urban dynamic, including in the context of the Alentejo region itself. However, effectively, the territory as a whole does not present a balanced urban structure since the majority of the population is concentrated in a handful of small and medium sized urban centres where Sines is the only town with more than ten thousand inhabitants. In demographic terms, the region's situation has given cause for concern. It has steadily been losing its population since the 1960s. The already limited population density, which has been a typical characteristic of this territory for centuries, has thus also been decreasing significantly across all council areas, with the exception of Sines. This situation is a result of the negative balance between births and deaths as well as, simultaneously, migratory movements to foreign countries or to more attractive areas within the national territory of Portugal, especially from an economic point of view.

The region contributes a little over 1% of Portugal's GDP, an indicator that is clearly sustained by the case of Sines. In effect, along with Greater Lisbon and Greater Porto, this council area is part of the limited set of territories that have a per capita GDP that is higher than the national average. This is effectively due to the existence of the urban-industrial hub of Sines, which specialises in petrochemicals. The territory of the South-West region records low levels of activity for the resident population (about 52%). Unemployment affects 9% of the active population and in recent years there has been an aggravation in terms of this social problem in the region, especially in the more rural council areas. Nevertheless, when compared to the other sub-regions of the Alentejo and the Algarve, this territory has lower levels of unemployment in the younger age groups.

Prospects and sustainability

In the context of an approach that seeks to identify future prospects, one can summarise a certain number of conditions that somehow identify the territory in question. At the outset, the urban triangle of Sines/Santiago do Cacém/Santo André constitutes a fundamental *centrality* in terms of the Alentejo coastline. The importance of this triangle ensures that it is an urban-industrial agglomeration with a great deal of potential for future development. Thus, this agglomeration could play a significant role from the point of view of the critical mass of a

territorially organised and economically balanced "hub", with a specific project for urban development in the area of the South-West coast.

Apart from the presence of this important agglomeration, the South-West coast is also characterised by a markedly *rural* environment, which ensures that it has an accentuated duality: about half this territory is "predominantly rural", while 72% of the population lives in urban areas. In any case, the region's rural nature is extremely visible, with a very scattered and very rarefied population (it is possible that this rural dispersion has a high positive correlation with the accentuated ageing of the population as a whole).

The South-West coast presents a high degree of specialisation amidst a limited set of activities, with a special emphasis on heavy industries linked to the complex at Sines and on specialised agriculture that is concentrated, above all, in the council areas of Odemira, Alcácer do Sal and Grândola (the entire irrigated perimeter of Mira, in Odemira, is extremely important). Thus, investments that are currently underway in the industrial sector and for the production of energy – with a special emphasis on renewable energy – along with the investments that are expected in the industrial-port platform of Sines and investments in the tourism sector along the seacoast and the interior areas of region, are shaping important economic and territorial transformations. These changes could reinforce the position of the South-West coast and especially its more dynamic axes, in terms of the regional and national economy.

In short[6], two fundamental territorial groups exist in the South-West region (through a policy of *clusters* that was implemented for the entire region), while in the case of one of them, a third autonomous case can also be identified. More specifically, one group encompasses the council areas of Sines, Santiago do Cacém, Alcácer do Sal and Grândola – combining the council areas that have a higher level of urban development, with a greater dynamism from an economic point of view and in terms of expected investments. A second group encompasses the council areas of Odemira, Aljezur and Vila do Bispo – bringing together the more rural

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[6] One of the fundamental areas of the research naturally focused on the Environment and Natural Resources, keeping in mind the ecological characteristics of the region in question. Owing to space constraints but also due to the objectives of this text, this central area will not be discussed here. Nevertheless, one can briefly recall a very schematic outline of the fundamental elements of that area in the South-West. In effect, the South-West coast has particularly remarkable ecological and environmental qualities and a diversity of landscapes, evident to common sense alone and clearly demonstrated by this research. It is thus evident that this quality and diversity should be part of a vast set of protected areas. In this context, one can note the existence of the South-West Alentejo and Costa Vicentina National Park (PNSACV) and two nature reserves: the Nature Reserve of the Sado Estuary and the Nature Reserve of the Santo André and Sancha lakes. Moreover, in the context of protected spaces, diverse areas have also been integrated into the *Nature Network 2000*.

and interior council areas, which are less dynamic in demographic and economic terms. However, Odemira functions as a "transition area" on the South-West coast, defining the frontier between the Northern areas of the region (first group) and the South (the remaining council areas), thus constituting a distinct territorial formation.

Patrimony and culture

Retrospective summary

From a cultural point of view (in the social and anthropological sense of the term), the South-West coast reveals significant differences that, in an ultimate analysis, are related to the history of its population (Romans, Arabs, Jews, Christians…), the diverse local economies (which, in the current context of globalisation, seek to establish a particular specificity) as well as its geography, derived from an Atlantic culture with an urban matrix (even owing to the important proximity of the metropolitan region of Lisbon and mid-sized urban centres). However, these geo-cultural influences are not unique: in effect, in a culturally complementary perspective (which is not necessarily an opposite one), this area is still strongly conditioned by a historical and economic Mediterranean influence, which is generally present all along the coast and grows even more evident the further South one travels within this region.

These historical, economic and geographic - and therefore *cultural* - differences go hand in hand with certain distinctions that, in an ultimate analysis, specify and differentiate the territory in question at this level. This process of differentiation allows us to reinforce the territorial demarcation outlined above: more precisely, between a territory that stretches from the Sado estuary to the area of Sines and Santiago do Cacém, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the space that extends from Odemira up to Vila do Bispo. However, as mentioned above, Odemira seems to be less of a "frontier" and more of a transitional territory, at most not belonging to either of these sub-areas, as had been demonstrated (in the previous point) at the territorial level. It is no coincidence that in administrative terms it still comes under the district of Beja – as though to symbolically emphasise that it belongs to a well demarcated region, the Alentejo – but it is nonetheless a transition (perhaps due to its proportionally "excessive" dimensions) between the vast and dominant Alentejo plain and a relatively mild Atlantic coast (as compared to the rest of the coast in Northern and Central Portugal).

These historical sedimentary layers and geographical differences end up by identifying the *cultural patrimony* of the South-West, although other patrimonial and cultural dimensions likewise shape the constitution of the territory. In such a context, religious architecture is undoubtedly a significant cultural indicator that typifies constructed patrimony. From the point of view of a patrimony originally created for military and defensive purposes, it would be natural to find diverse buildings, since it is a territory set on the edge of the Atlantic. However, here too, the distribution of such structures is not homogeneous. Likewise within the framework of cultural patrimony, it is possible to distinguish several types of patrimony, not limited just to historical buildings and/or architecture, in addition, obviously, to the urban patrimony itself. From the point of view of an archaeological patrimony, the long history of the region, with its successive sedimentary layers of civilisations, ended up by determining the existence of an ancestral culture, which, in general, extends throughout this territory.

However, a cultural patrimony is not limited to the situations outlined above. It is also reflected in various manifestations, such as crafts, gastronomy, festivals, fairs and pilgrimages. It is undoubtedly important to mention that these cultural manifestations, especially crafts and gastronomy, somehow end up by following a significant territorial differentiation, thus distinguishing the situations of the coast, the plains and the mountains. Apart from this transversal differentiation, it is necessary to implement a new general distinction between the North and South of this area, thus returning to the sub-areas mentioned above – which involves the Northern council areas, from Alcácer and Grândola to Sines and Santiago do Cacém, on the one hand, and the remaining council areas of Odemira, Aljezur and Vila do Bispo, on the other. Of course, the latter two council areas are already part of the Algarve and such a situation would necessarily introduce combined or integrated forms within the respective cultural identity, which can be identified in multiple patrimonial elements.

In a quest for specific patrimonial and cultural characteristics within the interior of the South-West, it was possible to distinguish various types of characteristics, which correspond to innumerable distinct territorial features (through the combination of parishes) that, as a whole, constitute a sort of identity puzzle of the South-West coast of mainland Portugal. These areas are identified according to their respective articulation, according to a greater or lesser proximity to the sea (coast, plain and interior) as well as their geographical location (north, centre and south). This enabled the construction of a typology of situations that were significant in patrimonial terms.

Prospects and sustainability

In a context of permanence and patrimonial and cultural changes in the South-West, it is undoubtedly important to try and succinctly assess some of the more significant elements of the said position. This is not exactly a summary of the research that was carried out but instead represents a set of prospective observations about the identitary and cultural conditions of the region under study.

It is clearly evident, from the outset, that the region of the South-West is, historically, a very diversified mosaic with an ancient heritage encompassing multiple cultures and civilisations that, over the course of centuries, occupied and settled most of that territory. However, this civilisational multi-culturalness is today very diluted socially, in large measure owing to the hegemonic weight of a late "modernity" that imported values and orientations that were not very compatible, if not downright contradictory, with that civilisational magma. Thus, if that historical and cultural identity is, undoubtedly, a very strong characteristic of the region, its empirical "invisibility" and its contemporary "normalisation" introduce a very accentuated territorial fragility and a cultural aphasia.

In this historical and cultural framework, the diversity and quality of the architectural patrimony in its multiple dimensions of civil, military and religious architecture (one should also add diverse artistic manifestations, namely sacred art), along with the ethnographic and archaeological patrimony together constitute very strong resources for the culture and patrimony of the territory in question. However, this patrimony is suffering from a not yet general degradation, while there is simultaneously an accentuated dearth of documental and bibliographic resources, resulting from a lack of scientific research and some public apathy with regard to many of these patrimonial elements. The results are paradoxical, since despite that patrimonial wealth there is a weak external visibility of these same cultural values.

Even though very fragmentary and quite scattered in territorial terms, it is possible to identify certain manifestations of local culture, especially in more rural areas. Specifically, it is still possible to find diverse manifestations of a local culture in geographical and temporal terms in the context of gastronomy and crafts, but also with regard to certain festivities, generally associated with events of a religious nature. It is true that the region likewise hosts some events on a national (and even international) scale, such as the World Music festival (in Sines) and the South-West Festival (in Zambujeira do Mar). But apart from this projection beyond the area of study, this cultural "localism" is accompanied by an absence of signs and the

interpretation of the respective cultural manifestations, apart from its isolation in the respective community contexts.

In general terms or in other terms, in the context of identitary processes, the South-West region thus presents fairly significant patrimonial and cultural values in quantitative and qualitative terms. However, the absence of culturally oriented policies, especially at a regional and local level, along with a dearth of human resource skills in the area of patrimony and, in broader terms, in the sphere of culture, has ensured that the region in question is in a fairly fragile state. These fragilities are compounded further since it is a territory that is heavily pressured by tourism while the "market" in itself does not offer even minimal guarantees for its sustainability. Ultimately, the patrimonial culture of the South-West is in fact a *non renewable* asset in itself, if it is not integrated in a sustainable manner into other economic, social and environmental policies.

In an ultimate analysis, these observations highlight aspects and situations that, from a cultural and patrimonial point of view, present a notable continuity in the South-West, alongside other aspects and situations that are more susceptible to processes of change or even transformations. It is true that, in most cases, the patrimonial and cultural condition of a said territory tends towards a sort of inertia of maintaining its status, without this implying a permanent and definitive immutability. It is also known that if major or minor changes take place, they are rooted, above all, in exogenous factors, which are thus external to the conditions that tend towards cultural conservation. There is no doubt that tourist activities generally have both a positive and a negative impact on these conditions. This means, as has already been emphasised, that the question of *sustainability* arises even at this level of patrimony and culture, in the interactive framework between a given patrimonial condition of the communities of origin and the multiple influences that are external to these community frameworks.

The specific nature of the South – and its sustainability?

In conclusion, one can recall that this article set out from a challenge - not a thesis, which would require another kind of grounding - about the historical and territorial specificity of the Southern regions of mainland Portugal. And the basic question that arose, as mentioned at the outset, was to debate the eventual sustainability of this territory. This obliges one to consider, albeit in a very simplified manner, the issue of sustainable development. In truth, as

highlighted at the beginning of this article, this study about the South-West was developed in the light of this same paradigm, in which the South-West ended up by proving to be an important "test laboratory" for many of the axes that characterise the issues involved in this paradigm.

Meanwhile, there does not appear to be a consensus about the definitions of both sustainable development as well as territorial sustainability in terms of conceptual and operative contents and even in terms of applications, which undoubtedly paves the way for ambiguities in the respective political proposals, from the outset. In the light of an as yet diffused analytical framework, one can accept a minimalist definition of sustainable development, as contained in the Brundtland Report (1987), which, in its extreme simplicity, can be understood as an ethical positioning of development, by defending that (in simplified terms) the present use of resources and the environment should not endanger its use by future generations. Irrespective of the ambiguities, this normative attitude has oriented the "political agenda" regarding the environment and territory, both in terms of the preparation of official documents as well as political proposals and recommendations, in which this conceptual and operative ambiguity has not been entirely bereft of contradictory consequences at the level of environmental and territorial policies, especially on a planetary scale.

As is known, the issue of sustainable development initially emerged in the context of a debate about the environment. There is no doubt that the last two decades have been decisive in creating an "environmental conscience", just as the 1970s represented a period in which an "ecological awareness" matured, as has been described in another text (cf. VMF, 2002). Such an "internalisation" of the environmental question, even with regard to cities and territories, has implied a progressive incorporation of the environment in diverse aspects of public policies and in distinct sectors at various levels of activities. Thus, it is important to admit, likewise within the framework of the state structure – in fact in the wake of many directives on a European scale – that such environmental policies must necessarily be articulated with issues of territorial organisation and therefore also with the organisation of cities. In this regard, the institutional articulation between the environment and organisation should allow a greater approach to the problem of sustainability, as long as the political practices do not become overly dependent and hegemonised precisely due to this same institutional sphere.

Effectively, the environmental and territorial *praxis* – which presupposes the involvement of diverse social actors (and not just public institutional agents) in the progressive establishment of a political practice, which is debated consensually and established by contract, in these two

fundamental dimensions – is still at an extremely nascent stage. It is still too fragmentary, based on the NIMBY (*not in my backyard*) phenomenon rather than an *integrated* perspective at diverse levels of implementation. In truth, in terms of policies – whose effects tend towards resolving the "zero sum"– the greater the institutional hegemony of the political system, the lesser the *room for policies*. This is precisely the place where conflicting interests clash and are eventually overcome.

In a certain way, the present economic and political context seems to favour some sociological *anomic aphasia*, in which, namely in the context of societal dynamics, social movements also oscillate between a certain "social apathy" and the "explosion of the movement". There is no doubt that this same context is greatly determined by the celebrated phenomenon of economic globalisation as well as the global nature of the environment. One can thus attempt to summarise this context on the basis of some key questions – which together could reciprocally help to illustrate this same context – from the "milieu" that has surrounded current environmental issues.

Firstly, alongside *economic competitiveness and urban and territorial co-operation*: this context of economic globalisation progressively unfolds in multiple dimensions, especially in cultural and political terms, and is paradoxically contemporary to an accentuated social fragmentation. Especially at the level of large territorial agglomerations, this fragmentation produces accentuated situations of social polarisation, immersing these territories in a profound social duality between what one can dub the "powerful" (i.e. those who have economic, social or cultural power) and those who are really "excluded" from society – as is evident, this duality is not homogeneous in territorial terms, including in the interior of each of the European and Portuguese regions. On the other hand, it is well-known that globalisation has been determined by aggressive processes of economic competitiveness and financial speculation – which, setting out from entrepreneurial competitiveness also quickly evolved into territorial competitiveness (urban and/or regional). Simply put, this same competitiveness is limited internally, as was amply illustrated by the Lisbon Group (1994), which raises the question of co-operation, perhaps economic but also inevitably at a territorial level. As an example, the proposals based on "networks of cities", as outlined above, would seem to constitute sustainable forms of urban and territorial co-operation.

Then, alongside *individual solidarity and social equity*: it would not be controversial to state that contemporary society has been accentuating individual egotisms (and some collective cynicism), as a direct result of a progressive fragmentation of social life. To a certain extent,

this fragmentation was already inscribed in the framework of the present historical modernity, irrespective of the debate about it being eventually supplanted by "post-modernism". In this context, liberal and neo-liberal policies have enabled the reinforcement of this ideological stance of a progressive individualisation of social life. Hence, although individual solidarity and social equity are likewise ideological postures, they are nonetheless indelibly inscribed in the *criticism* of the processes of social fragmentation mentioned above but also in the processes of the individualisation of social and cultural life. Thus, at this level, solidarity and equity constitute the two faces of the same *political project*, which must, in this case, be interpreted at the level of territorial sustainability.

Finally, alongside *territorial sustainability and political subsidiarity*: in the framework of the said sustainable development – which, apart from all its ambiguities, must be understood as an *integrated* development, insofar as it seeks to integrate the diverse factors in play – the principle of subsidiarity clearly leans towards decentralised methods of exercising power, in the sense that (in simple terms) such methods generally tend to be implemented "from the bottom upwards", with regard to the different levels of political power. This same stance of progressive and avowed political decentralisation will likewise tend to lean towards the *civic and political exercising* of "civil society", thus mobilising different kinds of associations, organisations for collective action (as is the case of non-governmental organisations) and social movements, in a more or less organised manner. In environmental and territorial terms, once again, it is possible to discern two sides of the same social and political stance, which, here too, also leads to the said question of territorial sustainability.

In the context of such a problematic backdrop, what can be said - and done - about the necessary territorial sustainability of the South, which is the same thing as questioning the regional and national territory (let alone going further)? Perhaps the answer lies in a quest to overcome the dilemmas that appear at the very outset. In other words, in the light of this said competitiveness, which, as is known, is projected on a global scale, to make advances in the multiple forms of *urban and territorial co-operation* and, in the light of individual solidarity, which in itself might seem innocuous enough, to emphasise the decisive question of *social equity*. Lastly, the final dilemma - which is only a dilemma in a framework of non-sustainable development – must be viewed in an articulated and integrated manner, insofar as *territorial sustainability and political subsidiarity* end up by being the two faces of this entire debate - or, as mentioned above, they should constitute the two simultaneous moments of an avowed and contracted *political project*.

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