

# Public Policies and Geographic Information

Basis for a strategy for next generation SDI

**Julião, Rui Pedro**

Territory has always been important for Man. It is the Society spatial support, giving it part of its identity, providing resources and opportunities.

Human interventions around the world, at different scales and with distinctive objectives - but mainly due to technological development - have registered since the second half of last century an increased severity, either by its pace and intensity, either by means its territorial extent. The spatial transformations took place, in many cases, at a speed higher than the capacity for analysis and correction by the man himself, creating a series of crises. We all well know, among others, the problems of big cities and their metropolitan areas, of rural areas, coastal areas and also of large areas of natural and/or semi-natural landscape.

All stakeholders involved in processes of territorial management and decision, in its many aspects (physical, human, socioeconomic, etc.), do face increasing difficulties when trying to combine the multiple perspectives necessary for a coherent and integrated territorial approach. This combination is, however, an essential step for coordination of the various activities in order to minimize the negative effects of isolated interventions or the lack of awareness of the potential impacts of territorial decisions.

That is, to act in the field of land management, necessarily implies to consider and articulate the multiple perspectives and interests present. In the current context, shaped by a lack of resources, it becomes even more crucial to consider these perspectives and interests in an integrated way. Ie, strengthening the concept and practice of integrated territorial management, where information is the basis of situation knowledge, planning and programming support, and grounding of decisions that every moment should be taken.

Thus, when speaking of Integrated Territorial Management, there is fusion of two key concepts.

"Management" can be seen as a set of tasks that seek to ensure the efficient allocation of all resources available in order to meet the pre-determined objectives. That is, the optimization of the operation, in this case of a given territory by making rational decisions, based on the collection and processing of data and relevant information and, thereby, contribute to its development and to meet the interests and needs of its stakeholders in general or of a particular group.

But this is not an ad-hoc management, but "Integrated", meaning the articulation of its various components and of different perspectives that stakeholders do have over the territory.

In short, when it comes to Integrated Territorial Management, we are actually talking about a set of articulated public policies that should create the basic conditions so that, through their instrumental components, it is possible to enable the promotion of society's sustainable development.

In this field, there was, with regard to Spatial Planning set of policies, the concern for creating an organized base that is embodied in PNPOT - National Programme of Spatial Planning Policy, approved by Law n.º 58/2007, 4 September, establishes a guiding framework for the different instruments of

territorial management, as well as claims for the need of them to be supported by relevant spatial data sets.

Returning to Management definition, it is important to stress that it is given particular emphasis to the need for this to be a set of rational decision making acts, based on the collection and processing of data and relevant information. In other words, good management requires good information!

This is the point to think about. How is it possible to implement a good Integrated Territorial Management without first having a thorough knowledge of it through Integrated Territorial Information?

Instead of the field of public policy for planning and land management, not always revealing a spirit of integration in the field of information territorial basis, there is a heartbreaking situation of absence of consolidated public policy for both spatial data and their instruments.

This is almost outrages in the actual context of INSPIRE and PSI Directive.

In this paper a look will be taken upon the political and public interventions regarding Geographic Information in Portugal in order to foresee the possible role of different actors and outline the major guidelines for the development of an integrated geographic information policy to be pursued as a model for the development of next generation SDI.

#### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

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#### **AUTORES**

**Rui Pedro JULIÃO**  
*rpj@fcsh.unl.pt*  
e-GEO/FCSH