

Conclusions

Contemporary territorial management and planning practice was introduced relatively late in Galicia, in 1956, while strategic planning was not introduced until 1992. Thus, the development and implementation of spatial plans or strategies did not always imply positive results. On many occasions, such a practice did not take into account the real characteristics and complex nature of Galician territory, often giving relevance to the province while neglecting the *comarca* and the parish. Faulty or simply non-existent methodological approaches came to deepen a series of structural problems, such as the coastal/interior dichotomy, issues on localism-clientelism (*caciquismo*) and the politisation of society and territory, the lack of administrative and territorial co-ordination, the lack of general/national spatial plans, or the disarray between the territorial socio-economic and cultural reality and administrative spatial organisation. Not even the Galician administration, since the recovery of self-government in 1981, has been able to correct such problems; at least not up to the end of president's Fraga administration, in 2004. In fact, Galicia has not been able to optimise economic and social transformation in terms of urbanisation, industrialisation, technological revolution, counter-urbanisation, and fund allocation from the European Union. Galicia has constantly 'floated in the stream', without actually taking advantage of 'the current'. Rural change and modernisation are a reality, but Galicia faced these processes in an unorganised, even 'chaotic' fashion.

It can be argued that the fundamental dilemma resides in the failure to actually establish a framework of reference, in effect, a general development plan or spatial strategy capable of co-ordinating and integrating all the different social, economic and territorial actors. The Galician administration has been especially incapable of providing a clear territorial model based on consensus, in spite of extensive literary and academic debate on the matter. Only timid references to strategic planning are to be found at an official level. As a consequence, municipal and provincial authorities have often pursued particular and personal agendas, deepening clientelist practices, territorial imbalances and maladjustments, resource wastage, and an overall lack of territorial administrative coordination. Municipal individualism is rampant, thus degenerating in the *feísmo* and

degradation of the heritage and environment, where local administrations and local residents themselves came to feel that ‘anything goes’ and, hence, public and private developments invariably pursue the most economical option, regardless of anything else. Without a model for development suited to the Galician territorial reality, plans and policies are to operate in an administrative territorial structure pivoting around the province and the *concello*, whereas the province has no real purpose and the *concellos* may sometimes be simply incapable of fulfilling all their administrative duties and functions. The disregard for *comarca* and parish condemns many spatial plans and policies to failure from the beginning, as they have to function in a territorial structure that is itself in need of readjustment.

Nevertheless, it is apparent that current territorial laws and plans adhere to the spirit of strategic planning, in the search of a more balanced territory and rational use of the territorial resources. Yet, democratic input into Galician territorial management and planning implementations is conspicuous by its absence. From that point of view, planning lacks one of the fundamental foundations of its legitimacy. Furthermore, officials responsible for territorial management and planning still fail to openly consider the territorial model which has been discussed by the Galician literary and academic community for the last decades. Certainly, politics critically influence the debate, since a new paradigm would dismantle a great part of the clientelist nets in rural (and not so rural) Galicia. This would entail the deconstruction of the informal power structures which actually sustain a number of top level politicians.

In the meantime, the new and stricter *Lei do Solo* (2002) seems to have been partially effective in tackling a number of issues, such as the *feísmo*, uncontrolled development of constructions, mixed land use, and some landscaping and environmental concerns. On the other hand, it is still premature to conduct a definitive assessment on the matter. Pre-2004 licenses are still valid, and the new administration is encountering great difficulties in discontinuing large developments in otherwise restricted (protected) areas, mainly along the coast. These licenses, not used until now, are difficult to revoke and are being employed at present despite the new (post-2004) regulations. All the same, other structural quandaries remain, such as a weak communications network, feeble trade exchange, underestimated tourism potential, structural unemployment, growing

emigration, an ageing society, and overall underdevelopment by European standards. The enlargement of the European Union might translate into further negative effects in Galicia, as it will be increasingly difficult to access new EU grants and funds.

In spite of this, the Euro-Region and the *Eixo Atlántico* still possess enormous potential, not to mention the possibility of relating the Euro-Region to its wider geographical framework, that is, Atlantic Europe and the Atlantic Arc. As Castelao asserted in his classical *Sempre en Galiza* (1944), the potential of Galicia is immense. But, again, a preferred territorial model must be agreed, both at a popular and academic level, and this model must be set as a goal to be achieved. Clear political commitments must be reached. Only then - with a clear spatial reference framework - will it be possible to actually develop feasible territorial management and planning actions. Until this is accomplished, any attempt to design, develop and implement *Directrices de Ordenación Territorial* – DOT, or similar spatial strategies, will continue to present methodological and analytical flaws. If so, these guidelines will be applied in a *per se* faulty territorial administrative structure.

The PDC ought to be the solution to part of these problems. It is a technically well-designed spatial strategy, and the prospects of *comarcalisation* were, and are, promising. The human and economic resources dedicated to this project were quite significant, although the strategy of *comarcalisation* and the PDC lack popular input. Fieldwork ratifies how the PDC is either considered a “good thing” or a good thing “if it was done in a different way”. Dr Rodríguez Pose (interview, 2002) insists that the PDC is a long-term and ambitious project, and conclusive results cannot be expected within a decade. He says that “we have only seen part of it ... it is a very short period of time ... final results are still to be seen and we cannot extrapolate definitive conclusions. The PDC responds to a broad spatial strategy as it is ever evolving and adapting; that is the good thing about it”. Nevertheless, the PDC has not fulfilled the expectations for its first years and, according to Dr Doval (interview, 2001), the Galician Government considers that full implementation of the *comarcalisation* process, with all its consequences, would have an enormous political cost. Dr Doval confirms that the fears of Garrido Faraldo and Lois González (1993) were well-founded, that is, they feared a possible decay in *comarcal* management and apathy from both public and professionals involved.

Indeed, Professor Precedo Ledo, chief architect of the PDC, tendered his resignation from the SDC in 2003. The dismantling of the current provincial structure is also well overdue.

In the absence of a clear, ambitious, and general vision for the future, Galicians continue to flock to the western coast, when they are not leaving the country. Almost half of them now live along the AP-9 motorway, connecting Ferrol with Vigo, as part of the north-south Atlantic corridor. Inland Galicia is being depopulated, creating a huge imbalance which carries negative consequences, such as the diminution in service provision, wastage of resources, destruction of the heritage and the environment. As populations move, entire villages have become deserted: the once human landscape transforms into a landscape of abandonment and oblivion, easy prey to speculation and large forest fires. While half the population saturates the delicate coastal fringe, making it increasingly an unattractive and unsustainable landscape, half the territory is abandoned.

Despite all the achievements made since the devolution of (partial) self-government, it seems as if there were not enough, and those made came too slowly to counteract the Galician ‘tendency to self-destruction’ of the last few centuries. The new Galician government has tried, for instance, to re-structure and rationalise its internal administration since 2004. The CPTOPV was divided in two new *consellerias*: the *Consellería de Política Territorial, Obras Públicas e Transporte* – CPTOPT (Department for Territorial Policy, Public Works and Transportation), and the *Consellería de Vivenda e Solo* (Department for Housing and Land). The *Consellería de Vivenda e Solo* replaces the old *Instituto Galego de Vivenda e Solo* (IGVS), which was a consultative body mainly concerned with feeding statistical data to the CPTOPV. The change of government has brought some reformist spirit indeed, but perhaps not enough determination.

As for the future, Galicia is still undeniably in need of a civic and political shift, alongside with the establishment of a national territorial and economic strategy, which will incorporate the vision of a preferred territorial model and model of development. Galicia needs to leave behind old ghosts and reach an indispensable social consensus, which takes into consideration the international arena. Galicia could only benefit from

increasing its autonomy within the state and being able to attract more resources. Galicia's financial autonomy may then be further secured and may also be able to engage in international relations (so jealously guarded by the Spanish central government), a critical issue regarding economic promotion, trade and tourism. Further political and economic resources can extend Xunta's faculties and self-sufficiency in reorganising Galicia internally.