

LEADERSHIP IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT. THE CASE OF TOURISM *VERSUS* TERRITORY CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT – Conflict occurs when the parties involved have divergent interests. Spatial planning involves a high number of agents who have conflicting characteristics (public/private, central/local government, the economy/environment) and divergent objectives or interests, and therefore, face the challenge of managing conflicts that are particularly difficult to resolve. A conflict management process that seeks to promote joint and constructive action amongst the stakeholders, and arrive at mutually beneficial solutions, requires a collaborative approach. In such an approach, leadership takes on a fundamental role. In this context, proceeding from a review of the literature on collaborative leadership, the aim of this paper is to answer the following question: what are the main leadership characteristics and functions that are necessary to carry out a collaborative conflict management process? In order to arrive to a conclusion, a tourism vs. territory conflict study was carried out, in which 26 public and private stakeholders were interviewed. These people are responsible for policies and interventions that have an impact on a territory that is subject to a high tourist development pressure and, at the same time, retains a high degree of natural value, in which the existence of intractable conflicts is a constant, namely the Troia-Melides coastal region in Portugal. The results of this empirical research confirm the idea that implementing a collaborative process in Portugal is only possible if there is a leadership that has authority, legitimacy, impartiality, neutrality and the necessary communication and mobilization skills to involve the stakeholders in the process.

Keywords: Conflict management; leadership; collaborative process; tourism; spatial planning.

RESUMO – LIDERANÇA NA GESTÃO DE CONFLITOS. O CASO DO CONFLITO TURISMO VS. TERRITÓRIO. O conflito existe sempre que as partes possuem interesses incompatíveis. Ao planeamento do território, em que estão presentes um elevado número de atores com características contrastantes (público/privado, administração central/local, economia/ambiente), com objetivos ou interesses incompatíveis, cabe-lhe a tarefa de gerir conflitos de difícil resolução.

Recebido: Maio 2015. Aceite: Outubro 2016.

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Um processo de gestão de conflitos, que procura promover uma ação conjunta e construtiva entre os atores e alcançar soluções mutuamente benéficas, pressupõe o desenvolvimento de uma abordagem colaborativa. Nesta abordagem a liderança assume uma função fundamental. Neste contexto, a partir da revisão bibliográfica sobre liderança colaborativa procura-se responder à questão: Quais as principais características e funções de liderança necessárias para desenvolver um processo colaborativo de gestão de conflitos em Portugal? Para este efeito, estudou-se o conflito turismo *vs.* território, tendo-se entrevistado 26 atores públicos e privados responsáveis por políticas e intervenções com impacto num território sujeito a uma forte pressão imobiliário-turística e que detém, simultaneamente, um elevado valor natural, em que a presença de conflitos de difícil resolução é uma constante: o litoral Troia-Melides. Desta investigação empírica sai reforçada a ideia de que a implementação de um processo colaborativo em Portugal só é possível se existir uma liderança com autoridade e legitimidade, com imparcialidade e neutralidade e com as necessárias competências de comunicação e dinamização para envolver os atores no processo.

Palavras-chave: Gestão de conflitos; liderança; processo colaborativo; turismo; ordenamento do território.

RÉSUMÉ – LEADERSHIP DANS LA GESTION DES CONFLITS. LE CAS DU CONFLIT TOURISME VS. TERRITOIRE. Des conflits surgissent toujours quand les parties prenantes ont des intérêts contradictoires. L'aménagement du territoire implique de nombreux agents, ayant des caractéristiques contradictoires (publics ou privés, centraux ou locaux, économiques ou sociétaux) et des intérêts incompatibles. Des conflits difficiles doivent donc être résolus. Seul un efficace processus de collaboration permet de gérer ces conflits et d'atteindre des résultats bénéfiques pour tous. Le rôle du responsable est donc fondamental. En partant de la littérature consacrée à ce thème, on a cherché quelles sont les caractéristiques du leadership permettant de le rendre efficace. L'étude est basée de forts conflits existent entre développement touristique et préservation des ressources naturelles. Les résultats de cette recherche empirique montrent que la mise en œuvre efficace d'un processus de collaboration n'est possible, au Portugal, que sous une direction à la fois légitime, impartiale, neutre et efficace, sachant informer et mobiliser les parties intéressées.

Mots clés: Gestion de conflits; leadership; processus de collaboration; tourisme; aménagement du territoire.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The context: intractable conflicts

According to Head and Alford (2008), problems that have a very high degree of complexityⁱ and diversityⁱⁱ can further the emergence of intractable conflicts. Intractable conflicts are conflict situations that persist over time and resist (almost) all attempts at

resolution. Putnam and Wondolleck (2003) identify the following sources of intractable conflicts:

- The parties involved are disorganised, dispersed, have no contact between each other, and there is no organised structure;
- The social system these parties are a part of is based on ill-defined organisational structures that do not have clear rules and procedures and have a lack of clear authority;
- There is a fundamental difference of values on the key issues;
- The conflict is continually growing: the parties are many, the number of issues increases and the costs of resolving them also increase.

Taking into consideration the transversal nature of the problems involved – be it in terms of tourist development or spatial planning, Almeida (2013) shows that the tourism vs. territory conflict is an intractable conflict, and therefore, difficult to resolve. According to a number of authors (Burgess & Burgess, 1994; Gray, 2003; FAO, 2005; Shmueli, Elliott, & Kaufman, 2006), resolving these types of conflict involves breaking them down into the various issues or disputes involved that can then be resolved.

Also taking into account, on the one hand, the characteristics of these types of conflictsⁱⁱⁱ and, on the other, conflict management methods (Moore, 2003; Movius & Susskind, 2009) and strategies (Blake & Mouton, 1970; Buller, Kohls, & Anderson, 2000; Cunha, Rego, Cunha, & Cardoso, 2007; Ferrão, 2011), the aforementioned authors conclude that the collaborative approach (negotiating mutual gains through the intervention of a mediating agent) is the most appropriate strategy for resolving such conflicts, provided that the decision-making deadlines are not very tight and that none of the parties have very limited powers.

2. Leadership in the collaborative process

2.1. Characteristics and roles of collaborative leadership

The existence of collaborative leadership is considered by a number of authors to be a fundamental part of the collaborative process. Based on an analysis of some of these authors' viewpoints regarding the concept of collaborative leadership, one can highlight the following aspects when it comes to choosing the leader with the appropriate characteristics for the role:

- i) *Collaborative leadership skills* – amongst other things, the ability to: motivate and mobilise stakeholders in the process; provide the necessary knowledge and competencies, thus guaranteeing technical credibility; articulate and promote a shared vision, integrating the viewpoints of the various stakeholders and building a consensus; help the stakeholders negotiate on difficult issues, resolve differences and reach an agreement (Chrislip, 2002; Vangen & Huxham, 2003;

- Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Crosby & Bryson, 2005a; 2005b; Ansell & Gash, 2008; McKinney & Johnson, 2009);
- ii) *Neutrality* – the most suitable leaders should have a high degree of influence, but a low personal interest, thus being able to focus on promoting and defending the process and not on decision-making. In other words, they should be neutral to the contents (Chrislip, 2002; Vangen & Huxham, 2003; Lank, 2006; Ansell & Gash, 2008; McKinney & Johnson, 2009);
 - iii) *Impartiality* – the leader should adopt a conduct that does not favour any of the parties. In other words, the leader should be impartial in relation to all stakeholders (Chrislip, 2002; Ansell & Gash, 2008);
 - iv) *Credibility and legitimacy* – the leader should be a person or entity that has authority, prestige and sufficient human and financial resources for ensuring that the process is carried out (Chrislip, 2002; Vangen & Huxham, 2003; Crosby & Bryson, 2005a; 2005b; Bryson *et al.*, 2006; Ansell & Gash, 2008; McKinney & Johnson, 2009);
 - v) *Origin* – the leader should be an agent that represents the public interest, that is, the leader should have a low degree of personal interest in the process (Chrislip, 2002; Vangen & Huxham, 2003; Ansell & Gash, 2008; McKinney & Johnson, 2009);
 - vi) *Multi-leaders* – there may be more than one leader, who may be accompanied by one or more mediators. If there is a good relationship of trust and a balance of powers between the stakeholders, collaborative leadership is not necessary. It is enough to have one mediator who ensures the peaceful development of the collaborative process. The leader, the process manager and the mediator roles can be held by one or more people. Accordingly, the collaborative leadership can be adjusted from case to case, depending on the situation and the personal attributes of the potential leaders and mediators (Chrislip, 2002; Huxham, 2003; Vangen & Huxham, 2003; Crosby & Bryson, 2005a; 2005b; Bryson *et al.*, 2006; Lank, 2006; McKinney & Johnson, 2009).

There is a consensus amongst the authors mentioned above defending that leadership plays a fundamental role in the collaborative process, not only in bringing the stakeholders into the process, but also in managing the whole process. Table I presents a systematization of the collaborative leadership functions, taking into consideration the three leadership goals: a) recruiting stakeholders for the process; b) getting stakeholders to commit to the process and achieving shared understanding of the issues; and c) resolving emergent problems.

However, these leadership functions (table I) can, themselves, constitute barriers to collaboration. Here one can highlight the following situations:

- Active intervention in the process vs. neutrality – Vangen and Huxham (2003) establish that, if the aim is to achieve a collaborative advantage, then sometimes process leadership requires anti-collaborative behaviour, exercising grea-

ter control over the process (“manipulating the collaborative agenda”) and managing the relations between the stakeholders who would rather not work together, seeking ways to exclude those who should not remain a part of the process (“playing the politics”) so that the desired results are achieved. In this context one can quote Hardin (1968) on the *Tragedy of the Commons*. The solution resides in mutual cohesion in which there is a mutual agreement supported by the majority of the people involved. However, Ansell and Gash (2008) alert us to the problems that may arise from the fact that the leader’s persuasive role in advancing with the process is not compatible with the leader’s neutrality function.

- Empowerment of the stakeholders vs. impartiality – The leader must not favour certain stakeholders to the detriment of others. In this context, Ansell and Gash (2008) point out the fact that some stakeholders may question the leader’s impartiality when the latter exercises their role of empowerment of the less prepared stakeholders with the aim of reducing imbalances, in terms of powers and resources amongst the stakeholders.

Table I – Collaborative leadership functions.

Quadro I – Funções de liderança colaborativa.

Problems	Leadership functions
A. How to begin the process? ^{iv}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Establish credibility and legitimacy – Incentivise the development of the process, involving the necessary people and resources – Lay down a set of basic rules to be carried out in the process – Motivate and mobilise the stakeholders to the collaborative process
B. How to build an identity, decide what to do and generate capacity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Involve people with different skills, from different sectors and with different interests – Ensure that stakeholders are committed to the process – Provide the necessary knowledge and skills, thus guaranteeing the technical credibility of the process – Articulate and promote a shared vision – Validate minor successes along the way – Help stakeholders to negotiate on difficult aspects
C. How to deal with problems that arise?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure that stakeholders maintain the dialogue, even in periods of greater scepticism – Integrate viewpoints of various stakeholders and build consensus – Resolve differences and build agreement – Coordinate activities and ensure results are achieved

Source: Own elaboration based on Chrislip and Larson (1994); Ryan (2001); Chrislip (2002); Huxham (2003); Vangen and Huxham (2003); Lank (2006); McKinney and Johnson (2009)

2.2. Leadership in the Portuguese spatial planning system

Some of the leadership skills and roles mentioned before are also mentioned in the Portuguese context, such as the leader’s legitimacy and collaborative skills, among others unstated here, as is the case with the accountability issue (Queirós, 2009; Carmo, 2014).

In the Portuguese context, the question of leadership in spatial planning is addressed from the perspective of coordination among the three levels of spatial plans (national, regional and local), and among the different sectorial plans of public administration.

The Portuguese context has some structural problems, such as centralism, bureaucracy, a top-down and sector-based organizational culture, administrative segmentation and fragmentation, system opacities, lack of network organization and excessive, dispersed and disjointed legislation (Ferreira, 2007; Queirós, 2009; Carmo, 2014). These factors make leadership of the planning process quite difficult. Currently, leadership problems in spatial planning tend to be even more complex and difficult to solve regarding the transition from a traditional and linear planning system to a collaborative planning system. This collaborative governance is characterized by new ways of communicating and sharing information, which involve a wide range of stakeholders from central, regional and local government, the corporate sector, the non-governmental associations, and the public as a whole, with different interests and power relations, as well as a more pro-active management (Breda-Vásquez & Oliveira, 2008; Queirós, 2009; Ferrão & Mourato, 2011; Pereira, 2013). In this context, Queirós (2009) draws attention to the need for stakeholders to develop new skills.

Some of the difficulties in coordinating public entities have to do with the fact that there is no coordinating body that holds the decision-making powers and the capacity to guarantee coordination among diverse entities. This lack of leadership leads to the emergence of two types of competency conflict: i) the overlapping of responsibilities and ii) areas where the competent authority is not clear (Oliveira, 2001). In this context, the importance of the Regional Development Coordination Commissions (CCDRs – *Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional*), as the responsible entities for drawing up regional spatial planning plans (PROTs – *Plano Regional de Ordenamento do Território*) and managing community funds, must be taken into account (Pereira, 2013), as they are universally recognised and are also seen as leaders and key stakeholders in tourism/territory relations (Fazenda^v, 2011). However, these entities do not have the decision-making powers to coordinate sectorial interventions or impose guidelines at the local level (Pereira, 2013; Carmo, 2014).

Breda-Vásquez & Oliveira (2008) emphasize the fact that, given the limitations of the central administration (and specifically the CCDRs), the role of political leadership at the local level is crucial, promoting the involvement of local agents. But, in the planning practice, the local authorities proved to be incapable of promoting a cooperative culture.

The literature review on leadership in the Portuguese spatial planning process highlights two examples of successful leadership: the Lisbon Strategic Plan (PEL – *Plano Estratégico de Lisboa*, 1992) (Ferreira, 2007; Pereira, 2013) and the Critical Neighbourhoods Initiative (IBC – *Iniciativa Bairros Críticos*) in *Cova da Moura* (2008) (Caser & Vasconcelos, 2008; IHRU, 2008).

In the scope of the collaborative experiences carried out by PEL and IBC in *Cova da Moura*, one can highlight as positive aspects the strong coordination and leadership of the processes carried out by the Lisbon Mayor and the Secretary of State for Spatial Planning and Cities, the National Housing Institute/Housing and Urban Redevelopment Institute (INH/IHRU – *Instituto Nacional de Habitação/Instituto da Habitação e Reabilitação Urbana*). In both cases, there was a strong degree of involvement at the highest hierarchical levels that legitimised and gave credibility to the process. The main leadership-related problem in these processes had to do with the volatility determined by the elections calendar, which meant that the continuity of the successful collaborative process could not be guaranteed.

Given the situation described above, this research project sets out to identify the main leadership characteristics and functions that are required in a collaborative intractable conflict management process in Portugal.

II. METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the objective identified at the end of the preceding section, the research methodology relied heavily on fieldwork, which included interviews with 26 public and private sector stakeholders. These stakeholders were involved in the elaboration of land use policies for, or the development of, a territory with a high natural protection value (the *Troia-Melides* coast, *Alentejo*, Portugal), which is currently subject to strong pressure from tourism-oriented development.

The leadership question was highlighted in the interview in order to identify the leadership problems which arise in a collaborative process that sets out to reconcile tourist development with the conservation and improvement of territorial heritage. In this context, the stakeholders were asked questions on the following:

1. In order to determine the stakeholders' perception of the main obstacles to developing collaborative leadership in the Portuguese context, the interviewees were asked to identify the restrictions of carrying out a collaborative process in the Portuguese context, like for example, whether collaborative leadership exists or not;
2. Subsequently, the interviewees were asked to indicate three leadership measures for improving cooperation between public and private stakeholders in reconciling tourist development and territorial heritage conservation and improvement in the *Troia-Melides* coastal region;
3. Aiming for a better understanding of the leadership problems, the stakeholders were asked to identify the leader in a negotiation process that sought to reconcile tourist development and the conservation and territorial heritage improvement of the *Troia-Melides* coastal region.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The answers to the questions listed in the methodology section and the respective analysis are presented in the three following sections.

1. Leadership in the Portuguese context

In the interviews, the stakeholders were asked about the importance of incorporating some functional characteristics of collaboration into the process of reconciling tourist development with the enhancement of territorial heritage. In Portugal, the topics regarding the existence of “collaborative leadership” are: the authority and legitimacy to coordinate the process; focus on the long term; and, the initiative and capacity to negotiate with the stakeholders involved in the process. The response was unanimous: *this is very important*.

Nevertheless, when the interviewees were asked about the applicability of such a collaborative process to the Portuguese context, the stakeholders had different opinions. Approximately 50% of them raised no objection to this, highlighting the fact that this is the path to be taken, regardless of existing constraints. The other half defended that this kind of processes would be difficult to apply in Portugal. Regarding collaborative leadership in particular, the interviewees were especially sceptical. Reasons such as the Portuguese culture, distrust, leadership skills, and aversion to being controlled were quoted topics:

- We don't like to be led, and even less, being mediated: it is a cultural matter;
- Leadership depends much more on personal attributes than those of an institution. Even if the know-how is there, it is a difficult process due to cultural reasons and trustworthy relationships.

2. Leadership proposals for improving cooperation between tourism and territory

The three leadership measures for improving cooperation between public and private stakeholders in reconciling tourist development and territorial heritage conservation and improvement in the *Troia-Melides* coastal region presented by the interviewees focused on the following proposals:

- Regional leadership;
- Creation of strong leadership work groups;
- Centralized decision making (political decision-making capacity);
- Leadership involving stakeholders;
- Leadership with capacity to communicate with other stakeholders;
- Creation of leadership structures, similar to the Monitoring and Assessment Commission for Projects of Tourist Interest (CAA-PIN – *Comissão de Avaliação e Acompanhamento dos Projetos de Potencial Interesse Nacional*), which has mediated negotiation processes with relevant stakeholders.

3. Leadership of the process

In their response to the question as to who should lead a collaborative negotiation process aimed at reconciling tourist development and conservation and enhancement of the *Troia-Melides* coastal region, the interviewees highlighted the *Alentejo* Regional Development Coordination Commission (ACCCR) as the ideal entity to perform that role (fig. 1).

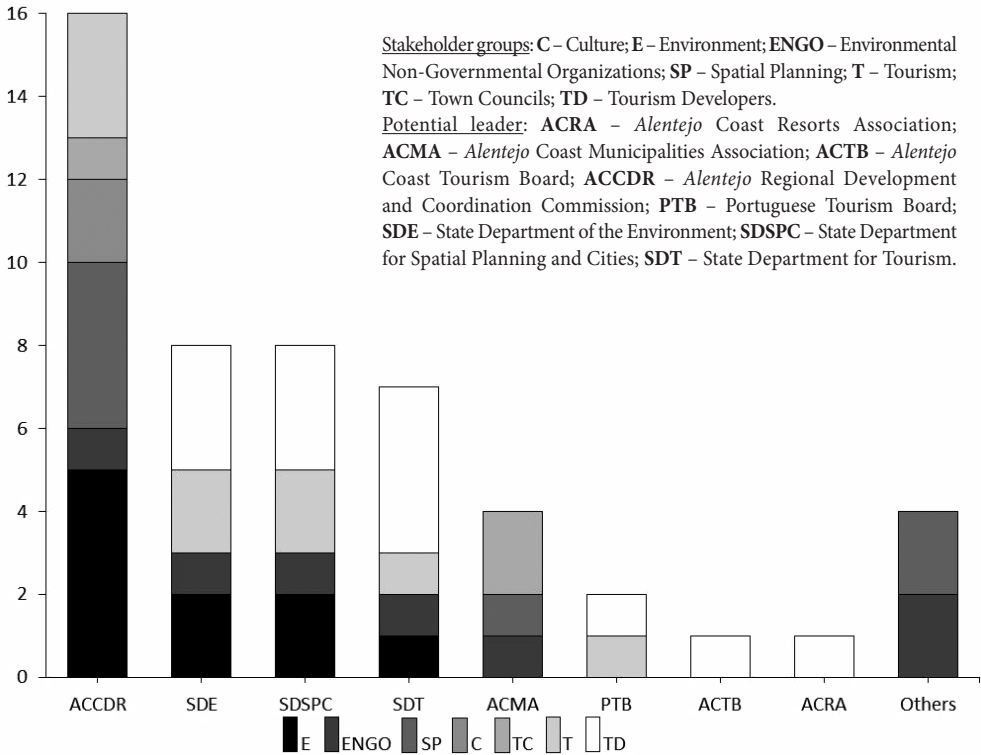


Fig. 1 – Interviewee’s choices in terms of the entities they think should lead a collaborative process for reconciling tourist development and conservation and enhancement of the territorial heritage of the *Troia-Melides* coastal region.

Fig. 1 – Escolhas dos entrevistados pelas entidades que entenderam que deveriam liderar um processo colaborativo de compatibilização entre o desenvolvimento do turismo e a conservação e a valorização do património territorial no Litoral *Troia-Melides*.

However, an analysis of the interviewees’ comments shows that whilst this authority was seen as the conceptually correct choice, in its actual format it is generally considered incapable of carrying out the work. As an alternative to the *Alentejo* CCDR which lacks the authority and legitimacy to take the leadership role, the interviewees’ second choice was centralised leadership in the Environment, Spatial Planning and Tourism State Departments.

As to the *Alentejo* CCDR, the interviewees highlighted as main advantages the fact that it is the regional entity that has already been set up to coordinate the other entities, and has an impartial and comprehensive vision concerning environmental and spatial planning issues.

The main constraints identified by the interviewees were:

- A lack of coordination powers in all sectors (coordination in environment and spatial planning areas only);
- A structure lacking legitimacy and authority to lead, with no powers to coordinate a collaborative process and maintain a long-term approach to the differing interests in the course of the process;
- A structure without technical competence and political power for decision-making;
- A heavy, ineffective structure;
- Lack of human and financial resources;
- Not dynamic or proactive;
- Impossible to be referee and player at the same time;
- Positioned on one side of the scale – close to the local government power and developers and not correctly representing environmental interests;
- Not very collaborative in other areas, namely on economic matters;
- Not knowledgeable about the dynamics of the tourism industry;
- Hostage to political disputes.

On the basis of the results presented above, one can say that there is currently no legitimate leadership propitious to the development of collaborative processes. The fact that the CCDR represents only sectorial interests related to the environment and land use management, and not all the sectorial interests at the regional level, compromises its ability to fulfil the role of coordination, reconciliation of interests and impartiality that is crucial for collaborative leadership processes, as stated by Pereira (2013).

On the other hand, the representatives from the three ministries – environment (SDE), tourism (SDT) and Spatial Planning and Cities (SDSPC), cooperated with each other and were able to manage conflict issues. Although they had collaborative leadership characteristics (subsection 2.1.), it is not their job to resolve these kinds of problems, but their intervention is important when conflict rises to the level of expressed conflict (Ury, 2000), and this was one of those cases.

Finally, although the Alentejo Coast Municipalities Association (ACMA) was only chosen by four interviewees, the local government leadership has a crucial role in the capacity to mobilize local agents and in the stability of relational networks, as stated by Breda-Vasques and Oliveira (2008).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The high level of mistrust that exists regarding collaborative processes in Portugal can be fundamentally attributed to the prevalence of a centralised decision-making culture and a top-down spatial planning system. The lack of entities with the necessary

legitimacy and leadership skills also makes it difficult to implement a collaborative process for tourism management vs. territory conflicts. For example, the CCDD – a potential leader – does not have the necessary powers, in terms of human and financial resources, required to carry out such a process, or in terms of legitimate authority to take on a leadership role. It also does not have the collaborative leadership skills (defined in table I).

Impartiality and neutrality are also fundamental attributes for leadership of the process. For example, the interviewees value the CCDD as a leader on account of its impartiality. Even so, the fact that it represents only the specific interests of the environment and land use management sectors, and not all sectoral interests at the regional level, compromises its ability to fulfil the role of coordination, reconciliation of interests and impartiality. This prevents it from assuming a leadership role in a collaborative process. The interviewees proposed a leadership structure (along the lines of the CAA-PIN) that has no interests in the process, and would therefore be a platform that facilitates dialogue between the stakeholders. Besides the collaborative leadership skills and other leadership characteristics of this leadership structure, legitimacy plays a fundamental role here, and maybe this kind of structure will be more efficient as a platform than as a leader. This not only reveals the importance of communication competencies that leadership should have, but also the impartiality and neutrality which give credibility to the process.

The fact that the interviewees opt for tripartite leadership involving the environment, tourism and spatial planning, also reflects the concern that impartiality must prevail. In this context, any leadership that is close to private interests, such as the local government, is rejected by the majority of the interviewees.

The final conclusion is that the leader, process manager and mediator roles can be taken on by one person/entity or by several people/entities, and there may be more than one leader accompanied by more than one mediator. For this reason, collaborative leadership can be adapted from case to case, depending on the situation and the personal attributes of the potential leaders and mediators in the process.

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ⁱ Complexity refers to the difficulties in gaining knowledge on the persistent problem and identifying the appropriate solutions. These difficulties emerge from restricted knowledge bases, the existence of complex interdependencies in the process, uncertainties resulting from the process dynamics and social issues and the immeasurability of the risks and potential trade-offs involved.

ⁱⁱ Diversity refers to the number and variety of stakeholders involved.

ⁱⁱⁱ Lack of communication and trust amongst stakeholders; the presence of environmental vs. economic interests, public sector vs. private sector, which seem irreconcilable; the preponderance of differing value systems and prevalence of lack of coordination among the public administration sectors and centralised decision making, which inhibit the development of appropriate negotiation forums (Almeida, 2013).

^{iv} The importance of leadership in the initial process phase is also reflected in the field of collaborative planning theory. Healey (1997, p. 269) and Jamal and Getz (1999) highlight the crucial role of the leader, who, in this phase, identifies the key actors and brings them to the negotiation table and chooses the mediators.

^v Fazenda (2011) demonstrates in his doctoral thesis that the CCDRs – as bodies that accumulate competence in the areas of planning and regional development, the environment and land use management, inter-sectorial coordination and structural funds management – are those that could best promote the territorialisation of a public nationwide tourism policy and also promote an integrated tourist planning process that would facilitate sustainable tourism.