

Painel: Inovação e transição para sociedades sustentáveis

A territorialised UN Agenda 2030 in Portugal: cross-cutting issues in energy, environment and health

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Resumo:

It goes without saying that the world is far off course for achieving a desirable sustainable development path. Crucially, this policy goal has been on the global agenda for more than four decades. In 2015, the United Nations (UN) presented the Agenda 2030 with its 17, now famous, action-oriented sustainable development goals (SDGs), as a powerful thematically holistic policy itinerary. In this context, this chapter builds on the partnership agreement with the European Commission (EC), also known as Portugal 2020 (European Union (EU) Cohesion Policy framework for 2014-2020 in Portugal) and its potential contribution to supporting sustainable policy transitions. This paper presents a theoretical discussion on sustainable policies and practices in energy, environment and health and proposes a conceptual framework to better analyse sustainable policy transitions. Supported by Portugal 2020's strategy and project analysis, it is possible to conclude that Portugal has been supporting the UN Agenda 2030 vision for a more environmentally sustainable territory, and that there are several cross-cutting projects that have been implemented in the energy, environment and health sectors. However, the Portugal 2020 intervention is mainly focused on financing physical renovation to improve energy efficiency processes.

Sustainable policy transitions require a shift towards more collaborative societal values coupled with a sustainability supportive fiscal framework. The materialisation of sustainable policies and practices in the field of energy, the environment and health also require the establishment of building blocks for a more empowered, informed and vibrant civil society in addressing sustainable development challenges. Policymaking processes also need to follow participatory, subsidiarity and place-based governance principles (Barca 2009; Stead 2014). Moreover, eco-innovation practices can only succeed if all involved actors (SMEs and large companies, research institutions, consumers, etc.) proactively contribute to this transition towards a more sustainable territorial development pattern (Bontoux & Bengtsson 2015). Finally, the physical renovation of buildings to improve energy efficiency and the production of clean energy renders a tangible platform to materialise these intended sustainable policy transitions (Kanters & Wall 2014).

By entailing several complex and interacting systems (Medeiros 2020b; Sachs 2015) sustainable development deals with a myriad of aspects of global development. Ultimately, however, it "has its roots in conservation and the desire to protect the planet's ecosystems" (Blewitt 2018: 2). Partly as a result of constructed social processes that are normally associated with environmental concerns, the social dimension is often incorporated in the familiar typologies of sustainable development: (i) people, planet, and profit; (ii) environment, economy, and equity; or (iii) environmental, economic, and social processes (Boström 2012). Taking this further, the notion of ecosocial innovation, entailing human needs for a healthier and environmentally sustainable world, has been developed since the 1980s in Europe (Matthies et al. 2019).

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Understandably, the analysis of sustainable policy transition processes is particularly complex and challenging. The same goes for the research on cross-cutting issues in energy, environment and health, which is the central theme of this book. This chapter will mainly focus on analysing the contribution of EU Cohesion Policy (2014-20 period – Portugal 2020) related strategy and funding to foment a sustainability transition in cross-cutting issues in the aforementioned three policy arenas. From a methodological standpoint, this chapter is mostly based on desk research of project databases. In addition, primary data sources were the Portugal 2020 strategy documents, supplemented with other national strategic documents, scientific articles, and books.

The bulk of the analysis is centred in examining the Portugal 2020 project database to determine how far there is a successful combination between the proposed components of the concept of sustainable policy transitions (Fig. 1). The proposed conceptual framework is supported by five crucial analytic components to stimulating sustainable policy transitions in the fields of energy, environment and health:

1. Social innovation: support to education and participatory society models. This involves support to empowered citizens and organisations as well as social responsibility and solidarity to address policy shortcomings on sustainable policy transitions;

2. Institutional innovation: support to decision-making processes towards sustainable policy transitions by institutions at all territorial levels. This includes strategic planning, participatory governance processes, and policy integration and evaluation processes;

3. Eco fiscal and financial models: support

to green taxation and financial benefits and regulatory approaches to support sustainable and renewable sources of energy. This includes encouraging the adoption of healthy and sustainable dietary patterns;

4. Ecological orientation: support to renewable and clean sources of energy, environmental protection and eco-friendly health products, which involves support for ecologic patterns of production and consumption;

5. Physical renovation: support for the use of renewable and clean sources of energy and increased energy efficiency in buildings and other physical infrastructure.

Palavras-chave

Sustainable policy transitions, Energy, Health, Environment, Portugal 2020