

# Two cross-national lessons for pontevedro



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## 1. Introduction

This report implements cross-national lesson drawing in order to suggest two lessons for the improvement of Pontevedro's planning system. For these two lessons to be successfully transferred they must be ideas that fulfil Pontevedro's needs, and how a policy works in the ' exporter jurisdiction' must be understood (Rose 1991). A lesson is then created, but importantly, one has to understand if the conditions that make the lesson ' work' in the ' exporter jurisdiction' also exist in the ' importer jurisdiction' (Rose 1991). The first lesson for transfer comes from France and its policy on regions and the second from Vancouver and its policy on zoning. These two, I believe, would do the most to improve Pontevedro's planning system. However, the report will remain realistic and critical about the scope for transfer.

## 2. A regional policy lesson

### 2. 1 Pontevedro in context

Currently Pontevedro has a population around 78, 100 with a quarter to a half of the island's people living in the capital Letinje. Pontevedro is divided into communes of different sizes, from the smallest, Govenska parish with a population of only 356, to the largest, Letinje City Council (Cowell 2013). These communes administer their own budget and are economically independent. Each commune imposes their own local taxation, with no

support from central finances (Cowell 2013). Consequently, there is a big gap in financial proficiency between the various authorities (Cowell 2013). Moreover, there are issues with the allocation of resources due to the communes being wholly responsible for service provisions such as transport infrastructure modernisation, waste collection and waste disposal (Cowell 2013). Thus a lot of the smaller communes are forced to contract these jobs out to private enterprises. For instance, waste disposal and water sanitisation in the south side of the island are carried out by 'Merdeaway', a French water company (Cowell 2013). This disposal process is considered uneconomical, rudimentary and could be organised and executed much more efficiently.

## 2. 2 The French regional system

In order to combat these concerns with resources, lessons can be drawn from the French planning system. The French system was always strongly based at national level; this means that like Pontevedro there have been issues with fragmentation (Booth et al. 2007). This problem was handled by the creation of various modifications that have altered the allocation of planning powers. It is an amalgamation of two of these modifications which would provide a useful and successful 'policy transfer' (Rose 1993) for Pontevedro's planning system.

The first modification affected the regional level of hierarchy due to changes in centralisation which led to the formation of a new level of government (Newman and Thornley 1996). This new level of legislation saw twenty-two new planning regions established in 1964, each of which revolved around the

recognised administrative boundaries (Newman and Thornley 1996). This new successful regional level was created mainly for economic planning reasons and since the 1960s the involvement of the state at this new level has progressively increased (Newman and Thornley 1996). Furthermore, all twenty-two regions possess the ability to produce strategic regional plans as well as economic development controls.

The second relevant modification affected the communal level of government and was known as the 'syndicat de communes' (Booth 1993). Communes that were not self-sufficient in terms of efficiently providing services were encouraged to forge partnerships with each other. Thus by sharing resources the communes could provide better services (Booth 1993). These modifications of the French system assisted in the resolving of the significant problems with fragmentation of a heavily centralised government and has meant that planning responsibilities have been redistributed to where they are more successfully controlled (Booth et al. 2007).

### 2. 3 The application of the lesson

As was the case in France, the smaller communes in Pontevedro find it hard to provide particular services effectively, such as road maintenance (Cowell 2013). Therefore, as was done in France, the creation of partnerships between communes in order to provide better services would be an effective way of tackling this issue. In addition, rather than simply forming collaborations between communes it is suggested that this be combined with the creation of a new level of government where particular planning abilities and service provision are operated. This would mean certain powers and

duties would be shifted from the communes to this new level and would generate a four regions structure. In all four regions there would be sufficient resources in terms of finance and workers that could address the problems effectively. The four regions would also construct regional plans which would take care of development in the area. This four regions policy would be successful as the regions would be able to amalgamate all the resources from the communes of which they consist, and provide quality services for each commune irrespective of resources or size.

## 2. 4 The issues with decentralisation

There are, however, some underlying issues with decentralisation and the creation of a regional level. De Mello and Barenstein (2001) argue that decentralisation can cause irresponsible spending and corruption as well as creating a strain on state budgets, as an increase in regional staff may not be matched by a cutback at the central level. Mello and Barenstein (2001) also highlight that central and regional government need equal attention with a suitable balance of centralisation and decentralisation. This is particularly important in issues such as the unequal geographic distribution of resources, people and poverty, which requires redistribution policies that only the central government can guarantee. Finally, one of the reasons for the decentralisation of France was because it is a large country of around 547, 030 km<sup>2</sup> (Encyclopedia of the Nations 2013) making it difficult to effectively manage all areas of the country (Treisman 2006). In contrast Pontevedro is only around 1, 144 km<sup>2</sup> (Cowell 2013) thus the geographical size of the island could also play a factor.

### 3. A zoning policy lesson

#### 3. 1 Pontevedro in context

Since Pontevedro has a constitutional system (Cowell 2013), there appears to be one clear mechanism for determining where development will take place in these regions. Through cross-national lesson drawing one can observe that all countries that have their basis in Roman law control development through the mechanism of zoning. As Pontevedro is based on Roman law (Cowell 2013), zoning would seem the best system to employ. Nonetheless, as to which country inspiration should be drawn from still needs to be resolved.

#### 3. 2 The Vancouver zoning system

The zoning system from which ‘ policy transfer’ (Rose 1993) appears to be most successful for Pontevedro is that of the city of Vancouver. The Vancouver zoning mechanism has developed to incorporate a discretionary component (Leary and McCarthy 2013). This innovative element tackles the problems in the majority of modern day zoning systems (Punter 2002). This notion of discretionary controls combined with zoning is present in a number of Canadian cities; however Vancouver possesses an international status as a city with high quality design (Punter 2003) and is known as one of the top destinations to live in the world (Punter 2002).

It must be noted that the notion of discretion and zoning can be identified as contradictory, as discretion infers an aspect of leniency, and zoning is perceived as an inherently fixed concept (Cullingworth 1993). However,

Booth (1996, p. 110) states that, “ Discretion is rarely absolute, but must operate within limits.” This illustrates that zoning can contain a discretionary element within its regulatory restrictions. This has been accomplished in Vancouver because of its advanced planning system and urban design policies, as well as refined guidelines, processes and procedures (Punter 2002).

This sophisticated system came into being due to the natural geography of the city, the concept of good design and the high emphasis on aesthetic quality (Leary and McCarthy 2013). Furthermore, the Vancouver Charter, passed in 1953, permitted the creation of individual administrative systems detached from provincial controls (Brunet-Jailly 2008). This meant that there was significant delegation of planning powers to the Directors of Planning, in order to prevent the interference of councillors in permit processing affairs; therefore skilled development planners had the top control posts (Punter 2002).

The primary discretionary feature of Vancouver’s successful zoning system is one where zoning has become design-led (Punter 2003). In Vancouver, the development plan procedure is operated by the zoning bylaws; these convert general planning ideologies and design ideologies into regulations (Punter 2003). These regulations control building heights, floor space and land use. They then correspond with the discretionary components, in this instance, design guidelines (Punter 2003). What makes Vancouver stand out from other zoning systems is its policy to give incentives for good design (Punter 2003). If the applicant obeys the design standards, then that applicant will receive an incentive of additional floor space, thus raising the profit potential

available to them from that development. As a result, the fundamental negative control system of zoning has a positive element and encourages good design (Punter 2003).

### 3. 3 The application of the lesson

When applying the Vancouver system, an element of design quality can be integrated into new development within Pontevedro, this would subsequently respect and enrich the island's built environment. Therefore Vancouver's system is applicable to Pontevedro, especially given Pontevedro's desire to preserve their culture and heritage, as witnessed with the displeasure at the demolition of the Gavno landmark (Pontevedro Sun-Herald 2007).

Additionally, the Vancouver system will succeed with the constitution in place in Pontevedro because Vancouver shares the same constitution.

One of the issues with the current system is that there is a problem with sporadic development of houses along segments of the coastline, ribbon development near main roads and demand for new housing. Drawing influence from Vancouver's zoning policy should be beneficial in the struggle with these problems; however at the same time there are issues when implementing this policy.

### 3. 4 The issues with zoning

Zoning can cause concerns due to the fact it does not include every aspect of development. For instance, zoning can be inclined to concentrate on individual lots instead of focusing on the impacts of development in general (Cullingworth 1993). This is a result of two ideas. Firstly, zoning seldom is



concerned with timing or the presence of infrastructure (Cullingworth 1993). Essentially, a development project can be proposed, which although complies with the zoning regulations, is isolated in terms of infrastructure, amenities and other developments.

Secondly, the usual opinion of municipalities is that they support development (Cullingworth 1993). Cullingworth (1993, p. 167) highlights this development-led idea when he observes:

Instead of asking “ is the proposed development desirable in the public interest at this place at this point in time?” The typical municipality starts from the presumption that any development is good and, in any case, it is unfair to penalise a particular owner with a refusal.

Consequently it is difficult for zoning to be consistent with other planning matters. Therefore it is important that the Pontevedro government consider the application of mechanisms to control urban growth, as well as reflecting on development on a larger scale. According to Cullingworth (1993), there are several ways this can be done, such as zone regulations, urban growth limits, restricted subdivision, phasing development as well as infrastructure provision and land preservation for particular use, such as protecting farmland.

Moreover, zoning is characterised by inflexibility and rigidity in terms of apportionment of land for development. Therefore, it can be flawed when there are changing conditions, such as the requirement for a new type of development (as seen with Pontevedro’s flourishing financial sector) or for controlling aspects such as traffic infrastructure (also seen in Pontevedro),

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and the aesthetics and design of development (Cullingworth 1993). Additionally, zoning can be vulnerable to corruption and favouritism (Cullingworth 1993). Even though this is the case in many systems that utilise zoning as a device to control development, there are places that overcome these problems (Cullingworth 1993).

#### 4. Conclusion

This report has outlined two of the policy transfers for the creation of a new Pontevedro planning system. Even though these lessons deal with some of the major issues they do not provide a comprehensive planning system by themselves. However, the chosen lessons do constitute what is essentially the basis of the new planning system, focusing on the planning structure and procedure for delivering and regulating development.

The creation of regions by the merging of communes, as done in France, will deal with the issue of service provision and will generate a more effective system to the pre-existing one. Zoning, although it has its limitations, was suggested as an instrument for development control because Pontevedro is a constitutional state. Vancouver provides a useful policy transfer that handles issues existing in most zoning systems, implants a level of design quality and improves the island's built environment; as well as providing a starting point for the preservation of cultural. Both of these policies can be transferred to Pontevedro's new proposed planning system because they have succeeded in their own and other countries, they solve certain issues found in Pontevedro and due to some similarities between the two countries the policies can be applied to Pontevedro.

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