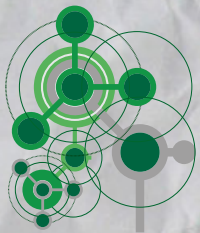


DOSSIÊ





Governing the “white space”: development, identity, and dynamic processes for increasing sustainability and social responsibility

Governança do “espaço branco”: desenvolvimento, identidade e processos dinâmicos para incrementar a sustentabilidade e a responsabilidade social

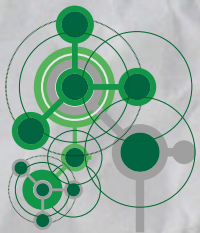
Gobernanza del “espacio blanco”: desarrollo, identidad y procesos dinámicos para aumentar la sustentabilidad y la responsabilidad social

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Abstract

Sustainability and social responsibility increasingly require ecological and social concerns like identity and quality of life to enter earlier and more deeply into the decision making process, especially intersector decisions. To accomplish this, new interaction designs and "governance" reforms are needed. This article explores a case in Southern Bahia, Brazil, where a new type of cross-sector governance mechanism holds promise for more effectively addressing pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

KEYWORDS: CROSS-SECTOR GOVERNANCE • NOSSA ILHÉUS INSTITUTE • BAHIA SOCIAL VALUES, DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES • INTERACTION DESIGNS • PARTICIPATORY PLANNING • NETWORKS • PUBLIC PARTICIPATION • DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Resumo

Sustentabilidade e responsabilidade social envolvem, de forma crescente, temáticas como identidade e qualidade de vida para entrar prontamente e de forma mais profunda nos processos de tomada de decisão, especialmente nos decisões intersetoriais. Para essa nova interação são necessários redesenhos e reformas de "governança". Este artigo explora um case do sul da Bahia, no Brasil, onde um novo tipo de mecanismo de governança cruzada faz prever um direcionamento mais efetivo para os prementes desafios sociais, econômicos e ambientais do século XXI.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: GOVERNANÇA INTERSETORIAL • INSTITUTO NOSSA ILHÉUS • BAHIA • VALORES SOCIAIS • PROCESSO DE TOMADA DE DECISÃO • DESENHO DE PROJETO INTERATIVO • PLANEJAMENTO PARTICIPATIVO • REDES • PARTICIPAÇÃO PÚBLICA • GOVERNANÇA DEMOCRÁTICA

Resumen

Sustentabilidad y responsabilidad social envuelven, de forma creciente, temáticas como identidad y cualidad de vida para entrar rápidamente y de forma más profunda en los procesos de tomada de decisión, especialmente en las decisiones intersectoriales. Para esa nueva interacción son necesarios rediseños y reformas de "governanza". Este artículo explorará un case del sud de Bahía, en el Brasil, donde un nuevo tipo de mecanismo de gobernanza cruzada hace prever un direccionamiento más efectivo para los permanentes desafíos sociales, económicos y ambientales del siglo XXI.

PALAVRAS-CLAVES: GOBERNANZA INTERSECTORIAL • INSTITUTO NOSSA ILHÉUS • BAHÍA • VALORES SOCIALES • PROCESO DE TOMADA DE DECISIÓN • DISEÑO DE PROYECTO INTERACTIVO • PLANEJAMIENTO PARTICIPATIVO • REDES • PARTICIPACIÓN PÚBLICA • GOBERNANZA DEMOCRÁTICA



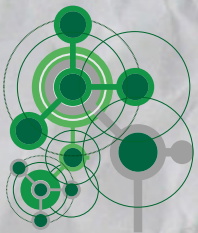
On a hot day in July 2012, a community activist named Socorro proudly described the upcoming or launching party for Instituto Nossa Ilhéus (Our Ilhéus Institute), that was recently established in a colonial town along the coast of Bahia, Brazil. “Everyone will be there,” Socorro exclaimed; “We have space for three hundred people, but judging from the calls I’ve gotten and what people are saying, we’ll have close to five hundred. This won’t be just any party,” she continued. “The actors from A Casa das Artistas [The Artists House – a local theater group] will be present – dressed up and mobilizing people in the audience throughout the night. We’ll also have the national anthem presented at the beginning. (...) and not that type of formal, haughty singing that you always hear [and she pushed her nose into the air], but this time sung by a beautiful woman who puts her heart and soul into it,” she explained, dramatically spreading her arms in imitation of a “new” heartfelt style of singing the Brazilian national anthem.

Indeed, several weeks later at the actual launching event for Nossa Ilhéus politicians, environmentalists, artists, business owners, university presidents, and other leaders from the Southern Bahia region crowded into the municipal theater to celebrate the advent of the new institute. But what does the formation of Nossa Ilhéus tell us about the governance trajectory of contemporary Brazil? Furthermore, what does the presence of such institutes communicate about new governance designs and implementation strategies?

To address these questions this article traces the advent of Nossa Ilhéus and its work to draw conclusions about emerging and promising governance processes that are shaping not only the Southern Bahia region but the nation of Brazil, as well as beyond. In this process, we highlight emerging governance initiatives that span cultural, geographic, institutional, environmental and sectoral boundaries. We conclude that some of the most promising new forms of governance that are developing today are characterized by their collaborative, polyarchy, poly-centric, highly ad hoc, episodic, and networked characteristics. Collectively these approaches hold promise for more effectively addressing pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

BIODIVERSITY, COLONIZATION, AND THE PORTO SUL PROJECT

Brazil’s Atlantic Forest is globally renowned for its impressive biodiversity. While the entire remaining tropical Atlantic Forest is one of the most endangered natural areas on the planet with less than 8% of the original forest remaining (Tabarelli et al. 2005; Galindo-Leal and Câmara, 2003), areas of Atlantic Forest in Southern Bahia have more floral and faunal diversity than even the more globally famous Amazon (Morellato; Haddad, 2000, p. 786). The strong conservationist agenda in this region today, however, is often challenged by longstanding regional development. Clandestine logging and unregulated hunting have impacted Southern Bahia’s forest for years, and more recent development efforts like coastal oil extraction and increased tourism development lead to rampant urban growth, waste management, and water quality degradation.



Southern Bahia, however, hasn't faced a development initiative as large as the proposed Porto Sul project since it was first colonized in 1500. Porto Sul is intended to facilitate the worldwide export of Brazil's natural and agricultural resources – iron ore, uranium, nickel, coal, cement, fertilizers, oil derivatives, grains, and biofuels. These products will be transported from the western part of the state of Bahia by a cross-state railway¹ which will meet the international airport and deep-water port that comprise the Porto Sul project the state's coastline. While the mining is to occur about three hundred miles inland, the airport and port component are slotted for construction just north of the city of Ilhéus, which lies in the middle of this richly biodiverse region where the Nossa Ilhéus Institute was recently formed.

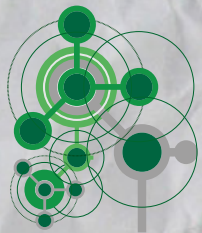
Porto Sul, however, is directly connected to the regional as well as the national imaginary of development. The project derives from the presence of an iron ore deposit in the town of Caetité, located in Western Bahia. The owner of the Caetité mine, called Bahia Mineração (Bamin), notes: “We plan to be one of the largest mineral companies in the world. (...) We want to be a Vale², a BHP, a Rio Tinto. We have the resources and support for this” (Tavares; Cunha, 2005). Despite the nationalist roots of this dream, however, the Porto Sul project is now controlled exclusively by foreign partners, shared equally by Zamin Ferrous, based in London and the leading world producer of steel, and Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation, a Kazakhstan-based mining company that is sixth in the world for exporting iron ore³.

This project complements Brazil's global economic development trajectory; much of the country's iron ore and other minerals as well as the agricultural products intended for export through Porto Sul are destined for China. As with many development projects throughout Brazil as well as elsewhere, however, the Porto Sul project is polemical. Residents of Southern Bahia have been assured that the two elements of the project that will most affect their lives – environmental impact and employment generation – will be central to its planning and implementation. State planners declare: “Everything was thought of in terms of eco-development – this will be the largest investment in environmental conservation in the state. (...) Bahia will come out in the front with a new model of sustainable development”. Yet the viability of making the entire area surrounding the port an ecologically protected area is questionable at best, and large discrepancies exist around employment projections. Proponents estimate that Porto Sul will create between 8 thousand and 10 thousand jobs during construction and somewhere around 2 thousand during implementation. Opponents to the project, however, assert a mere four hundred jobs will result once the port is operational⁴. Porto Sul is also colored by the intermarriage of private companies with state and federal funding for infrastructure development projects. Bamin is a privately held company, and the port will have both private areas, open to Bamin and other companies, as well as public space⁵.

¹ This railway is part of Brazil's East-West railway development, intended to better connect the country by railway (CITES).

² Former Companhia Vale do Rio Doce.

³ See http://www.bamin.com.br/interna_ing.php?cod=3. Accessed Feb. 13, 2010.



The environmental conservation, economic development, and social preservation issues intertwined with projects like Porto Sul are found throughout the broader national context of Brazil and, quite arguably, in regions throughout the globe. As one community leader in Bahia noted, “this type of movement [Porto Sul] is an expression of the macrosituation in this country. We are applying, here in Brazil, so many policies with private initiatives and models that were developed in other regions, where [the] history is completely different from Brazil’s. So we, here [in Bahia], have a transition of coronelismo of slavery, of imperialism for a democracy without a fight. (...) So this ends up being, causing, in many ways, serious structural problems, and [with] these structural problems, everyone suffers (...), and the greatest risk of suffering, those who suffer the most, are the poor”.

EVOLVING GOVERNANCE PRACTICES AND PROCESSES

Given this caution, however, how do the launching party of the Nossa Ilhéus Institute and the looming presence of Porto Sul in Southern Bahia relate to each other? Furthermore, what do these realities reveal about new governance approaches to environmental, economic, and social issues that are particularly profound in the 21st century? The challenge of creating sustainable governance processes⁶ is one of the most discussed issues of our time. As our global interdependence becomes greater, the need for alternative forms of governance that are able to conceptualize and produce creative and mutually beneficial decisions also grows. Ultimately governance has the power to transform difference and conflict into community decisions. The quality of a governance process depends, however, on the creation of productive reciprocity and quality decisions.

Furthermore, governance today is not just, or even primarily about governments. Traditionally governance has been conceptualized across three sectors each with their own domain and spaces to answer community needs —the public good (done usually by governments), economic (done usually in business), and civic (done usually by churches, public stewards, community groups, universities and nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs). Each of these have a preferred way to do governance. The public good is done by rule by law, regulation and force; focus on redistribution, market correctives, safety and security; traditional political processes of decision making; process legitimacy and implicit social contracts; scale overcome by administration

⁴ Complexo portuário vai criar 10 mil empregos no sul da Bahia (The port complex is going to create 10,000 jobs in Southern Bahia). March 19, 2008. Available at <http://www.revistaportuaria.com.br/site/?home=noticias&n=CSqo&t=complexo-portuario-vai-criar-10-mil-empregos-sul-bahia>; accessed Dec. 1, 2009; O Projeto Porto Sul (The Porto Sul Project), Ilhéus Action, May 28, 2008; available at <http://www.acaoilheus.org/entendimentos-iniciais>; accessed Dec. 1, 2009.

⁵ Governo da Bahia assina concessão de área para as instalações do Porto Sul (Governor of Bahia signs concession of area for the installation of Porto Sul). Available at: <http://www.tribunadabahia.com.br/2013/06/07/governo-da-bahia-assina-concessao-de-area-para-as-instalacoes-do-porto-sul>, Accessed July 4, 2013.

⁶ Governance, for our purposes in this article, includes all the processes by which groups of people make decisions together and regulate and coordinate their interdependent activities



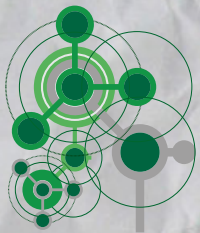
and representation. The economic is done by rule of contract and calculation; focus on wealth accumulation; market processes of decision making; efficiency and productivity legitimacy; scale in universal calculations through monetary value. The civic is done by rule by norms, suasion and voluntary compliance; focus on values; consensual decision making; traditional and ethnos legitimacy; scale through cultural management, acculturation and norm inculcation.

All three sectors are currently experiencing challenges to their capacity to do governance in their domain. And these challenges have direct consequences for economic, social and ecological goods. Government governance is challenged by decisional paralyses and partisanship, pressures from special interests, corporate collusion in regulatory agencies, reduced legitimacy and voluntary compliance, and inadequate resources. Corporations (as a dominant commercial form) governance structures are challenged by the continued growth of managerialism and managerial capitalism, short-termness, scandal and oversight difficulties, and social responsibility expectations. Civic governance is challenged by the breakdown of communities and family, postmodern conditions and loss of organizing narratives, deinstitutionalization, lost youth and gangs, and pluralism and lack of value consensus. Each is struggling to regain capacity through new forms of response to changing conditions.

A number of fixes for existing governance have been suggested – public deliberation and increased civility for government; Corporate social responsibility, workplace participation and stakeholder models for commercial; value campaigns and community dialogues for civic. But none of these are sufficiently radical.

A greater challenge is in the so-called ungoverned “white space” between the sectors. Issues of the “commons” and interdependency more generally make the “inter-sector” space and decisions there ever more important and good processes there could eventually reduce the need for governance from sectors. The central value from these processes rests in creativity and legitimacy usually comes from the inventions of possibilities and decisions than none of the sectors could on their own. The “white spaces”, like all governance systems, have to answer questions like: “Whose objectives should count?” “How much should they count?” “How will they be accounted for?”

The development of cross-boundary governance – involving civic groups, government units, businesses and communities – early in the decision making chain seems key to addressing conflict and a number of social and environmental problems. The success of these cross-sector collaborative initiatives has been mixed, however, mostly because they have focused on developing structures and meeting forums but have not developed the theory, expertise, and standard practices necessary for consistently conceptualizing and choosing mutually beneficial decisions. These are concerns that cannot be answered well by the more abstract models from political science and economics but call on more anthropologically informed practices and sophisticated communication theories and interaction designs. Considering this context, let us



now return to the case of Nossa Ilhéus as an example of how new practices and strategies for governance of “white spaces” can, in turn, more effectively address contemporary developmental debates such as the Porto Sul project.

TRAJECTORY OF ACTIVISM: FROM “NO” PORTO SUL TO NOSSA ILHÉUS

Despite the local economic promise and national development interests associated with Porto Sul, over half a decade ago when plans for the project first surfaced the immediate reaction among regional social-environmental leaders was a campaign called Porto Sul Não (No South Port). On t-shirts, banners, and graffiti across roadside signs Porto Sul Não was a common message.

Almost simultaneously, this campaign served as the impetus for the creation of an organization known as Ação Ilhéus (Action Ilhéus). Public meetings were held with the hope of mobilizing a discourse in the region beyond what many people living there did not want (Porto Sul) into what it did want. As regional activists note, “we couldn’t define ourselves by the negative, and, instead, needed to create a positive and collective vision that could be used to move forward” In time, the Porto Sul Não campaign began to transform into something more reflective of this vision. Publications such as one aptly named, “Um futuro muito além do Porto Sul” (A future much beyond Porto Sul) began to shift the public discourse away from one specific project like Porto Sul and into the arena of broader discussions of regional history, identity, and future visions. Another organization then developed in the region to exemplify this vision, called “Sul da Bahia justo e sustentável” (Just and sustainable Southern Bahia). Web sites evolved, logos were developed, and new connections extended outward from Bahia to other like-minded networks beyond.

However, in the post-colonial milieu of Ilhéus that is still heavily laden with economic and social inequities, some citizens perceived these groups as largely directed by single-minded environmentalists with little consideration for a broader set of values and which, at times, privileged an environmental agenda over a region’s economy and society. The conversation needed to be broadened.

In early 2012, as previously described, the Nossa Ilhéus Institute arose with the goal of pushing democratic governance processes in a new direction, a direction distinctly connected to the notion of a place being “of” its people. The objective of Nossa Ilhéus is to strengthen citizenship and foster social control in the city of Ilhéus. Furthermore, the institute’s very name, Our Ilhéus, invokes the question of how to create a regional cultural economy (Scott, 1997) built upon what some scholars have deemed “solidarity-bounded activities” (Isla, 2009)⁷. Exemplifying this, Socorro, the executive director of Nossa Ilhéus who described the institute’s launching party, regularly provokes citizen involvement via the institute’s Facebook site. She pushes people to create a collective, regional vision challenges local citizens to get involved in developmental debates and issues associated with projects such as Porto Sul:



Let us imagine in a beautiful region, the central corridor of the Atlantic Rainforest, with the highest biodiversity on the planet, dedicated to agriculture and tourism in ALL its forms, arises a project that will bring raw iron to approximately 11.5 cubic meters of water flowing in a large river [in the region]. (...) The entrepreneurs are well-intentioned people and promise they will treat this water. (...) After treatment they will reuse 3.4 million cubic meters and the rest they will... think about how to deliver to the poor and miserable people through canals that go into residences. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

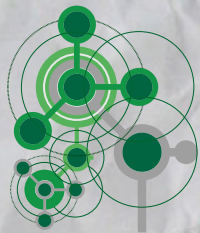
These men also want to create jobs in this beautiful region, because the people are unemployed and marginalized. Will they employ unskilled and crack addicts of this place? To instill it [Porto Sul] may well close this paradise [through] an iron ore processing plant that then transports [these resources] in large quantities on large ships, often for only a few years until the mine is exhausted. In fifteen or twenty years we can have more jobs being generated to try to recover what was destroyed! (...) WHAT DO YOU THINK?

These questions, each followed by the challenging question, “what do you think?”, are intentionally meant to not only overtly connect Porto Sul’s development to the region’s long-term economic, environmental, and social sustainability, but also to inspire and call people to incorporate their particular values into the regional governance. In sum, Socorro wants to build a governance strategy out of what people truly, and collectively, think. This has to go beyond standard ways values are included.

The fundamental question is when, where and how social and ecological values enter into the decision process. Social and ecological values often enter the decision chain through personal, political and economic processes. The personal is usually understood as the presence of private values and stewardship that are extra economical additions to decision making. Non-economic values inevitably enter into all decision making. Some of these focus on social and ecological sustainability and some support other private and social agenda. Much of the social responsibility literature has focused on these values and the consequences they have for decisions. Values also enter through political processes. In governmental decisions these enter through election processes and answering to various constituencies. In business decisions this is experienced through various forms of regulations and public guidelines. And finally, values enter in through economic processes. Every purchase is in many ways a vote for a particular set of values. While each have an important place, each of these is also limited in how they individually add to the quality of decisions and their social and ecological impact.

But each of these have flaws that hamper value inclusion. New approaches to governance need to go beyond the reliance on the personal values and good will of leaders, which can often be naïve and superficial. Furthermore, leaders often explicitly or implicitly fall into the false assumption of an inevitable trade-off between economic and social and ecological goods. Free trade agreements

⁷ From June-August 2013 undergraduate students from the University of Colorado and the State University of Santa Cruz will conduct research intended to help build a solidarity economy in this region.



often limit explicit consideration of non-economic values. Governmental influence and regulation is often expensive and reactive, dismissive of local circumstances, corporate and government collusion is common, and regulation tends to lead to a double bureaucracy, one to regulate and another to avoid it. And, at the base, public agencies frequently do not have the legitimacy and resources to impact where most needed. Economic impact is limited by cost externalization and the difficulty of full-costing translating all social goods into the economic code. Selective consumption is limited by the complexity of choices and green-washing. To maximize economic, social and ecological values in a sustainable way, the system of value inclusion must be more timely and more effective.

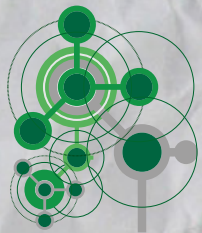
FURTHER EVOLUTION OF PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESSES

Nossa Ilhéus' goal of participation across all aspects of society, its mechanisms for cross-sector mobilization, even the “soulful” national anthem that Socorro described as an attempt to translate the vision of a region and a country into action, are all intended as new forms of meaningful and truthful participation in governance. Participatory planning of regional development, however, is hardly a new concept in Brazil which is globally famous for its efforts for cross-sector involvement in economic and environmental decision-making like municipal level budgeting and regional level water councils.

Nevertheless, Nossa Ilhéus, is instituting several practices that not only adhere to this concept of participatory planning, but which, in fact, push it to new levels. While Bahia Mineração (Bamin) is betting on Bahia (and even former president Clinton is betting on Brazil⁸) Nossa Ilhéus is betting that dialogue across difference which addresses the most pressing issues affecting a region can provide a foundation for belonging, and, in turn, for defense of place. By way of example, Nossa Ilhéus regularly works with a local theater group to have periodic open forums on topics affecting the city. These forums are aptly named “Oxente! A cidade que queremos” (Oxente! The city we want). The first word in this forum, Oxente, is a slang term in Bahia that roughly translates into “Come on people!” Such encounters represent new forms of public debate as experts in history, geography, and public policy discuss aspects that constitute the city, and the people, of the region where Porto Sul is slated to be developed. Controversial topics are aired in a manner that is simultaneously engaging, entertaining, and thought provoking.

Our Ilhéus also strives to promote not only public discussion, but also widespread transparency. Before the institute found offices this past summer, Socorro referred to her “office” as an outdoor coffee shop in the center of town. “I like to sit among those who view things differently from me,” she once remarked, “I’m open to talking to all.” Today, the institute is forging relationships with the local university in the hopes of having a “nucleus” where information can be disseminated in an unbiased, public forum.

⁸ Reuters Aug. 28, 2012. Available at: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/28/us-brazil-clinton-idUSBRE87R0UB20120828>>. Accessed: July 4, 2013.



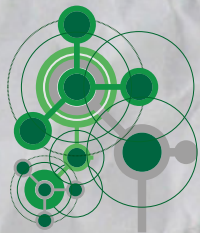
Aligning with this philosophy, Nossa Ilhéus recently launched a website that visually and quantitatively demonstrates some of the starkest characteristics of the city of Ilhéus, through a system of indicators that publically communicates information and data on pressing issues like poverty, crime, political corruption, and environmental degradation⁹. The hope is that this data will become a common basis for public debates on regional economic, social, cultural, and environmental priorities. This notion of open discussion, transparency, and even a little of the Bahian concept of “Oxente” lies at the institute’s very core.

FROM NOSSA ILHÉUS TO BROADER GOVERNANCE NETWORKS

The very real possibility of Porto Sul and the new approaches of Nossa Ilhéus are emblematic of development debates throughout not only Brazil, but of other locales facing development, identity, and governance challenges. These realities are also further developing a governance approach that has long been used by civil society actors throughout Brazil, the technique called the *rede*. In communicating the profound perceptions of identity and connectedness to place, *redes* typically use e-mail and other social networking tools, while also holding annual face-to-face meetings and periodic events connected to the interests of the *rede*. At the national level, *redes* throughout Brazil are quite sophisticated in articulating environmental, social, and political agendas (Scherer Warren, 2006). *Redes* are also both a concept and a political strategy that people refer to comfortably in daily conversations. One prominent social-environmental leader referred to how his organization had over time “developed *redes* of relations that help to realize [their] work” (Rocha, 2011).

Furthermore, the *rede* is grounded in the necessity of determining viable options for the region’s sustainable development. A leader in the Just and Sustainable Southern Bahia *Rede*, explains: “You need to have an economy in this region capable of sustaining biodiversity. Who is going to sustain biodiversity? It isn’t going to be the NGOs it isn’t going to be the small resources that go into nature conservation. It is going to be the reality of the economy.” For this reason, the region’s ecological and cultural exceptionality is increasingly foregrounded in inclusive sustainable development strategies that demand that specific interests, such as environmental conservation, be balanced with other strategies such as sustainable livelihood development. This same leader observed: “The regional environmental conservation goal won’t be successful if it isn’t balanced with an agenda of development in areas we consider strategic, for example, ecotourism, agroforestry, transformation of cacao into chocolate, other uses like beekeeping, etc.” Thus, the *rede* doesn’t align with a specific issue or identity such as environmental conservation, the plight of family farmers, long-standing territorial rights, or even a prime beach for surfing. Rather, it is a mechanism for stimulating thoughtful discussions about the local cultural and ecological characteristics that are

⁹ <http://nossailheus.org.br/>



unique to this region and, following this, for arriving at a broader, more inclusive vision and politics of place that are common across its different groups and social movements.

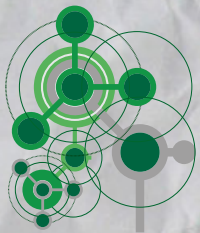
Nossa Ilhéus and the broader Southern Bahia Just and Sustainable Development Network rede that this institute is a part of are also democratically oriented and opposed to influence by elite networks, technological requirements, and class-based processes of knowledge production and political participation. No membership fee is required, and Nossa Ilhéus is open to individuals, civil society organizations, neighborhood associations, businesses, professionals, NGOs, institutions, and foundations working toward sustainable development for the region. As Socorro states, “the goal is to (...) provide opportunities to all persons and institutions and give them a mechanism for reporting on their projects”¹⁰. In keeping with this, Nossa Ilhéus avoids one technique of participation, such as purely internet-driven knowledge production. For communicating information, phone calls and word of mouth are used in addition to e-mail. There are regular meetings anyone can attend, and public demonstrations coordinated by the broader rede encourage democratic participation in constructing a more inclusive vision and articulating a more active politics of place which transcends class, interest, and cultural lines.

These new forms of political union and action that are inspiring both civil society and government actors to join together reveal processes that align with “the creation of new spaces of governance with the growth of citizen participation” (Scherer-Warren, 2006, p. 126). Nossa Ilhéus and the Southern Bahia rede are hoping, furthermore, that citizen participation will lead to long-term regional sustainability. As one leader notes, “This new (...) agenda in the region – we need a new manner of constructing this agenda. This imposing, disciplining agenda is unsustainable over time. It might function for some months, some years, but it doesn’t sustain itself”. These processes are also instituting a new form of governance that, in sum, is collaborative, polyarchical, poly-centric, highly ad hoc, episodic, and networked.

EMERGING COLLABORATIVES FOR EXAMINING GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS, STRATEGIES, AND PROCESSES

Cases like Porto Sul, Nossa Ilhéus, and the Southern Bahia Just and Sustainable Cities Network are arising around the world and demanding focused and detailed study of the practicalities and the processes of new forms of governance. In turn, cultural, geographic, institutional, environmental and sectoral boundaries can become blurred and, in turn, can lead to more collaborative decision-making and increasingly effective governance approaches that better consider social, environmental, and economic realities.

¹⁰ E-mail communication from Socorro, January 12, 2010.



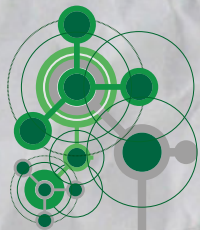
Furthermore, academic and research institutions are increasingly recognizing the importance of working across national, institutional, and disciplinary boundaries to collectively examine and understand emerging governance processes. By way of example, the Brasil-US Network for Environment, Society, and Governance¹¹ was founded in Boulder, Colorado in April 2012 with the mission of sharing knowledge across academic and research institutions and to developing collaborative working relationships for research and education pertaining to governance. Last summer U.S. and Brazilian students worked side-by-side to collect data on new governance processes in the Southern Bahia region. In 2013 an even larger team of students from Colorado and Southern Bahia will join forces to study the ways in which governance challenges are being addressed in this region, including through educational programs, payment for ecosystem services and the development of a solidarity economy. As a part of this rapidly growing network, graduate students from the University of São Paulo are working with U.S. academic institutions. Professors from the United States and Brazil are sharing their ideas about governance processes at annual meetings and co-authoring papers and edited volumes that explain these processes for audiences within and beyond the academy.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sustainability and social responsibility increasingly require ecological and social concerns like identity and quality of life to enter earlier and more deeply into collective decision making processes, whether these decisions are made in companies, in national and community political processes, or in “the white” inter-sectoral space between them.” Issues of the “commons” and interdependency more generally make these inter-sectoral spaces and decisions ever more important; improved participation and decision-making processes in these “white spaces” could eventually reduce the need for governance from specific, isolated sectors. The central value from these processes rests in creativity. Legitimacy usually comes from the inventions of possibilities and decisions than none of the sectors could achieve on their own.

These lofty ideals, however, often call for new institutions and interaction design architectures. We must both understand emerging successful models and invent new ones to achieve positive cost-effective outcomes. This new structure builds on a broader sense of governance that is grounded in a collectively developed regional identity and a belief that accountability, transparency, and collaborative participation are critical elements for shaping the future development trajectory of this region. To achieve this, new interaction designs and governance reforms are needed. Polyarchical, poly-centric, highly ad hoc, episodic, and networked approaches have been shown to be some of the most promising new approaches to the most pressing development and governance challenges facing regions today.

¹¹ <http://www.colorado.edu/brazil-us-network/>. The second meeting of the network will be held in São Luis (MA), Brazil, in June 2013.



This article explored the Nossa Ilhéus Institute case in Southern Bahia, Brazil, where a new type of cross-sector governance mechanism is taking root. We conclude that core issues like identifying situated governance challenges and types of conflicts and decision needs; identifying and creating new interaction designs; matching challenges and design preferences; and institutionalizing design processes and “triggers” that evoke specific design choices, are essential for creating more democratic and participatory governance processes.

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