



# Voices and ears: participation processes in coastal areas

Luísa Schmidt

**BASE Transnational Training Course on Climate Change in Practice  
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**CHANGE**

**CHANGE – Changing Coasts, Changing Climate, Changing Communities,**  
a 3-year study (2010-2013) that aims to understand social perceptions about  
coastal risks and to examine new ways of adaptive management

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**TEAM:** *Luísa Schmidt (coord.), Filipe Duarte Santos, Ana Delicado, Ana Horta, Carla Gomes, Catarina Vargas, Gil Penha-Lopes, João Mourato, Mónica Truninger, Paulo Granjo, Pedro Prista, Susana Guerreiro, Tiago Saraiva*

**CONSULTANTS:** *João Alveirinho Dias, Gert Spaargaren,  
Kris van Koppen, Riley Dunlap, Tim O’Riordan*

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2010-2013, Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia  
(PTDC/CS-SOC/100376/2008)



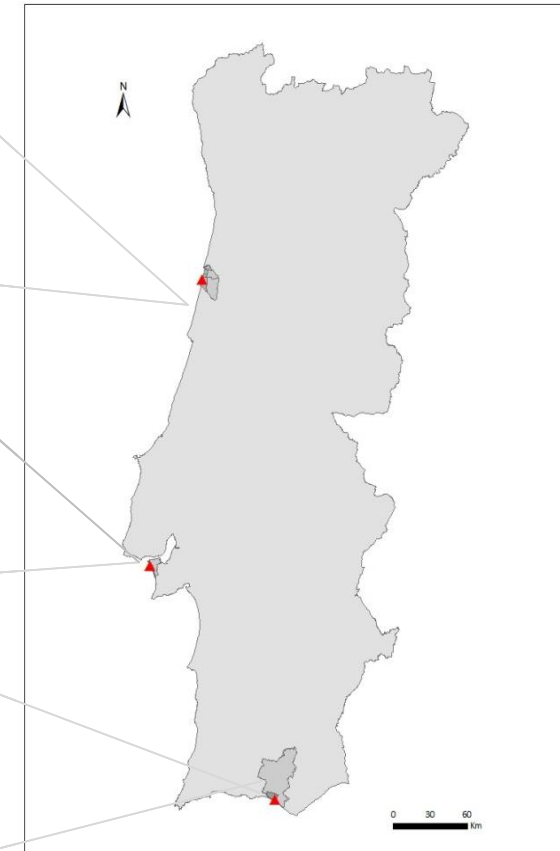
- 1. Objectives**
- 2. Case-studies**
- 3. Methods**
- 4. “Glocal” effects**
- 5. (Im)possible futures**
- 6. Participation**

## **1. Objectives**

- **To identify actors, interests and socio-territorial dynamics**
- **To mobilize public participation and science communication**
- **To inform coastal areas's adaptive governance solutions**

## 2. Case Studies

- Barra-Vagueira, Aveiro;
- Costa da Caparica, Lisboa;
- Quarteira-Vale do Lobo, Algarve.



**High vulnerability (erosion + sea level); high and fast growth (population + construction); entangled institutional and legislative frameworks**

### 3. Methods

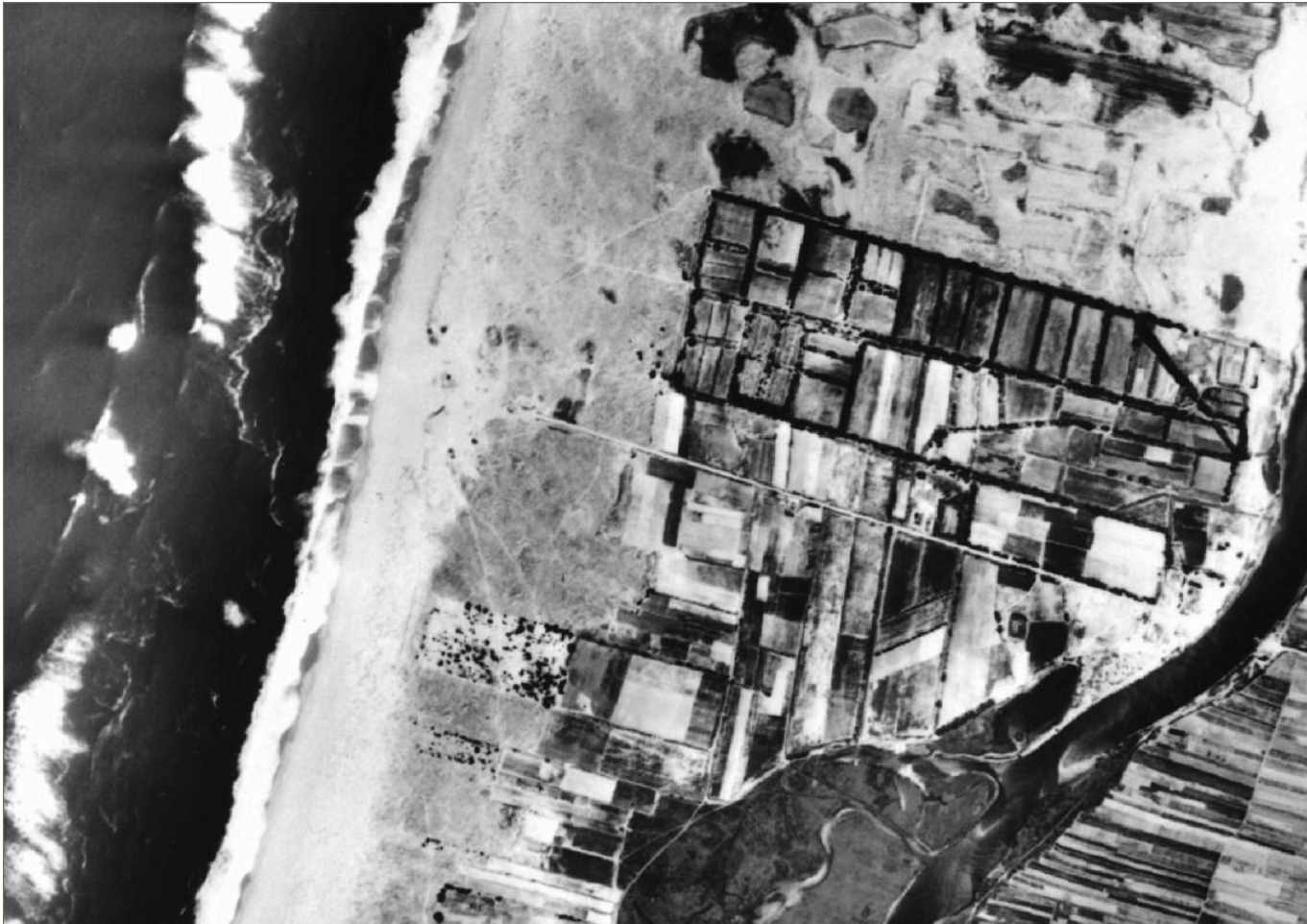
- **Socio-historical** (i.e. occupation processes + social characterization and evolution + public policies background)
- **Socio-anthropological** (i.e. interviews, surveys, focus-groups, workshops)
- **Climate scenarios** (2025, 2050, 2100)

#### 4."Glocal" effects - global phenomena, local effects

- **Portugal's retracting shoreline** - One of the most affected European countries;
- **Last 30 years saw a tremendous concentration of population and economic activities in coastal areas** (e.g. **300k to 900k** housing units increase; **650k to 1.2 million** pop increase);
- **Experiences a severe economic recession** - costal protection costs harder to sustain;
- **Most recent Climate Change scenarios** - sea level rises from **60 cm to 1,20 m** until **2100**. In Portugal **67% coastal areas extremely vulnerable** - **2m a 12m/year** shoreline retraction (SIAM II, 2006).







Vagueira – 1958





Vagueira – 2006



Barra-Vagueira, 2012



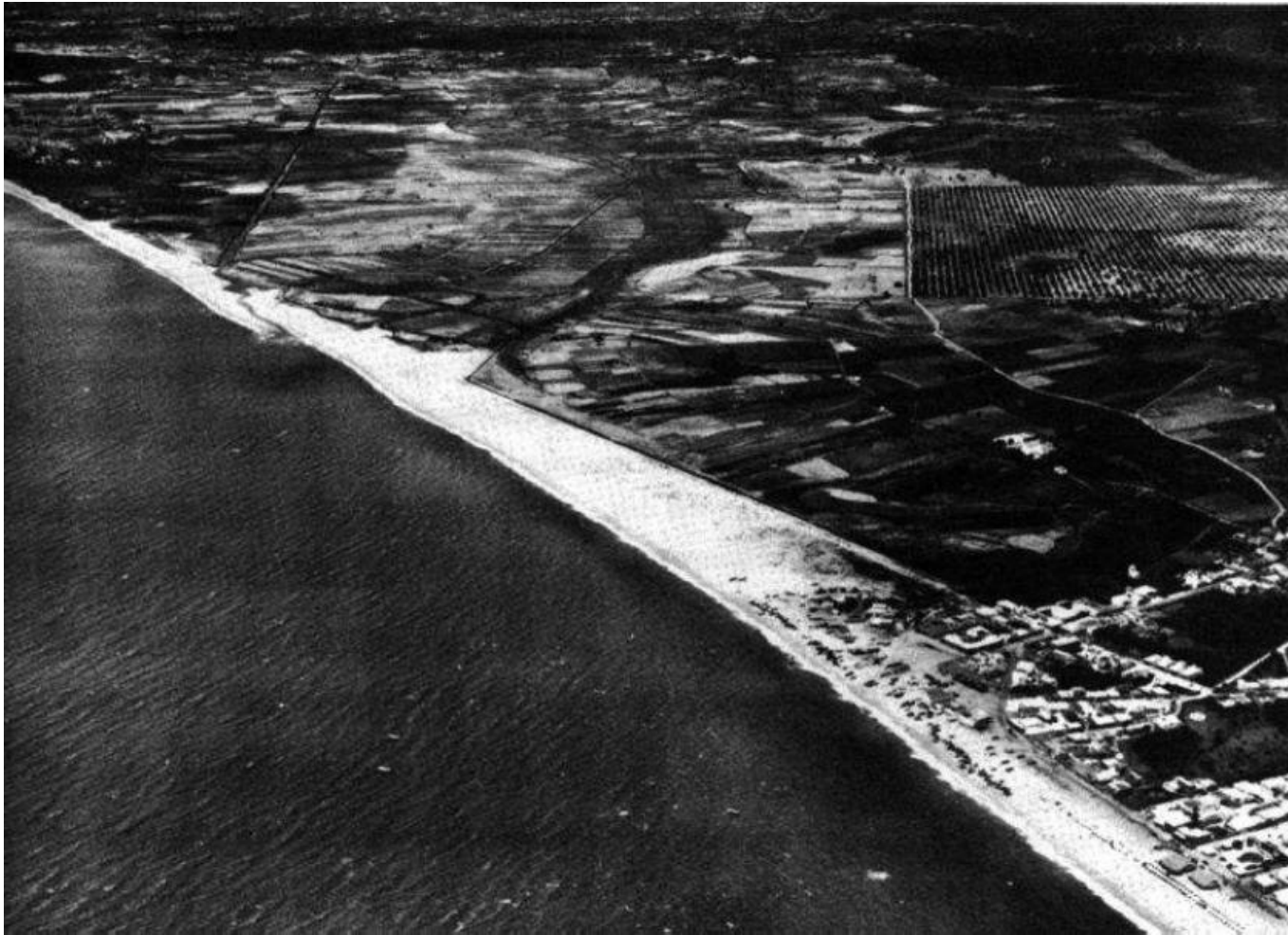
Costa da Caparica, 1960





Costa da  
Caparica,  
2012

Photo: SIARL (DGT)



FONTE: <http://www.skyscrapercity.com>

Quarteira, 1966





Quarteira, 2012

Foto: IGP/EPRL





Foto:  
SurfTotal

Barra, January de 2014



Barra,  
Summer 2005

January 2014

Source:  
SurfTotal



São João da Caparica  
March 2007





Costa da Caparica, January 2014



## 5. (im)Possible Futures– VAGUEIRA

2025/2050



Susceptibilidade elevada



Susceptibilidade moderada



Galgamento



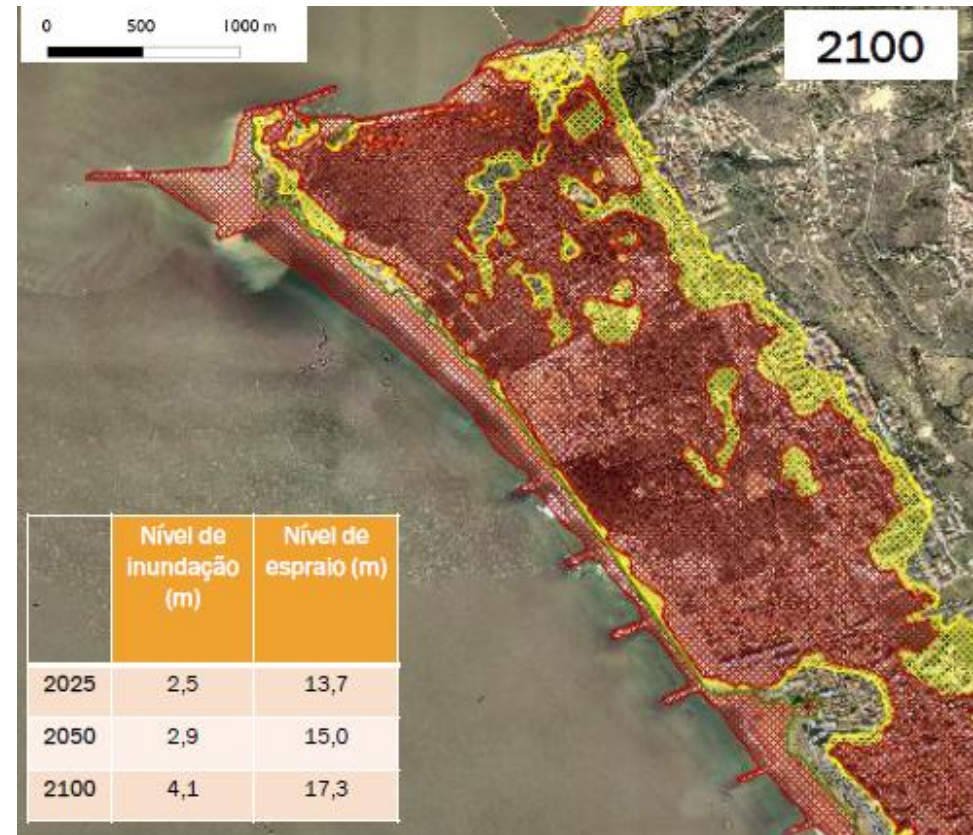
	Nível de inundaçãõ (m)	Nível de espraio (m)
2025	2.5	11.6
2050	2.9	12.7
2100	4.1	14.9

2100





## 5. (im)Possible Futures – Costa da Caparica





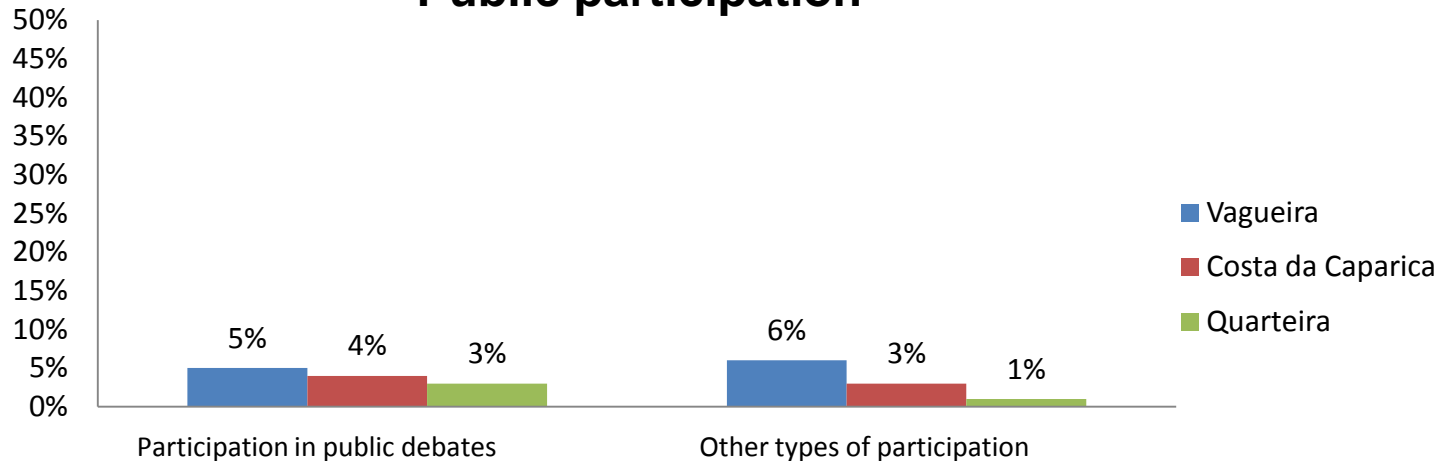
## 5. (im)Possible Futures– Quarteira



## **Involvement of stakeholders and citizens in public decision processes in environmental issues**

- Enshrined in law (e.g.. public consultation in Environmental Impact Assessment and Planning projects)
- In practice there are many obstacles
- Fundamental for change and adaptation
- Use of scientific information is crucial

## Public participation



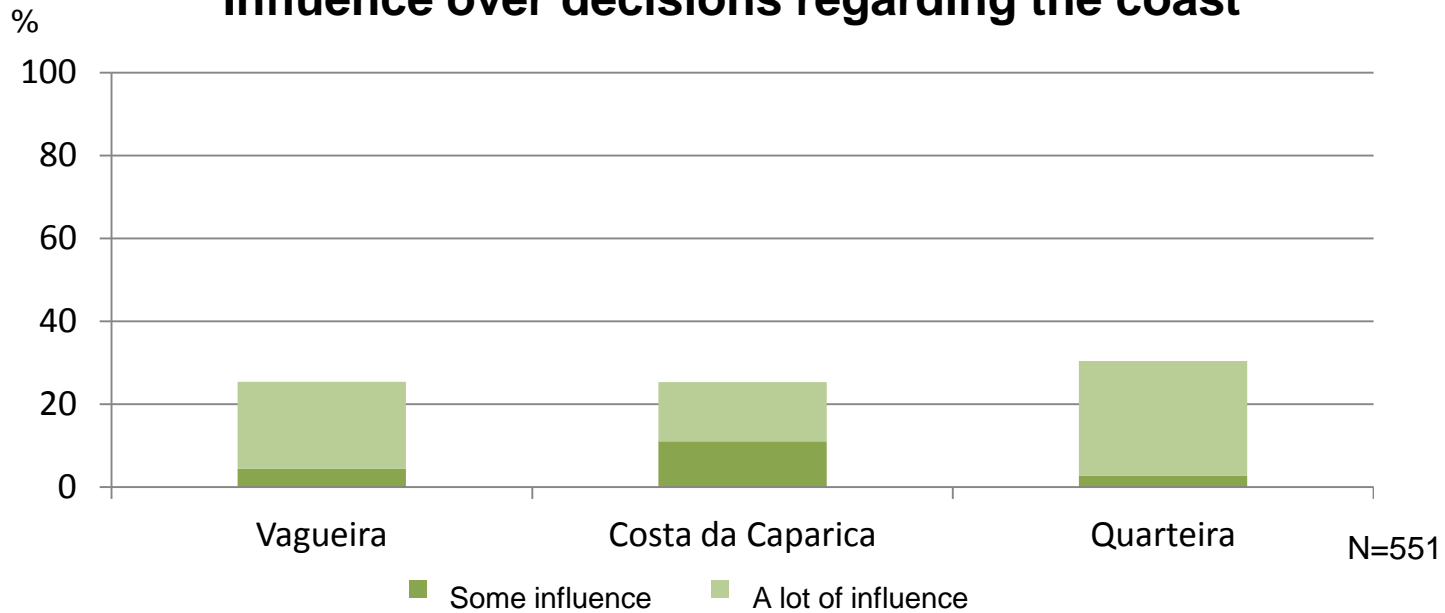
*These territorial interventions have to be redesigned; citizen participation must come before the strategic plan*

Caparica – Costa Polis

*Public consultations are publicised in newspapers, but not everyone has access to information, it is not delivered door to door, like notifications; they follow the legal rules but these are not effective; they hold meetings in hotels and almost nobody goes...*

Caparica – Residents' association

## Influence over decisions regarding the coast



*Fishermen know a lot about this but nobody listens to them*

*Vagueira – Parish president*

*There is public consultation, but things are already decided.*

*Caparica - Surfer*

*The hear us but they don't care, nothing is written...*

*Caparica – Beach café owner*

# Obstacles to participation

## Lack of 'civic culture' as a problem

- Paternalistic view of participation

People talk with no notion of what they are saying (...) Misinformation is worse than participation, you can't just talk of what you don't know

[Wksp, Vagueira, Maritime Police]

In terms of population, sometimes is like this: people didn't read, people didn't see the information, but someone manipulates the room, it happens a lot

[Wksp, Costa da Caparica, central administration]

# Obstacles to participation

## Lack of 'civic culture' as a problem

- Unfavourable administrative tradition

There is this tradition, due to a centralised government, that people think that policy issues are for politicians

[Wksp, Quarteira, scientist]

- Lack in school training

I think that in school we should be more trained to make speeches, to speak, that is a deficit

[Wksp, Quarteira, regional administration]



# Obstacles to participation

## Lack of 'civic culture' as a problem

- Private Good

People only go when it messes with their interests directly

[Wksp, Quarteira, scientist]

- Vs. Common Good

We have so much difficulty in treating a place like our own. If water comes into my house, I go and complain to the local authorities. (...) Last year the beach vanished and did anyone complain? No! Someone will solve, the beach is not mine

[Wksp, Quarteira, teacher]

# Asymmetry of participation

To expect that the burden of participation will fall solely in people, that they have to see the notice, come to the hotel room, into a context that is not their own, a language that is not their own, not only fails to motivate but also makes participation undemocratic, because it does not give the same opportunities of participation to a fisherman than to an expert on the issue

[Wksp, Costa da Caparica, local authority candidate]

# Disincentives to participation

- Format

Written participation? There is little motivation! (...) 600 or 700 page plans, whoever tried to read them just gave up (...) When we do powerpoints and common language, then they are motivated

[Wksp, Vagueira, Polis]

- Language

I'm an expert myself and sometimes I have difficulty in understanding the documents myself. Documents are often complex. They are hard to understand.

[Wksp, Quarteira, regional authority]

# Disincentives to participation

- Timing

We are bombarded with plans, the institution has a deadline and sometimes there is no time to take it all in.

[Wksp, Vagueira, Maritime Police]

- Dissemination

Maybe if this was publicised well, disseminated, maybe there would be more people.

[Wksp, Quarteira, non-profit association]

# Disincentives to participation

- Administrative disfunctions

There are constant changes in the people who rule this country (...) First it was the ministry of environment, afterwards Gaia Norte, then it moved elsewhere. This is crazy! (...) If they were able to create an umbrella over all of them, for a year or two, we could address the problems from the inside

[Wksp, Vagueira, businessman]

## Mistrust in results – lack of feedback

It goes like this: statement from Quercus – put it in a drawer! (...) without feedback, what's the motivation to participate again? (...) a lot of people participated and criticised the Plan, the municipal authority said “thank you very much, we will consider it”. But they never do!

[Wksp, Vagueira, ENGO]

When these public sessions are convened, the decision is already made, so what is lacking is the willingness to listen to people

[Wksp, Costa da Caparica, local authority candidate]



# Claims for participation

Because citizens are able to make choices if they understand them: retreat, accommodation, protection. I can make that choice.

[FG, Costa da Caparica, priest]

Experts and researchers, fishermen, surfers, divers, everybody has something to say, everybody has an opinion. Then we do a synthesis and bringing all this together we come out with something good, between ideas and economy and political decision. This goodwill could come from them, this humility from those above who decide.

[Wksp, Quarteira, non-profit association]

# Mediators for participation

- Associations

...to have working groups with invited people, fishermen, farmers or associations, it is easier, they are heard

[Wksp, Costa da Caparica, local authority candidate]

- Universities

We did several studies, one of them with the university which interacted with the local communities, fishing communities, etc., before we started dredging the river, which was something populations wanted. We also did a workshop with all interested parties, fishing, agriculture, institutions, the port, the captaincy

[Wksp, Vagueira, Polis]

# Adaptation - Participation as a chain process

- To **listen** (assess perception, knowledge, concerns)
- **Clear and credible information** (data, concepts, diagnosis)
- **Communication adapted to different publics** (multiple waves)
- **Mobilisation** – gather together individual and diffuse (global) interests, finding the right moments

# **Adaptation - Participation as a chain process**

- **It is crucial:**
  - **Interdisciplinary scientific knowledge**
  - **Education and formal training**
  - **To enable proximity powers and local leaders**
  - **New mechanisms of continuing participation, feedback**

