



International conference on protecting and restoring free-flowing rivers in Europe

April 15-17, 2024 | Oosterpoort, Groningen, The Netherlands

Can people's engagement facilitate dam removal processes? Lessons learned from a case study in Portugal

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To discuss problems and opportunities identified to contribute to restore the connectivity of river ecosystems in Portugal and how can the participation process can be improved, considering the gaps identified in Alviela dam removal.

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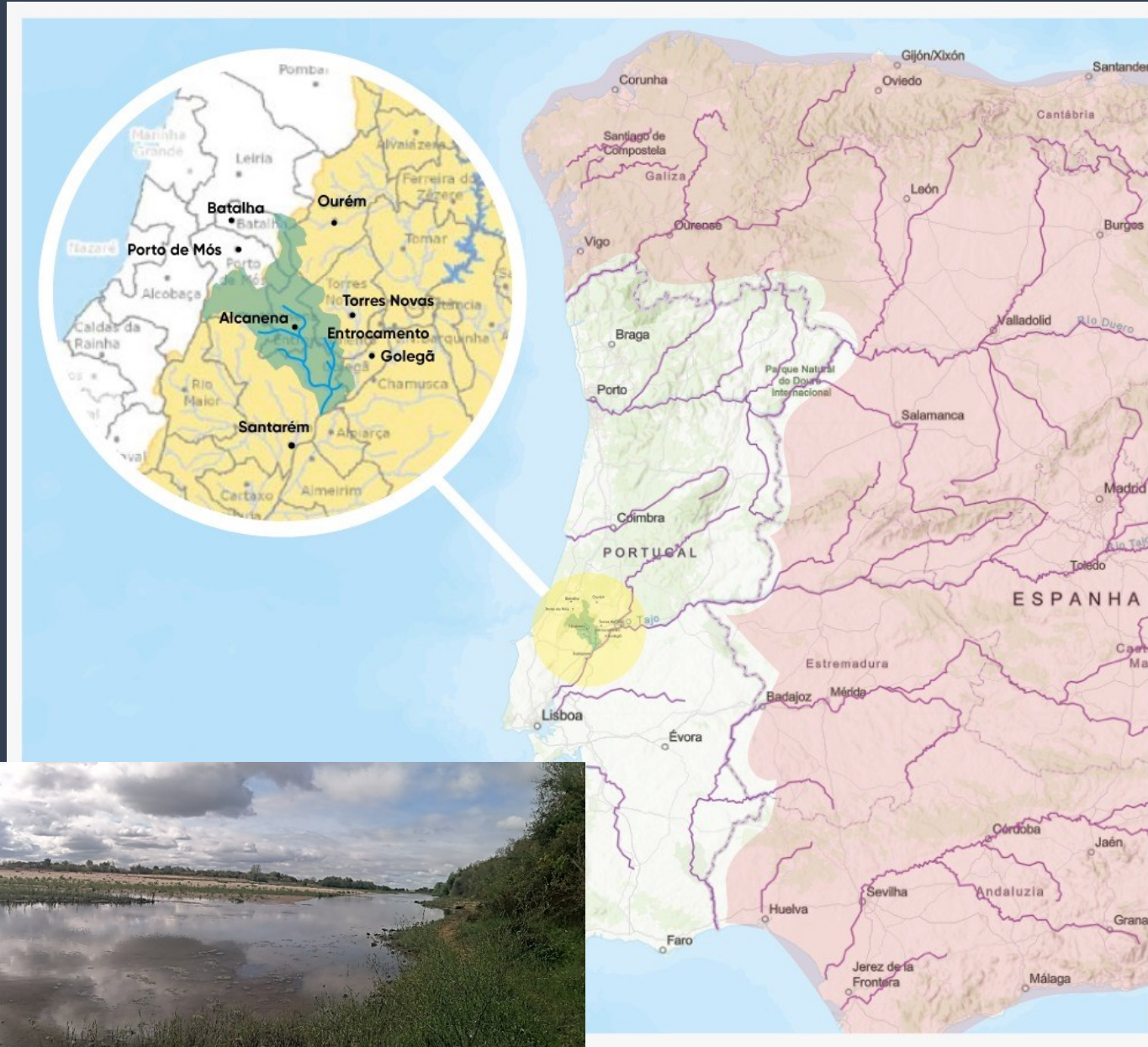


Alviela River

Location: West of Portugal (100 km from Lisbon)

Alviela River rises from Serra da Mendiga and flows into the Tagus River - 40km

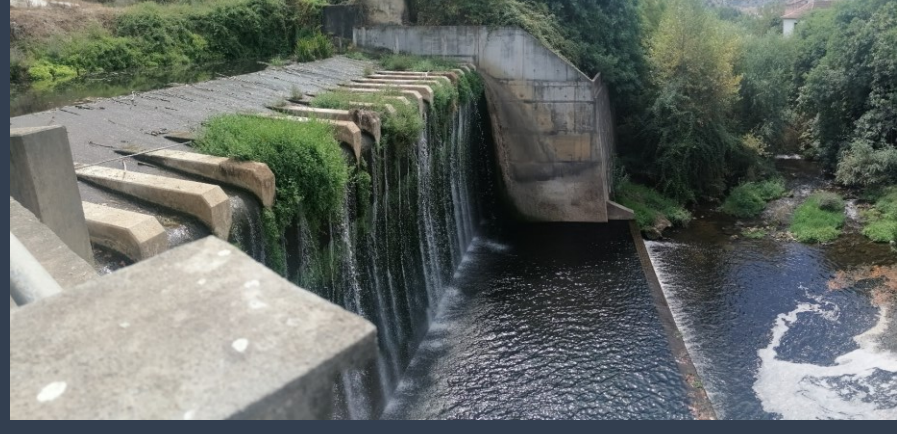
Alviela hydrographic basin - 333 km²



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Alviela Rehabilitation | Vaqueiros dam Removal

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- Engagement process with key stakeholders, population and landowners;
- Review of existing studies;
- Site analysis;
- Development of the rehabilitation project;
- Obtaining permissions and licencing;
- Implementation of the river rehabilitation work with removal of the obsolete dam;
- Communication of results.



S Problems

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- difficulty in attracting the population
- cultural resistance to the idea that it is ecologically important to remove obsolete dams
- lack of information about the ecological problems caused by damming rivers



S Opportunities

- Establishment of partnerships with relevant stakeholders: municipalities, parishes, associations and companies;
- laying foundations towards a relationship of trust with the population
- Increase synergies between Government institutions, municipalities, NGO's and communities;
- Actively engagement of the landowners;
- Portuguese Government announcement of a national plan to remove obsolete barriers from Portuguese rivers



S Main Challenges

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- actively engage the population and key stakeholders;
- reconnecting people with the river;
- high % of senior population;
- diversity of stakeholders to be involved in the process - the river basin includes 3 different municipalities



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

encompasses a group of procedures designed to **consult, involve, and inform the public** to allow those affected by a decision to **have an input into that decision.**

Public Participation Planning

Planning the implementation of individual public participation activities:

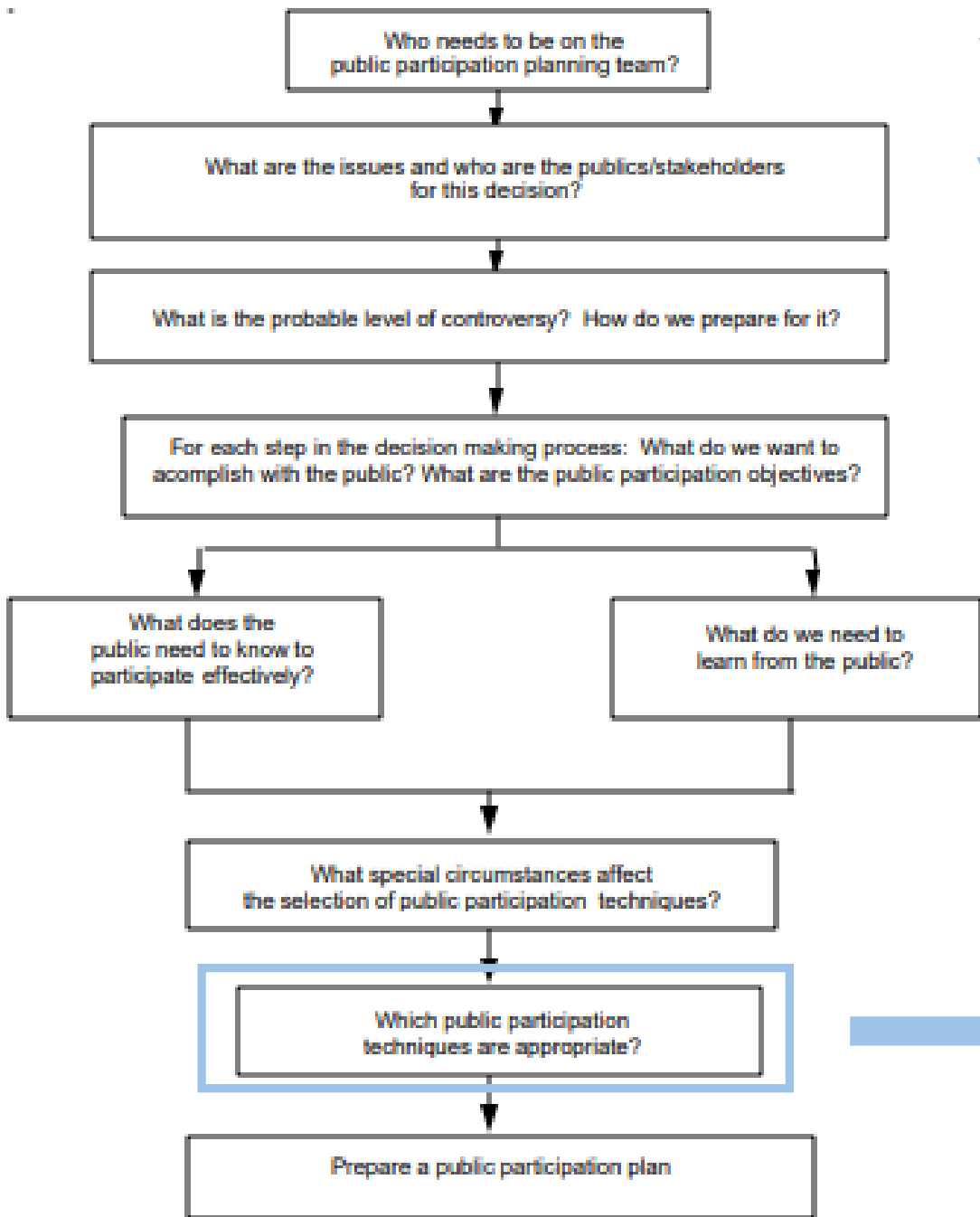
- 1 – Decision Analysis
- 2 – Process Design
- 3 – Public Participation Plan



Public Participation Planning

Decision Analysis

Process Design



Who?

What?

Probable level of controversy?

Objectives?

River-scale public participation process

- Development of interactive areas
- Information and educational events
- Entertainment events
- Follow-up information
- Interactive community work
- River clean-ups, vegetation management, etc.
- Training workshops
- Citizen science initiatives
- Establishment of River Basin partnerships - multi-stakeholder groups working together to solve ecological problems on a river basin scale

ALVIELA public participation process – DECISION ANALYSIS

Who needs to be on the PP planning team?

Rios Livres team, Expert team in PP processes (academic outsourcing) and the municipalities involved

What are the issues and who are the publics/stakeholders for this decision?

River rehabilitation (considering ecological, social and economics issues) with obsolete dam removal

Alviela River Basin population and relevant stakeholders (municipalities, parishes, environmental and other associations, companies).

What is the probable level of controversy? How do we prepare for it?

Very high. Establishing networks of partnerships, actively listening everyone involved, transmitting knowledge through simple, clear, transparent, and two-sided communication, building a relationship of trust

What are the PP objectives?

Promote the engagement of stakeholders and consider their perspectives to increase their interest and participation in Alviela river rehabilitation issues and inspire Climate Action

ALVIELA public participation process – PROCESS DESIGN

Which PP techniques are appropriate for Alviela River Basin?

Development of interactive areas - 1st removal of an obsolete weir on the Alviela (Vaqueiros weir) as a LivingLab

Information and educational events - production of materials to share knowledge about the importance of river restoration, inviting experts to joint sessions to reflect on and share ideas, emotions and anxieties about the problems of the River Alviela

Cultural and Entertainment events - Organisation of Rios D'ARTE events, bringing people closer to the river raising awareness to ecological issues

Organization of workshops - Mural painting workshops, Art installation by the river with art collectives, "From the river's past to the river's future" workshops with stakeholders and population



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Promote a deeper connection between people and rivers, driving their protection and restoration

Implement inclusive and representative processes which empower stakeholders



PROMOTOR
E COORDENAÇÃO

geota
Grupo de Estudos de Ordenamento do
Território e Ambiente

PROJECTO

RIOS LIVRES GEOTA
ECONOMIA, PESSOA, RIOS E NATUREZA

IPARCEIROS
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Santarém

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DIMFE
DIVERSITY INITIATIVE FOR RESTORED FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS

Funded by MAVA under project
Reconnecting Iberian Rivers,
coordinated by GEOTA.

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