

Municipal decision-making steering tools and citizens' awareness and participation within Lisbon Metropolitan Area

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Abstract

At present, as a consequence of the urban sprawl, the exponential increase of population living in cities and its impact upon the natural environment and, as well as, on the human quality of life, municipalities have been adopting and incorporating sustainable tools in their planning and management policies and procedures. In Portugal, the municipalities within the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) have been revealing some awareness for the need of an urban sustainable development approach and thus defining strategies to improve the urban environment quality for a better and healthier life of their inhabitants. As evidence of this, is the Lisbon Municipality (LM) itself that has made available a group of formal but also

informal planning and management tools; it is important to emphasize that Lisbon it is an appropriated case study, since it is the first capital of an European country with participatory tools, such as the Participative Budget or BIP/ZIP programme. Despite most of the procedures empowers the social layer, the success of such urban policies is the result of a bilateral will, so, it is relevant to assess the significance of this social component on urban decision-making.

Keywords

Sustainable Development, Urban Planning tools, Participation, Healthier lifestyle

Introduction

There are four significant milestones on the environmental awareness. The first, in 1962, when it was published the book *Silent Spring*, written by the marine biologist and conservationist Rachel Carson which brought the environmental concerns to an unprecedented public debate and, on following years, it has generated the global environmental movements (Griswold, 2012). A decade later, in 1972, it was an international conference convened under United Nations auspices, the *Conference on the Human Environment*, held in Stockholm; it has focused on the discussion about the growing environmental degradation as the result of unbridled exploitation and use of natural resources; the *Stockholm Declaration*, the first document in international environmental law to recognize the right to a healthy environment, contains 26 principles to guide the nations through their responsibilities', an action plan, split into three categories including an environmental assessment, environmental management, and 109 recommendations; in overall, there was

an agreement on the need for common vision and principles to guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment and thus, geared the search for a balance between economic development and reduction of environmental degradation (UNEP, 1973).

A third moment on this crusade, has happened in 1987, with the released of the Report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (UNWCED, 1987), *Our Common Future*, coordinated by Gro Harlem Brundtland, and thus, well known as the *Brundtland Report*. It aimed to set recommendations for a sustainable course of development; it raises the perception and commitment to action on the part of individuals, non-governmental organizations, businesses, institutes, and governments. This report and the commitment of the UNWCED laid the groundwork for the convening of the 1992 *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, held in Rio de Janeiro, informally known as the *Rio Earth Summit* or simply *Rio92*; resulting from this meeting two important documents with

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the regard to sustainable development, the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* and the *Agenda 21* (UNEP 1992). The first document consisted of 27 principles intended to guide countries and the second, a voluntarily implemented action agenda for the UN, other multilateral organizations and individual governments around the world that can be executed at local, national, and global levels.

Therefore, Rio-92 conference was a turning point as it has placed environmental issues firmly on the political agenda and to the need to embark on a different form and development process than the one it had followed so far in order to save the planet and the survival of its own human being; and though both documents, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the Agenda 21, are non-binding some national and state governments have legislated or advised that local authorities take steps to implement the plan locally, as recommended in Chapter 28 of the document. These programs are often known as *Local Agenda 21* or simply by the acronym *LA21*.

Europe turned out to be the continent where LA21 was best accepted and most implemented. Several initiatives, some implemented and defined by the European Union, have been developed at European level and have been important in the planning and the management at regional level, but especially, at local scale. At this scale, the problem is focused on the urban sprawl and its consequences on the natural environment and as well on the human quality of life. In fact, with the exponential increase of the population living in cities and the current urbanization trend, it is crucial that sustainable development principles apply to cities, as Ban Ki-Moon (2012) has emphasized *sustainable cities are crucial to our future well-being ... our struggle for global sustainability will be won or lost in cities*.

Among the European initiatives it is important to highlight the first *European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns* (EC SCT), in Aalborg, Denmark, in 1994, whereby the *Charter of European Cities & Towns Towards Sustainability* or *Aalborg Charter* was adopted; this document, considered as the European equivalent of the Earth Summit's Agenda 21, it states that municipalities and their citizens have a great responsibility in creating environmental, social and economically sustainable communities; so, it has provided a framework for the delivery of local sustainable development and calls on local authorities to engage in Local Agenda 21 processes (SCP, 1994). This Aalborg Charter was signed by the participants, more than 3,000 local authori-

ties, NGOs, national and international organisations, and scientific bodies, from more than 40 countries, it has resulted in the largest European movement of its type contributing to the *European Union's Environmental Action Programme: Local Action Plans Towards Sustainability* and, as well, started the *European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign*. Meanwhile, this campaign was responsible for the organization of three further European Sustainable Cities and Towns Conferences: Lisbon (1996), Hanover (2000) and Aalborg (2004). So, ten years after, this 4th Conference, the so-called *Aalborg +10*, which purpose was to develop a common understanding of sustainability, as well as, to develop a framework, the *Aalborg +10 Commitments*, a set of ten shared voluntary oaths on sustainable measures, to be used at the local level that would better articulate how to embed sustainability across municipality sectors. Thus, sustainability has turn into a priority among central, regional and local authorities but also in several professional areas and one of these is the urban planning and management. In fact it may play a central role on the road to a more sustainable and healthy life, because through it becomes possible to put into practice the goals set for a sustainable development: avoid urban sprawl, contribute to the revitalization of urban centres, promotes their imperative redesign, making it more inclusive, reassesses the problems of production and reduces waste, creates the conditions for a more active population, in particular, the elderly, promotes the intergenerational relationships, and so the quality of life and health as well.

In this context, the present research focuses on the evaluation of the Portuguese urban planning and management mandatory tools, in particular, the municipalities within the Lisbon Metropolitan Area; furthermore, it was evaluated some informal tools. The main purpose is to assess whether they are on the path towards a sustainable urban environment. In addition, it is also important to perceive whether citizens' respond to this challenge? Are they aware of its importance? And is sustainable development a concern for citizens? And what is the preponderance of participation in decisions?

Land and urban planning and management in Portugal

In Portugal, there is a large set of formal land planning and management tools covering the different scales of approach: national, region-

al, inter-municipal and municipal. This network operates on a hierarchical basis established by the Basic Law on Land Use Planning and Urban Planning (LBPOTU), where some plans may have a more global vision and establish guidelines for the others. However, it is a complex, bureaucratic, static, time consuming and elitist system, as it does not promote the participation, in the different phases of the process, of the population, NGOs, sometimes creating inter-municipal conflicts due to lack of relationship and interconnection (Freire and Crespo, 2011); and, at an urban level, these tools are also insufficient for the structuring of the cities.

The aim of this research is to assess the set of instruments of the AML municipalities, in particular, the one for which they are responsible for: the municipal master plan (PDM). It is a medium/long term tool that is both formal and mandatory. It sets the strategy and the rules on the land occupation, use and transformation and also defines the general norms of urban management. Usually, it should have a ten-year term, but due to situations such as the long and complex process between the beginning of the review and finally its publication, this timeline is usually too long.

Recently, the PDM is more feasible and has earned more autonomy to act upon the territory because of the revision of the urban policies structure that looks for a more complementary system instead of a hierarchical one (Oliveira, 2010). However, as mention before, there are some functional problems that can be summarized into three aspects: a poor articulation and cooperation between municipalities and their PDMs; the existence of several superimposed institutions in the performance of the territory; and instability in the several agencies and authorities that are responsible for the administration of the municipal land.

As informal tools there is, for example, the strategic plan, the participatory budget or the local agenda 21. The first sets up the guidelines and action plans, defining more precisely the following paths in order to achieve the territorial goals, which are generally focused on a theme (transport, tourism, environment, etc.). They should help the PDMs to create stronger guidance on the development of municipalities and have an important social element as they should include the key players in the urban process. In the case of the participatory budget, citizens are invited to participate and decide on projects for the city and where part of the municipal budget available should be spent. At last, the Local Agenda 21 is a tool that promotes several levels of participation

of the population: establishment and decision making. Thus, it contributes to people empowerment, in order, to improve sustainable development in the city and its neighborhoods. Individuals and public or private bodies are invited to discuss urban problems and to find sustainable solutions to improve the quality of space.

In addition, to these informal tools, it can be also weighed other municipal actions that are focused on improving social, urban and environmental sustainability, such as those covering education, awareness and dissemination about the importance of a balanced development.

For a more thorough and substantiated research, in the evaluation process that follows, in addition to the PDM all other tools mentioned above are included in the assessment.

Ranking AML municipalities' sustainability based on their planning and management tools: a methodological approach

The Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML) has the higher population density and economic concentration, in Portugal. AML comprises 18 municipalities, divided into two half by the Tagus river, 9 municipalities in each margin, covering a total area of about 3 000km², and although it represents only 3.3% of the Portuguese land, here lives almost 3 million inhabitants, about a quarter of the population (Figure 1). At the economic level, it concentrates around 25% of the active population, 30% of the national companies, 33% of the employment and contributes with more than 36% of the national GDP. With an Atlantic coast of about 150km and a riverfront of around 200km, the AML has a great variety of morphology and an important natural wealth, which give it an environmental, landscape, economic and leisure potential that it is important to preserve and value. It has two large estuaries: the Tagus, which is the largest wetland in the country and in Western Europe, and the Sado; in addition, it has five protected areas, integrated in the Natura 2000.

As it was expressed earlier, one of the goals of the present study is to assess whether AML municipalities are pursuing a path for an urban sustainable development. This evaluation is based on the methodology set by Levent *et al.* (2004) where the authors, through a multi-criteria analysis, establish a comparison between some European cities, considering a set of criteria related to their green spaces (Lampert, 2014). But, for the present case study, the aspects used were

defined and adapted to fit the specific benchmark of this research. Therefore, the target was the set of municipal planning and urban management tools available and, namely those considered to be relevant for their sustainable development.

As source for building the database, it was used the official website of the municipalities; the criteria were grouped into three main groups: formal tools, informal tools and other actions. They were all examined according to the adoption or not of such resources. The PDM aspect is the only exception, since it is mandatory, thus it was decided to calculate its efficiency through the time scale of its review, available at the Coordination Commission for Regional Development of Lisbon and Tagus Valley (CCDR-LVT).

Therefore, in the first group, as *formal tools*, was only contemplated the PDM. The second group, *the informal tools*, is divided into three main indicators: the strategic plan, the participatory budget and the local agenda 21; and the last group, *the other actions*, which screens those projects that include social and urban sustainability. In this case, three projects were taken into account: *A Square in Every Quarter*, *Healthy Cities and Aalborg Charter Commitments*. As environmental sustainability projects, were considered those covering relevant aspects such as: hygiene, air quality, noise, water and sanitation, waste management. Finally, the management of green spaces where some initiatives with an educational, awareness and dissemination purpose have prevailed, and which have contributed to the awareness of sustainability. Thus, it was possible to add a total of 9 main criteria to make the comparison among the urban tools of the 18 AML municipalities (Table 1).

The results from the municipal tools assessment

The analysis of Figure 2 shows that in general the results are positive (greater than 0), which means that almost all municipalities have implemented a set of instruments with a sustainable target. In fact, 8 municipalities have a score higher than 0.5 suggesting that almost half of the municipalities have a more sustainable path based on the tools adopted. The northern part of the AML, represented in blue, has the municipalities with the best results. On the south bank of the Tagus River, Almada is the only exception, and ranking third in the test.

In a closer perspective, Lisbon stands out, being the best placed municipality. The reason may



Figure 1 - The municipalities within the Lisbon Metropolitan Area

Source: authors

be related to the municipality relevance to the country, since it is the capital. Also, the impact of some conferences that were held in Lisbon, such as, the second European Sustainable Cities and Towns Conference, on central, regional and local authorities growing interest in following a sustainable path. This has brought to the spotlight issues such as the need to implement the natural heritage protection, the urban pollution reduction, developing more and better green spaces for a healthy lifestyle and inter-generational relationships and inner cities social-economic problems, etc. In addition, tourism has become a central part of the city's economic growth and therefore it is crucial to have a positive image and so, the city public space has gained relevancy. Obviously, to work and take these sustainable measures and strategies, municipalities are dependent on policies that have underlying concern for sustainability.

Cascais is a similar case to that of Lisbon, showing values above average (0,88) and so it is well positioned compared to other municipal boroughs. Geographically close to Lisbon, Cascais municipality has been attracting Portuguese and foreigner visitors. Since the Second World War, many important European aristocratic and rich families have found refuge and set residence there. At present, as the result of the vast natu-

		FORMAL tools	INFORMAL Tools				OTHER actions			
		PDM	Strategic Plan	Participatory Budget	Local Agenda 21		Urban & Social Sustainability projects	Environmental Sustainability projects (health, air quality, waste & green spaces management, etc)	Educational & Awareness initiatives for Sustainability	Dissemination initiatives for Sustainability
		Revision Time	With vs. Without	With vs. Without	With vs. Without	in force	With vs. Without	With vs. Without	With vs. Without	With vs. Without
Municipalities on the North Tagus River bank (the Great Lisbon)	Amadora	-	+	+	-	-	+	++	+	
	Cascais	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+
	Lisboa	++	+	+	+	+	++	++	+	+
	Loures	+	+	-	-	-	+	++	+	+
	Mafra	-	+	+	+	-	-	++	+	+
	Odivelas	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
	Oeiras	+	+	-	+	+	+	++	+	+
	Sintra	++	+	+	-	-	-	++	-	+
	VFXira	-	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+
Municipalities on the South Tagus River bank (the Great Lisbon)	Alcochete	-	+	-	+	-	-	++	+	+
	Almada	++	+	-	+	+	+	++	+	+
	Barreiro	+	+	-	+	+	+	++	+	+
	Moita	-	+	-	-	-	-	++	+	+
	Montijo	+	+	-	+	+	+	++	+	+
	Palmela	+	+	+	-	+	+	++	+	+
	Seixal	+	+	-	+	+	+	++	+	+
	Sesimbra	++	+	-	+	-	-	++	+	+
	Setúbal	+	+	-	-	-	-	++	+	+

Table 1 - Assessment of AML Urban Planning and Management Tools

source: authors

ral and cultural heritage, tourism is a significant part of the city's dynamics.

Sintra, despite its potential because it has a World Heritage Cultural Landscape, and also, close to Lisbon, did not achieve a satisfactory result (0.17) according to our criteria chosen for analysis. A possible explanation for this might be that policies are not being effective from a sustainable development standpoint and changes must be made in order to increase and/or improve it.

Almada is ranked third, and its result is close to that of Cascais (0.82). As in this municipality, Almada has a strong brand on the natural resources, with a long coastline that houses a long sandy beach fringe, and so, the results also suggest that measures are being taken to protect the territory and there is a strong commitment towards a sustainable development.

Amadora, with a score of 0.29, and Odivelas with the lowest score are both an interesting case

since despite their results they are included, from the beginning, in the small group of AML municipal districts that has signed both the Healthy Cities and Aalborg Charters. Nonetheless, the explanation for these scores are not similar; in the first case, it is the result of the time taken to prepare and review the PDM, it has taken over 16 years (Freire and Crespo, 2011) and the lack of a Local Agenda 21; therefore, its outcome on the present evaluation was undermined; and, in fact, Amadora has been showing an awareness for the importance of improving the quality of public spaces and, in particular, green spaces and pedestrian mobility. In the case of Odivelas, there is a poor outcome because it has been feeble in the application of tools and strategies for a more sustainable development. Meanwhile it was perceived that is being lacking a more acute approach, such as improving the cleaning and the maintenance of the urban space, people empowering in decision-making processes or

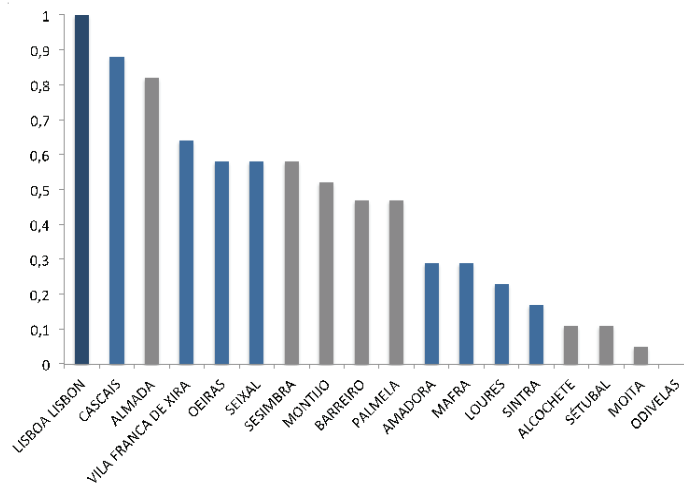


Figure 2 - Results from the assessment of the sustainability level of AML Urban Planning and Management Tools in use

Source: authors

becoming more concerned with increasing education, awareness and dissemination on sustainability issues. However, we are aware that the lack of data online on the official website may be a cause for such results. In any case, it is a issue to be acknowledged because the disclosure of information is an important aspect in today's society, which contributes to citizens' awareness and commitment to their city.

As it can be seen on the table 2, one of the tools that it has been adopted by municipalities, and, in recent years, even by parishes, it is the participatory budget, which by its peculiarities and increasing importance, it will be evaluated and outlined separately, on the following topic.

The participatory budget

In addition to formal tools, there are other informal and more participatory ones with implications on planning decision-making. This is the case of the so-called participatory budget (PB) taken and applied as a project of a public participatory management model. The PB can be defined as an informal example of urban management, with the direct participation of the population on establishment of the priorities regarding the use of part of the municipal budget. For Cabannes (2008) the PB is a process through which the population decides, or contributes to the decision making, on the destination of a part, or of all the public financial resources available for a given territory. In addition to formal

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This initiative has its roots in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989. According to Hoskyns (2005) after a few years, the participatory process has made Porto Alegre the city with the highest quality of life in the country. PB is a new form of governance based on the direct participation of citizens. Since the beginning of the first experiences, the PB has been raising the empathy and recognition from different sectors of society. It is a worldwide phenomenon, current in all continents, with a particular emphasis on Latin America, Europe and, more recently, in Africa. Although there is no overall statistics on the number of existent PB, it is estimated that they currently exceed 2,000 worldwide.

In Portugal, the first stage (up to 2004) has comprised consultative and in-person processes; the second (post-2005), has included deliberative processes with the possibility of *multichannel* participation; also, in this last phase, the

Town Councils developed autonomous processes of the municipalities. The empirical analysis undertaken, it has revealed the low incorporation of participatory mechanisms within the participatory budget. This tool, throughout the country, has its most effective expression in the Lisbon region (Crespo, 2013).

Lisbon municipality was the first European capital to implement the PB, aiming to strengthen the link between the municipality and its citizens. The Lisbon PB had its first edition in 2008, and dissociate from other similar experiences because it is a truly deliberative process, which confers effective decision-making power on citizens to present proposals for their city and to vote on the projects they consider being the priorities. The most voted projects, up to an amount equivalent to 5% of the investment budget, which correspond to five million Euros, are accommodated into the proposed municipality budget and activity plan on the following year. In this context, in July 2008, the Participatory Budget Principles Charter of the Municipality of Lisbon was endorsed; annually, there is an evaluation of its results and, in order to improve it, adjustments may be added reflecting an evolutionary nature. It can be identified a set of the PBs potential as a participatory and territorial management tool: the institutionalization of participation, allowing commitments to citizens in the definition of investment priorities; the powers equity and the creation of a space for direct communication and cooperation between elected representatives and voters; to boost the citizens identification with the destiny of its municipality (Dias, 2008).

In addition, in 2010, the BIP/ZIP program (Priority Intervention Neighborhoods/Priority Intervention Areas) was implemented by the Lisbon City Council. It is an initiative by the authorities to create opportunities for the participation of the inhabitants. The BIP/ZIP program is part of the Local Housing Program (LHP) and aims to stimulate partnerships and small local interventions to enforce social-territorial cohesion. The need and relevance of this program is the result of the existence of degraded neighborhoods, where there is poor living conditions, consequences of the urban decline and the lack of social partners. Thus, it contributes to improve the quality of life of residents and the municipality as well. To achieve this, the municipal authorities got involved with residents, parish councils, architects, lawyers, start-ups and other professionals to boost local development and bottom-up urban planning.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that Lisbon is the only European capital with participatory tools: both the PB and the BIP/ZIP program.

Conclusions

Obviously, all PDM problematic conditions have created difficulties in achieving and consolidating sustainable urban development (Rego, 2014). This is probably the reason why there is the need to support a more sustainable urban planning based on other informal tools that can help improving the efficiency of the urban policies. At the end, decision making tends to be essentially based on these other planning tools rather than on the PDM.

In general, within AML municipalities and, in particular, that of Lisbon, have been promoting and implementing some actions and applied urban planning and management tools in order to set a strategic and sustainable development. However, there a clear difference between the municipalities of the north margin (with higher values) and the southern margin (with lower values) of the Tagus Estuary in the adoption of such procedures.

In order to be successful, there must be a respond and reciprocity of the citizens with their involvement in the municipal instruments and actions, the most desired participatory governance, endorsed strongly at the LA21 and, in particular, as the first rule of the Aalborg Commitments set on: *we are committed to energising our decision-making processes through increased participatory democracy* (ESCP, 2004, p.2). Taking into account the results from the participatory budget and the BIP/ZIP study, they could be ways to get citizens engaged actively in sustainability targets. In both, the involvement of the population and the territorial actors is a binding matrix. And following the positive experience from the case of Lisbon municipality it is clear that people are willing to get involve on solving the problems in their surrounding environment. Hence, the empirical analysis undertaken has revealed that the participatory practices implemented arise as a response to the urban problems, the administration and the social needs of the inhabitants.

The debate and practices on participation and involvement of the population in sustainable urban management have a new angle. It emerges as a positive measure to face the economic crisis, to cover the present user's needs and an attempt to connect the population with the au-

thorities and legitimize their decisions. This new circumstances promotes more contextualized responses, a sense of belonging and adequacy of resources. Participation is seen as a fundamental tool for sustainable urban planning because it fits and facilitates implementation in diverse territorial contexts; it also adapts to diversified social, political, economic and ideological transformations.

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