

Catalysing Governance in a Paradoxical City

The Lisbon Strategic Chart and the uncertainties of political empowerment in the Portuguese capital city

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Abstract: This paper describes and reflects upon the most recent socio-political configurations and strategic enforcements in the government of the city of Lisbon. In this framework, a specific process is detailed: directly requested by the president of the Municipality, an independent commissariat developed in 2009 a proposal for a Strategic Chart of the city. This proposal addresses a wide range of areas, including the political and institutional ones (through several governing principles with corresponding rationales and proposed lines of action). A critical analysis (all but closed in the present phase where the proposals are still under public discussion) is made upon this specific process and some of its correspondent contents. The analysis is supported by theoretical reflections on urban politics, following the changes - and the growing paradoxes - both at the urban systems and at the new governing dilemmas presently emerging in the European cities. The text seeks in this sense to contribute to a better analytical clarity for urban politics and urban administration. As state-of-the art for the political developments in Lisbon, reflections are made upon the networks of administration, governance and socio-cultural capitals in the city. The final part of the paper shows the present stalemate of the chart process, thus deriving some overall reflections upon contemporary urban politics.

Key-Words: Lisbon, Govern, Governance, Urban Politics

A. Introduction

In the beginning of 2009, following the municipal elections just held and paralleling some wide-ranging strategic initiatives, the president of the Lisbon municipality António Costa - a political leader with considerable national relevance¹ - asked for a group of independent experts and urban

¹ António Costa has been since 2003 the 'number two' of the Portuguese Socialist Party (after the present Prime-Minister José Sócrates). In July 2007, following an unprecedented political crisis in the Lisbon Municipality that resulted in anticipated elections, Costa applied for the Portuguese capital city presidency as head of the Socialist Party list, leaving his former position as Minister of the Internal Administration of the central

thinkers to develop a proposal for a future strategic chart for the city. As then expressed, a chart to stand as the base for all the different new local policies and strategic plans and instruments to be developed, as well as for a new type of attitude towards the city and the citizens - thus expecting to conduct in the long term to a considerable shift in city government, in urban policy and in the local public administration rationales.

The initiation of this process came from some relevant backgrounds. Firstly, by a growing recognition of the new type of challenges confronting the city, extending through several types of sectors and dimensions and demanding public and socioeconomic responses which the city was showing not to be quite aware and prepared to tackle. Among other aspects, in Lisbon these challenges include a metropolitan ongoing socio-spatial fragmentation (after three decades of a demographic haemorrhaging unparalleled in European urban history); the slowly pace on urban regeneration of neighbourhoods, with little capacity to attract both public and private investment; the need to reconfigure the array of policies directed to social inclusion and cohesion; the need to reframe the scopes on the challenges posed to the city core bases of urban competitiveness and employment; the wide array of environmental and sustainability challenges; the need to put into practice new type of regulations, fiscal policies, urbanism instruments and administrative practices; the need to rethink and restructure most of the institutional and administrative structures of local government. Irrespectively of the Portuguese capital city continuing to be undoubtedly the main national social, cultural and economic driver, notwithstanding the new urban-driven socio-cultural paths well felt in dimensions like the housing market and international tourism, and albeit some innovative policies and attitudes undertaken by public entities and by private and civic actors, the city has experienced in the last decades major difficulties to face up several and some growing pressing challenges. The most recent economic crisis, also well felt in Portugal, revealed above all a crisis deeply felt in the governmental and policy orientations, thus enduring in Lisbon a stronger recognition towards a shift on its urban political dimensions.

Therefore, and secondly, by a parallel recognition that an important part of the incapacities to develop new socio-political and administrative responses was due to a conjunction of rigidity and disorientation felt in most of the political and institutional local and regional structures. Place of major socio-political and cultural stakeholdings, Lisbon paradoxically faces the exhaustion of several of its classical political administration panorama and a recognized rising level of public driven ineffectiveness, with public attitudes continuing scarcely drove by long term rationality and merit, but mainly through short-term political projects and its corresponding closed policy and bureaucratic

government. His list won the municipal elections - as well as the following ones in October 2009, now for a mandate until the end of 2013 and including an alliance with independent local lists.

communities. As reflected ahead in this text, this situation has been growingly recognised - and debated - by a broad majority of the city urban society and its main stakeholders.

Thirdly, by a steady development of a new civic consciousnesses and exigency in Lisbon society, paralleling the changes in civic and political attitudes occurring in most contemporary urban societies (Clark and Hoffman-Martinot, 1998) and more specifically to what has been developing in the Mediterranean urban world, reducing the traditional north-south cultural gaps upon civic assertiveness and social capital (Leontidou, 2010). As confirmed by some researches, and notwithstanding some relevant pervasive elements such as the considerable socio-spatial fragmentation or the deterioration of traditional associative institutions like corporate and labor unions, the socio-cultural capital of Lisbon society - analyzed and comprehended through new forms and dynamics of civic awareness and involvement - is revealing an overall growing and recognized activity, namely when considering several urban-driven topics (Cabral, Silva and Saraiva, 2008; Seixas 2008).

It was thus with a considerable dose of social expectation that the new political teams and programmes resulting from the last municipal elections addressed these demanding backgrounds. Along with the powerful new leadership evolved, the newly elected municipal team included newly elements, like some recognized non-party independents, and several considerable new types of proposals already stated in the winning political programme - namely, the commitment towards a city governmental reform, along with several new strategical instruments and processes (like the revision of the general urbanistic plan, a new housing strategy, a new culture strategy, or a complete financial recovery plan). Following these political perspectives a proposal for a Strategic Chart for the city was then asked and developed.

B. The slow repositioning of urban Europe

The European cities have been positioning themselves in a historical moment of crossroads. The changes and restructurings occurring in their fluxes, densities and landscapes, as well as in their cognitive and cultural dimensions, are leading into new types of urban pressures and challenges. Challenges that cross deeply through their classical socio-political urban contexts, marked by parallel confrontations and pressures from its main references - from higher time-space flexibility and modularity of the economic and socio-cultural chains; to the crisis of the welfare state who is raising new types of social needs and exigencies.

These fascinating but also disruptive times, conjoining the heritage of what François Ascher called the Fordist-Keynesian-Corbusian paradigm (1995) with the development of hyper-territories configuring

meta-relationships and growingly complex functionalities of urban life, work, mobility and consumption, are framing new types of fluxes and externalities, severely challenging the present political urban governmental and institutional arrays.

Slowly, long-established socio-political structures and stakeholdings seem to be under change by urban transformations. Today seems widely recognised by most of the political, socio-cultural and academic realms that this historical mutative scenario demands the need to reinterpret socio-political structures and attitudes on urban politics, city administration, urban governance and local actor's stakeholding (Bagnasco and Le Galés 2000, Jouve 2004).

Concomitantly, a varied sort of multiple new urban-driven strategies, policies and governmental reconfigurations have been under development, some with promising and other with already confirmed results. Some other trends, however, have been raising growing doubts upon democratic procedures and cost-benefit effective public deliverance. Nonetheless, what seems considerably certain is that a wide array of new types of urban projection, urban policy and urban interpretation as a whole is developing in European societies. Varied new urban and local institutional structures are being created; different processes of administrative deconcentration and political decentralization, some against relevant odds, have been slowly rising; different arrays of principles and tools for urban strategy, urban planning and even civic participation and civic rights, are being tested and developed; political and instrumental improvements in social engagement and civic participation are being raised; more elaborated and influential forms of civic and academic questioning upon urban socio-political regimes are strengthening.

Notwithstanding all these innovative processes, the last two decades have also revealed relevant uncertainties and blockades, especially when considering the general configurations of the institutional arrays towards the city. Even for some of the seemingly most necessary political developments - like the creation of metropolitan political authorities configuring stronger governance commitments at recognised scales of most relevant urban collective regulation and action; or the need for new public enforcements in face of several deviations of resources and even democratic procedures - many urban societies have been showing that the paces of their 'real cities' are not being adequately followed by corresponding paces from the part of their 'socio-political cities'. By one side we have witnessed the gradual evolution of post-fordist urban policies - and more recently even the reconfiguration itself of neoliberal policies - which tended to prioritize neo-schumpeterian perspectives and to promote the entrepreneurship and competitiveness enforcements (Harvey 2001, Jessop 1994, Brenner 2004). But by other side some severe criticisms have been developing upon how it has been through these logics that structural changes have occurred in the political arenas and

agendas, remodelling whole structures of urban politics and raising important questionings around the potential deployment of main urban values such as equity, social justice, even democracy.

In a resumed way, the European cities - and namely the southern European cities - with its stakeholding structures and dynamics, have been under recent socio-political pressure, by several reasons (Seixas and Albet, 2010):

1. Firstly, by the new sort of dysphasia felt by European urban citizens, between the new urban opportunities and experiences provided by different cultural and economic paradigms, and the growing pressures felt in basic elements such as employment, housing rents and social inclusion.
2. Then, by a continual weaknesses felt by local governments in detaining more negotiative and resourceful capacities, coupled with chronic issues regarding fiscal and financial support. Notwithstanding the regional and local decentralisation processes followed in several countries, which have brought about - with debatable success - a greater focus on intermediate and local territorial scales, these local weaknesses are contributing to enlarge the gaps towards overall policy delivery, political competences and socio-political empowerment.
3. By other side, the considerable socio-spatial fragmentation of several European metropolises, largely caused by economic stakeholding structures and by corresponding effects on the urban production models, seems paradoxically to be fragmenting traditional modes of urban governance and fomenting the loss of historical organic processes of local political stakeholding. In fact, crucial uncertainties remain regarding local governance configurations and strategies - namely in southern urban societies, where social capital has always been complex and considerably fractal, highly personalised or even populist, and not so much oriented to collective strategies or to accountable democracy.
4. On major issue concerns with the influence of EU policies and directives. Which is showing to be growingly relevant, both in financial and in symbolic terms. Strongly due to European directives, for the first time national strategies of countries like Greece and Portugal have objectively recognised cities as a main asset for development and sustainability, thus raising its political and symbolic importance.
5. Finally, and as above already expressed about Lisbon contemporary society, the European urban cultures are experiencing new forms of cosmopolitanism maturation - transformations quite visible from the most differentiated life-styles to the most varied urban social movements and civic expressions rapidly moving toward much more sophisticated forms and contents. A civic

and cultural panorama framing a new political culture that will certainly have profound and long-term influences on the governance and political spheres of the European cities.

These paradoxical European urban scenarios are not at all clear - they seem to have within it a wide array of possible future directions. By one side most diverse opportunities for political development and socioeconomic equity expand; but by other side most challenging impasses still seem to fully correspond to what Henri Lefébvre was referring more than 40 years ago as the long-period of disorientation with the (then) expected outcome of the urban revolution (1970).

C. Applied theories on urban govern

Urban politics comprehends a vast dimension where coexist quite different dimensions ranging from national strongholds to political local communities and to civic neighbourhood responsibility, from metropolitan strategic planning to human resources administration and to real estate and swap finance. Here, in the evolution of the forms of dialogue and conflict and of collective strategy development, the understanding of the tendencies whereas more shared or divided political spaces between different urban actors (between governmental and institutional organs themselves but obviously between these and the most varied actors of the civil society) remains a vast and triggering questioning.

These perspectives emphasise the relevance to attend to the logics of urban social dynamics, perceptions and identities in the strategies and practices of the multiple actors and communities living within each city's extent. The recognition to what the literature refers to as *social and cultural capital*, and as systems of *action* in a city, question the perspectives that urban policies are not bound only to specific urban designed or planned configurations but have much due to its socio-cultural and economic structures, as well as to the civic and daily energies that leverage quotidiannities.

Nonetheless, the inclusion of these perspectives on city politics should be supported with the existence of a considerable degree of corresponding rationality in governance planning and management itself, thus implying the existence of dialogue, consensus and strategy building structures across several scales: spaces, instruments and mechanisms, both formal and informal, through which conflict and cooperation fluxes are processed with considerable proximity and the formation of interdependencies and partnerships is materialized with considerable doses of objectivity.

Renowned comparative analytical studies on trends in European cities (based on performance standard indicators), carried out over the last two decades,² unsurprisingly reveal a considerable correlation between urban qualification and political innovation and inclusion. The cities with best performances and standards of quality of life and wealth have also been those that, in its different scenarios and scales fostered good levels of innovation in the panorama of their urban policies and in their own political-institutional frameworks.

Through their observations on the experiences and transformations occurring in real European city-system scenarios and their corresponding socio-political urban systems, various social scientists have put forward conceptual proposals to interpret emerging urban political structures and dynamics. There remains an open ended range of issues that need more thorough examination including: the reinterpretation of the role of the State in the city (Brenner, Jessop, Jones and Macleod, 2003); the deepening of the scope and practices of urban governance (Bagnasco and LeGalés, id.); the evolution of city values and principles (Borja, 2003); the consolidation of deeper enforcements for strategic planning; a whole array of possibilities in institutional and administrative reforms; greater attention to qualitative dimensions such as quality of life, public spaces, landscape, urban rhythms; spaces and processes for deeper citizen participation and community involvement; the new perspectives on areas like for instance communitarian and cognitive local economy, or reflexive and citizen-driven urbanism.

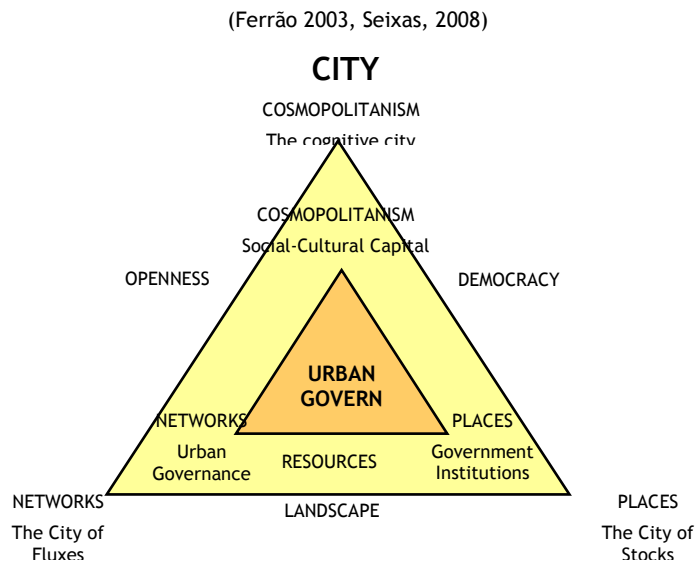
In this text we will follow a specific conceptual proposal for interpreting contemporary city politics - an intelligibility proposal which establishes a conjugation between a desirably systemic conceptual exercise and its transformational capacity for concrete governability and social-political action. In a clear allusion to the city as a living being - or the urban system as an ecosystem, we propose the development of a systemic structuring both for the city system and the city political system - based on the classical assumption of the *polis* being understood by an umbilical connection between the *urbs* and the *civitas*. This interpretative proposal for the urban systems is furthermore structured around a somewhat new concept in the field of urban politics, hopefully more comprehensive than those of government, governability or even governance, and actually including all of these: *Urban Govern*. According to Guerra (2002) in the task of comprising structures, cultures and relations of power and action in the city, “*the concept of govern includes and combines knowledge on political processes for social regulation, along with the compromises made in several institutional, organizational and management based forms*” (...) “*the concept of govern appeals to the existence of proper aims for public intervention, which would stretch beyond a simple generation of consensus*

² See, for example, the studies by the London School of Economics and Political Science - Urban Research Group at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/urbanAtLSE> as well as more analytical approaches such as Borja and Castells (1997), Parkinson (2001), Jouve and Booth (2004).

to become a real search for social equity” (...) “a constructive perspective (...) an interpretative pluralist perspective, where articulated processes and the learning capacity of ‘action systems’ are valorised.” (pp. 55-56).

Extending these conceptual premises interpreting *the city as a collective system*, and following theoretical proposals from Ferrão (2003) and Seixas (2008), it is proposed a symmetrical theoretical structure with three elements representing body, fluxes and soul of the city-system and of the socio-political city-system - for the latter, thus comprising the city of institutions and organisations, the city of governance, and the city of collective social-cultural capital. This theoretical structure is - as it will be understood in the following parts of this text - the conceptual base for both the urban socio-political diagnosis as well as for the consequent critical analysis for the Lisbon strategic chart processes and contents.

FIGURE 1
The conceptual triangle for interpreting *Urban Govern*



1. The body of the political city is its *institutional and organizational government scenarios*, involving the different public and para-public organisms that, in the most varied of forms, govern it: municipal councils, metropolitan and/or regional governments, parish councils or urban districts, etc.
2. The life of the political city (or the fluxes of socio-political interaction) should be interpreted through its *structures and dynamics of urban governance*. Recalling the broad definition by Bagnasco and LeGalés, governance is “a process for the coordination of actors, of social groups

and institutions in order to achieve collectively discussed and defined goals in a fragmented or even obscure environment” (2000: 26).

3. The soul of the political city, or its political cosmopolitanism, is affirmed by the *solidness of its social and cultural capitals*. It is its collective political intelligence, structuring perceptions, values, attitudes and behaviours of the city as a community.

This conceptual govern system of the city attributes equal value to landscape, openness and democracy:

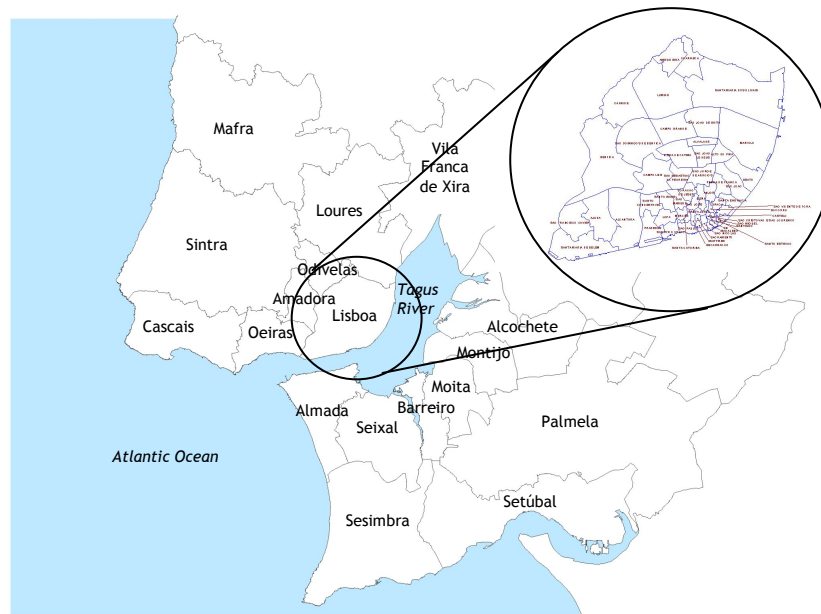
- a. In urban govern, the *Landscape* frames the city of institutions with the city of governance. A pleasant govern landscape needs adequate support in terms of resources and political instruments, directly or indirectly positioned within the city’s government dynamics. There should exist core normative elements such as a charter of principles and more operational elements such as strategic, urbanistic and dimensional plans, as well as appropriate levels of human and financial resources.
- b. *Democracy* in urban govern is constructed out of the cultural guidelines and social processes of its civic and collective values consolidating the institutional panoramas of urban government. The political cosmopolitanism of the city enables and supports the development of governmental and democratic solutions.
- c. *Openness* in urban govern interrelates governance networks with the city’s structures of social and cultural capital. A govern framework, established through considerable doses of openness, proximity and connectivity across its networked spaces, enables the comprehensiveness of urban actors fostering a more deepened sense and exercise of citizenship, consolidating the *public space of city politics*.

D. Lisboa Socio-Political State-of-the-Art

Lisbon is structured by a strong geography which includes the Tagus river estuary, a large regional hinterland, a city-region of around 3 million people and circa 40% of the Portuguesa GDP, and a long history of more than 2500 years of urban occupation and expansion. Only around 500 thousand inhabitants (i.e. less than 20% of the region) reside in its core, reflecting at least 4 decades of continuous territorial diffusion and a process that as passed from suburbanisation to rururbanisation and to the most recent trends of metapolisation and hyper-regional socio-economic expansion. Today these trends include most relevant projects like the new airport, new logistic platforms and expected urban developments in positions going until 60 to 80 km away from the old historical origin. Like most of the European urban regions, a fast changing pace towards decisive service, cultural and tourism economy, notwithstanding most relevant difficulties in the modernisation and reconfiguration of crucial socioeconomic dimensions such as policy delivery and fiscal capacities from the different tiers

of the State - a panorama quite well understood through the observation of some data, like for instance the recognition to be the OECD country with the second smallest public investment capacity from both local and regional tiers of government³.

FIGURE 2
The Metropolitan and Municipal Core Territory of Lisbon
Metropolitan Municipalities and Lisbon Parish Territories



In the institutional core of this urban meta-territory stands the Municipality of Lisbon. As the autarchic power of the capital city of Portugal, historically quite mirroring the Portuguese (and European) times of expansion or decadence, it exists as a relevant institution since Roman times, followed by a history of prevailing relative political importance. This considerable stakeholding has been however under pressure since absolutist times and most drastically on the dictatorial regime of Salazar already in the XX century⁴. Only after the 1974 revolution and the democratic IIIrd Republic the local administration in Portugal has regained political positioning, nonetheless still remaining today a long way to fully accompany most of the European local and regional structures of competences (Crespo and Cabral 2010).

Notwithstanding, and as a result of long historical developments, Lisbon socio-political and institutional panorama is intrinsically quite complex. The Lisbon autarchic government structures are mainly based on the large scale municipal institution, functionally structured through some 300

³ See the most recent Country Note for Portugal in www.eocd.org

⁴ Notwithstanding a small but highly important period (from 1935 to 1942) when the president of the municipality was also the minister of public works of the central government (M. Duarte Pacheco).

departments and divisions and employing circa 11,800 members of public staff. Its political-executive management has been carried out by minor or absolute majorities deriving from a total of seventeen councillors. There also stands the Lisbon Municipal Assembly, whom is attributed general powers of legislation, oversight and supervision. Both political organs hold considerable political autonomy reflected in separate electoral ballots. At more local levels there exist in the Lisbon municipal territory 53 Parish Councils (each with their respective assemblies and executives) displaying highly unequal territorial distributions and social structures. The scopes of parish council actions and the daily difficulties faced, has also gained widespread recognition by Lisbon society as requiring change, turning their political and administrative panorama in one of the main paradigmatic examples of the stalemate reached in the governance of Lisbon.

Based on the systemic conceptual structure set out above, focusing on the three vertices of the theoretical triangle - cosmopolitanism, places, and networks of the govern systems of the Portuguese capital - and on multiple field analyses set out in the city and the society of Lisbon for the last decade (through several sources and methodologies and including the debates on the Lisbon Strategic Charter⁵) there is now exposed a socio-political critical analytical approach. Tables 1, 2 and 3 provide a systematized summary of the main conclusions arising from these researches and its corresponding developments⁶.

TABLE 1

Summary of Lisbon Govern Diagnosis: Sociocultural Capital

Sources: Seixas, 2008; various bibliographic sources; seminars of the Lisbon Strategic Charter, 2009; report “Quality of Life and City Government in Lisbon” (ISEG/ICS, 2010)

A. The Cosmopolitanism of Urban Govern: Sociocultural Capital in Lisbon	
Weaknesses / Threats	
Elites	Lisbon has no consistent urban-oriented political community. There is still an embarrassed promotion of the city as a socio-political object. Decision making elites continue to display little interest in the city’s problematic are much more driven to the National and International arenas. The few local driven elites are mainly connected to the municipal scales, not to the entire city region.
Strategy	The major challenges facing the city (culturally and politically speaking) still haven’t been clearly discussed, placed and met. There is therefore an evident lack of strategy (namely a collectively apprehended strategy).
Information and Knowledge	There are few places and opportunities for awareness of the realities and challenges of the city.
Citizenship	Most of the city population still reflects an important difference between passive and active citizenship. Metropolitan housing and economic fragmentation over the last four decades has resulted in the fragmentation of critical mass and

⁵ Namely the ones concerning the govern dimensions, open to the general question ‘How to create an efficient, participative and financially sustainable model of governance’

⁶ The correspondent research project is being prepared for book edition, due for publication in the near future.

many relational networks.

Strengths / Opportunities

Citizenship and Socio-Cultural Capital

The cultural and symbolic capital of Lisbon detains deep strengths (especially in the dimensions of neighbourhood identity and of overall cultural and city identity). There are being developed new political attitudes and civic engagement dynamics, namely in the youngest and educated classes. In the last 5 years, a considerable expansion of opportunities for debate and discussion of urban related themes (conferences, seminars, media, internet and blogs).

Elites

There is under formation a young and cult class that understands the city and its urban livelihood a key-dimension for development and sustainability.

Strategy

Some recent strategic processes and instruments have been under construction, like a new urbanistic plan (PDM), new sectorial strategies and the Lisbon Strategic Chart initiative.

Cosmopolitanism: Social-Cultural Capital in the Govern of Lisbon

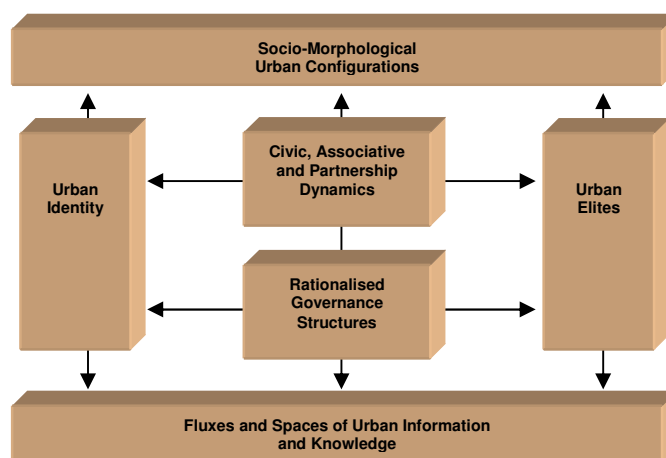
Despite of a series of strengths within the scope of its urban culture and identity and its neighbourhood social structures, the socio-cultural capital of Lisbon's urban society shows to attain a relatively fragile consistency, especially when projecting community citizenship and its dynamics. Very recent research has shown how there are still important distances between passive citizenship and active citizenship attitudes (Cabral, Silva and Saraiva, 2008). In our previous research⁷ developed throughout six different vectors of urban socio-cultural capital valorisation (see figure 2), showed structural limitations still existing today: the limited traditions of Portuguese society's civic involvement and participation, with public questions not being easily understood as a collective responsibility; a perception of a relative superposition between public involvement and civic involvement; the magnitude of socio-spatial fragmentation trends in the metropolis over the last three decades, fractionalizing urban energies and urban benefits; knowledge deficiencies on urban and city problem issues, with a state of 'relative ignorance' in effect as to what is at stake in the contemporary city, thereby permitting the maintenance of cultural and administrative structures with little capacity for transversal and multidisciplinary approaches. There is still a reasonable absence of open channels of governance, 'public spaces' for dialogue and cooperation established beyond the usual debates held during days of electioneering and public consultation procedures established in normative planning frameworks. Researches also confirmed the still weak levels of interest among Lisbon's urban elites, in participative processes or even in concrete professional and political involvement in urban government and urban governance systems (Seixas, id.) - an important factor that does not facilitate the development in Lisbon urban society of 'local political communities' (Jouve and Lefèvre, 1999), beyond political communities linked to more specific and particular goals, therefore to a significant extent leaving local city government institutions to their own perceptions.

⁷ See Seixas (2008) for detailed analysis on these dimensions. An empirical collection work was made in the city of Lisbon, following a theoretical background proposing a systemic structure for a more comprehensive interpretation of the socio-cultural capital in a city.

FIGURE 2

Dimensions of Valorisation of the Socio-Cultural Capital in an Urban Society

Source: Seixas, 2008



However, notwithstanding this panorama of undeniable fragilities, there were also registered by our previous researches interesting developments of wider urban social cognition in Lisbon - and corresponding political and civic involvement attitudes - all around the city, in its neighbourhoods and communities, and expressed in NGO, academic or media attention: more debate, more civic intervention and social pressures (even beyond common NIMBY type concerns), more scientific and general debates upon city's subjects. Even the fast growing current expansion of individualized expressions of citizenship through the Internet, supposedly quite fractal and kaleidoscopic, is showing a rising stock of awareness based on a relative consolidation of a cultural capital of urban cosmopolitanism, increasingly influential within the socio-political structures of Lisbon. Nevertheless, it is still not at all clear how these expressions will develop stronger structures of socio-cultural capital, as well as materialize in any form of more modern and democratic governance development.

TABLE 2

Summary of Lisbon Govern Diagnosis: Administration

Sources: Seixas, 2008; various bibliographic sources; seminars of the Lisbon Strategic Charter, 2009; report "Quality of Life and City Government in Lisbon" (ISEG/ICS, 2010)

B. The Sites of Urban Govern: Public Administration in Lisbon

Weaknesses / Threats

Metropolis

The Lisbon Municipality - and all the municipalities in general - has small political and institutional weight in the metropolitan/regional scale. Low level of coordinated and integrated strategies and policies at the metropolitan level (reduced political impact).

Organization and Efficiency

The organizational structure of Lisbon Municipality remains highly taylorist, segmented and verticalized. A weak administrative subsidiarity. Strong difficulties in policy articulation/transversality between different public organs and

services. Organizational structure and culture mostly too closed to itself, non pro-active and non oriented to rapid and efficient responses (an 'autarchic autarchy' of the administration ethos). Excessive opacity / Lack of transparency in several administrative processes. Little accountability and evaluation processes (internal and external).

Responsibility

Poorly defined principles and values of public responsibility, resulting in a significant motivational crisis of public officials, civil servants and technicians. Political and administrative actions primarily driven by 'restricted timeframes' and by limited/segmented cognitive perspectives on the city. Small rotation of public department chiefs. Hypertrophy of decision making responsibility on municipal political cabinets.

Resources

Deficit of new and better qualified staff, particularly in core areas of municipal development. Local public resources facing strong rigidities/deadlocks: a quite complex planning and administrative regulatory frameworks, low levels of human resource trainings (on average), a considerable financial debt, continuously classical and unrealistic budgetary procedures (non oriented to objectives);

Parish Councils (Juntas de Freguesia)

Local government entities highly fragmented, with weak power for effective policy delivery and administration. Low levels of political autonomy, considerable dependency upon third parties. Difficult and conflicting processes of delegation/decentralisation of local competences and resources.

Strengths / Opportunities

Responsibility

The profile of elected local politicians is gradually changing. It is noticeable a different type of management of political timeframes and resources. Development of new planning regulatory frameworks (headed by the review of the Municipal Development Plans) and of new strategic instruments (in relevant sectors like housing, public spaces, culture and mobility) as well as the drafting and debate of the Strategic Charter.

Organization and Efficiency

Good levels of pro-activity and efficiency at various municipal administrative entities - namely in the ones facing high proximity with: strategic rationales, high autonomy and public visibility, cooperation and networking active involvement, concrete local territories. Several administrative areas renowned by its quality, flexibility and innovation. Some renovation and training of employees. A political process aiming at a global reform of the administrative and government structures of the city, with high support from the municipality presidency, is under development. Proposals for new organisation procedures on the Lisbon Strategic Charter

Resources

By its volume (almost 12,000 public employees), the municipal human resources must be still seen as a potential stronghold. There is some (albeit little) human resources renovation.

Places: Institutions in the Govern of Lisbon

Notwithstanding vast public deliveries made by the public administration organs to meet the city's needs, our critical analysis on the local institutional and governmental fields also found important gaps - and structural difficulties in reducing them - between the city's places of govern and the city-system's problematic and challenges.

For this, there might be referenced two relevant areas of shortcomings on two quite different scales. Firstly the recognition that the metropolitan scale hasn't still a form of empowered political institution; secondly, the inner local parish/neighbourhood government configuration is highly inadequate and deprived of resources. These two expressions of relevant political and administrative gaps on different scales are broadly due to party political structures based on classical administrative divisions but also to a closed-circuit state - or, as we have called it, a state of considerable *zeitgeist* - that seems to be prevailing in the cultural structures and *ethos* of most public and political organs. On one hand, the power hypertrophy existing around executive

political offices proved to be simultaneously cause and consequence of the lack of pro-activeness across most local administrative levels. On other hand, the very levels of administrative efficiency, delivery and accountability revealed important weaknesses. Thus entrenching a panorama of high political and administrative complexity with dispersed and poorly rationalised capacity of action - condensing a state of *a-topia* in the city administration, withdrawing motivational capital, the capacity to conceive and discuss strategic objectives, not focusing on long term and structural reforms, uncomfortable to work with the city and its citizens. Notwithstanding, this *autarchic autarchy* has not prevented - maybe even directed to - the development of highly liberal and imagnetic-based policies, strongly based on financial, real estate and marketing fields - towards a discretionary urban regime relatively similar to the ones conceptualised by critical urban policy researchers such as Jessop (2000 and 2002) and Brenner (2004). Overall, this situation left a relevant part of the main urban political agendas in Lisbon, to a large extent and for too long dependent on determinate actors and to specific partisan and private strategies.

We have, however, also noticed political and administrative pro-activity in several directions - a pro-activity steadily evolving in the last few years. With the existence of a wide and otherwise consolidated normative and political-institutional structure of government, and even if with important gaps and malfunctioning situations, the public govern of Lisbon also revealed several areas of administrative modernity, of strategic thinking and democratic improvement. These are evidences that bring some perspectives for change, that must be added with other type of pressures and incentives deriving from other origins - from the exigencies of the city-system and urban society itself; but also from other levels of government like central government or the European Union, namely through administrative decentralization enforcements, the empowerment of local autonomies and communities, or through new legal and fiscal frameworks (like a new national law for local finance and local resources, or an empowered structure of National city politics in Portugal), all of it implying new demands, new attitudes and new positioning for local urban governments.

TABLE 3

Summary of Lisbon Govern Diagnosis: Networking and Participation

Sources: Seixas, 2008; various bibliographic sources; seminars of the Lisbon Strategic Charter, 2009; report “Quality of Life and City Government in Lisbon” (ISEG/ICS, 2010)

C. The Governance of Urban Govern: Networking and Participation in Lisbon	
Weaknesses / Threats	
Governance	Most of the local administration apparel operates within a closed circuit apart from the city itself (an <i>internal Zeitgeist</i>). In some areas there has been occurring a steady pace towards more cooperative and governance processes with socio-economic city actors. However most of these have only extended to a sparse number of processes with limited impact (and still lacking plurality). A notably lack of more permanent governance/dialogue instruments and institutions.

Considerable power hypertrophy on semi-closed political communities. Lisbon society remains with a considerable mistrust upon city's government and administration structures and officials.

Strengths / Opportunities

Social Capital

As confirmed on different researches, Lisbon society retains a relatively latent civic awareness and responsiveness capacity - although with considerable difficulties to socially and politically mobilise and capitalise. A very significant and important symbolic and social capital in the scales of the several neighbourhoods. In the last 5 years, a considerable expansion of opportunities for debate and discussion of urban related themes (conferences, seminars, media, internet and blogs).

Governance

The local Parishes have overall a very good community relationship - although its shortage of resources strongly curtails several potentialities. Recent development of some interesting participative processes, like the Participative Budget process (since 2008 and containing 7% of overall municipal investment), the Local Housing Strategy Program and the Strategies for City Culture. Proposals for new and wider governance instruments in the Lisbon Strategic Charter

Networks: Governance in the Govern of Lisbon

The previous research also pointed to important weaknesses in the specific governance dimension. Beyond institutional structures founded on the classical logics of political representation, Lisbon does not contain many governance processes evolving considerably open and plural participatory processes. The organicity existent in the dialogue and partnerships within the urban panorama, although natural and obviously healthy in any city, is however the almost absolute mirror reflection of the organicity existent in a governance panorama not based on clear and recognisable forms of strategic planning, of rationalised public action and of authentic public openness attitudes. This situation leads to high doses of uncertainty and instability in urban governance processes and shapes a panorama that is naturally dominated by the dynamics and strategies of the most compelling stakeholders that follow the perspectives of urban competitiveness, and also of urban most symbolic cultures and images. In fact, cultural pressures and the expenditure of energies by Lisbon govern system actors - including the citizenry - in their attention to the most mediatic, symbolic and competitive urban projects were quite visible in our interviews.

Therefore, and as expressed above, local political agendas are to a significant extent dominated by these logics, overshadowing other political projects and local-type attentions and leading the administrative frameworks to clearly prefer *new public management* attitudes to the detriment of *new public administration* actions (Mozzicafreddo, 2003), perceptively more complex to develop and surely much more delicate to negotiate in the present institutional, party political and union labour contexts. In reference to one of the main questions proposed by the French literature on these fields - *who governs the city* (Joana, 2000) - although we do not consider that the urban regime of Lisbon has evolved towards a clearly structured global competitive statist regime (as Brenner conceptualized for several urban regimes in the USA and Europe, 2004), we should recognise that in the last decade the Lisbon socio-political system as been framed by a considerable degree of power hypertrophy and sustained through semi-closed political communities.

E. The Lisbon Strategic Chart

As briefly addressed in the introduction of this article, following the most recent autarchic election the presidency of the Lisbon municipality asked a group of independent urban thinkers to develop a proposal for a future strategic chart for the city. The initial ideas by the local political leadership were threefold. Firstly, for the future chart to frame the global strategies and objectives to be followed by the city policies and administration. Secondly, for the chart to be unfolded through six different areas to be addressed (or 6 questionings to be answered, as it was then proposed): human demography and vitality; quality of life and social inclusion; energy, mobility and sustainability; economy, creativity and employment; culture, education and identity; institutions, administration and governance. Thirdly, for the chart to cover a period dating from 2010 until at least 2024, thus marking the 50th anniversary of the Portuguese democratic revolution and putting a considerable political symbolism on the overall process and on its correspondent main instrument. The independent group (constituted by academic experts) developed a working programme that included several public debates and workshops in different areas and phases of the process, as well as instruments like internet e-earrings. The group delivered its proposal in a formal presentation to the city and the municipality on July the 3rd. The proposal⁸ is constituted by a general introductory text, then addressing the main problematic and correspondent principles and lines of action proposed for the different six areas.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the state-of-the-art of the Lisbon governing dimensions, through a double-sided critical reading, considering not only the diagnoses previously developed and the chart proposals in the governing and administration dimensions, but also the strategic chart process itself - and its present stalemate.

The following lines will then show a systematization of the main proposals included in the sixth dimension of the chart, focusing on the city institutional, administrative and governance areas. The reason for this analytical choice is based on the conviction - supported after several years of research both on the most general urban politics perspectives and developments as well on the specificities of the Lisbon socio-political panorama - that the future development for this (and probably any other) strategic and hypothetically changeable process will deeply depend on its capacity to enthrall on the existing and expected local socio-political and governance stakeholdings.

The proposals for the reform of Lisbon governing and socio-political structures are based on a global vision that recalls the republican idealisms pursued since its instauration in 1910, the democratic

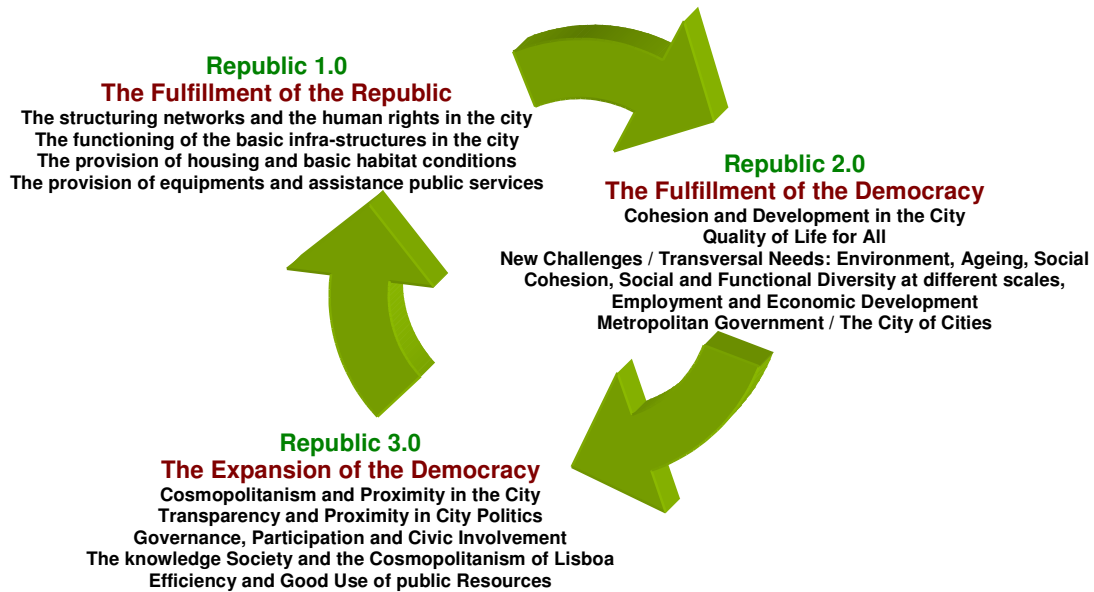
⁸ Which can be seen in detail in www.cartaestrategica.cm-lisboa.pt

objectives followed since the 1974 revolution, and the new (and future) perspectives for democratic expansion for this new century (see figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Global Vision for the Lisbon Political and Administrative Strategies

Sources: Report “Quality of Life and City Government in Lisbon” (ISEG/ICS, 2010)



Then, and as expressed in the corresponding text of the chart proposal: “*The proposed change to the Lisbon governance paradigms - or its political revitalisation - is based upon the most critical element of the social and political city: its citizenship. Strengthening citizenship is the best means of sustaining the entire upgrade of a city’s governance structures. It is strengthening citizenship that community is best build. Lisbon, with its excellent potential to achieve this, needs to build community both at the city scale (and even at its metropolitan area) as well as at each neighbourhood scale. Correspondingly, the key concept for the reform of the governance systems of Lisbon is the perspective of developing individual and collective citizenship dynamics, and its mote should be: Building Communities - City Policies as a New Public Space*”.

For these global objectives, the chart text structures three base vectors for reform and innovation:

- a) Firstly, a higher proximity between politics and the citizen: “*the revitalisation of Lisbon’s democratic and governance systems involves the creation of structures and processes that might enable a greater proximity between politics and each citizen and a greater sense of share of the collective destinies on the city and on each of its neighbourhoods. As the quotidian place for each citizen, as the favoured space-time for daily experiences and labours, as the scale with the greatest synergy potential (social, economic, cultural, creative and clearly also political), the city should become the key facet in setting out new ways of building community and hence enabling the*

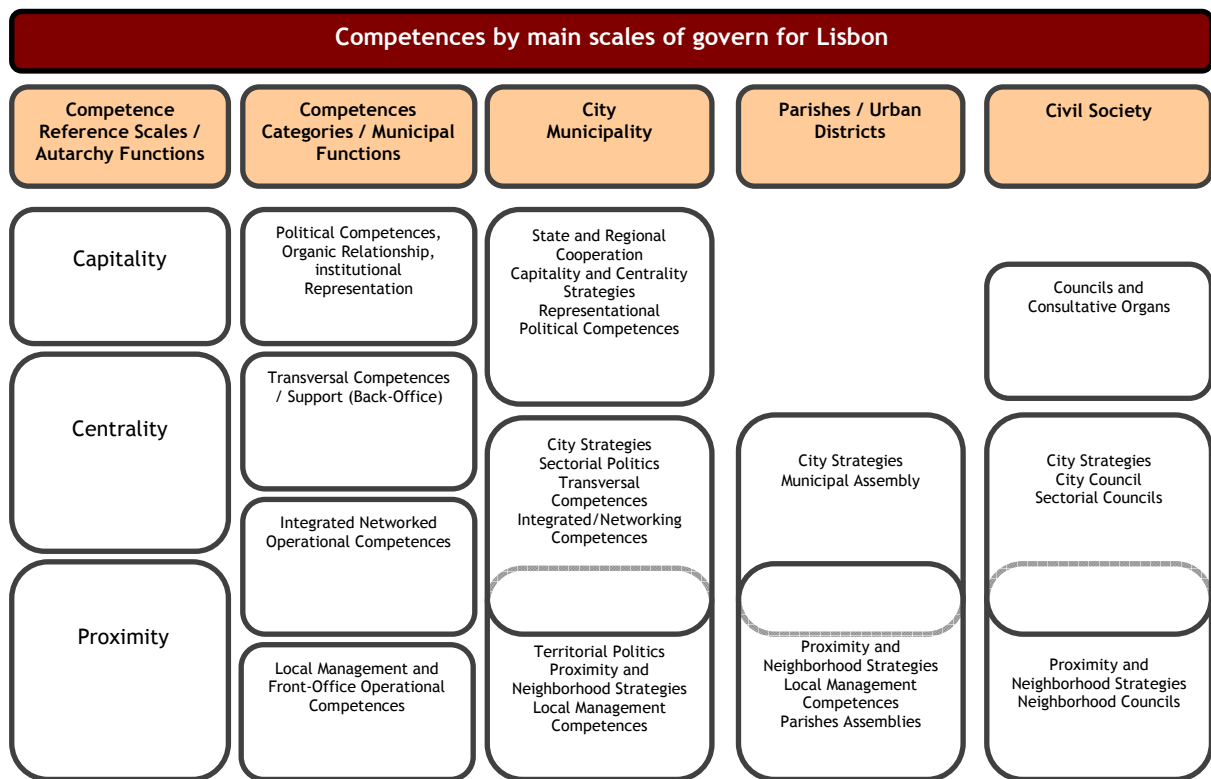
development of social networks, pacts and more collective principles and values. Many cities are constructing this path, with diverse methodologies and processes already well under appliance⁹. In summary, the city should be the key element in deepening citizenship within the scope of a new political culture that has undergone development in conjunction with the emergence of the information and hypertext society into which we are increasingly submerged”.

- b) Secondly, a strengthening of the administrative public capacities: “the political revitalisation of Lisbon should equally extend to a clear strengthening of the city’s public managerial and administrative capacities, given the new needs and challenges facing urban settlements of the 21st century and the manifest crisis (both in visionary and in operational terms) current confronting the current administrative structures. Similarly, there is the need to extend wide ranging and integrative strategies and a better perception of the spaces and times truly essential to the development and cohesion of the city, endowing responsibilities and resources to the most appropriate scales and entities for public action. There must also be higher requirements able to drive to greater efficiency and structured evaluation, motivating resources, clarifying competences and providing good information and knowledge to the most varied spaces of debate and decision making”.

FIGURE 4

Structure of Competences by main scales of Lisbon Govern

Source: Report “Quality of Life and City Government in Lisbon” (ISEG/ICS, 2010)



⁹ Like for instance the principles and processes underpinning Local Agenda 21.

c) Thirdly, a higher assumption of the specificities of Lisbon itself: *“the political revitalisation of Lisbon should furthermore incorporate the definitive assumption of its specific character within the metropolitan, national and planetary panorama. Its dual status of geo-metropolitan centre of the leading national region and as political capital of a European country with deep historical roots and heavily influenced by political government, places the city in a unique position. This specificity has to be central in the deliberations of its strategic foundations as well as on its needed and demanded frameworks of competences and resources”*.

The chart proposal follows with the listing of seven major principles *“for an efficient, participative and sustainable system of governance for Lisbon”*. Four of these principles are transversal in nature, interconnected with the four major systematised guidelines included within the strategic chart proposal: a strategy-oriented and cumulativeness of urban public policies (principle 1); the refocusing of the socio-political action towards new urban scales and dimensions (principle 2); a highest level of management and local administration proximity (principle 3); the best information and knowledge of the city (principle 7). The other three principles target the three vertices of urban govern: a qualified and efficient administration (principle 4); a more dynamic and inclusive governance (principle 5); an effective civic participation and involvement (principle 6).

TABLE 4
Govern Principles and Lines of Action

Source: Proposal of the Lisbon Strategic Chart, 6th question (2009)

Type of Principles	Principles	Definition and Proposed Lines of Action
Transversal Principles	The Strategy-Oriented and Cumulativeness of Public Policies	<p>The need to establish an integrated and consensual platform on planning and management of the city’s future. A strategy and objectives to be as collectively debated and drawn as feasible, where the options and objectives might override sectorial, ideological and partisan barriers. A strategy to be based on a cumulativeness and consistency of the main public policies on the city, thus proving to be a leading and critical input into gaining the <i>confidence</i> of Lisbon communities.</p> <p>Proposed lines of action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Debate and approval of a Strategic Chart for Lisbon, thus providing strong strategic Rationality for Local Administration and Urban Policies b) Municipal leadership in strategy enhancement and monitoring c) Consensual Sectorial and Territorial strategies/pacts d) Usage of renowned processes like the Local 21 Agenda
	The Focusing on New Urban Scales and Dimensions	<p>The contemporary city needs to expand its focus on varied dimensions and scales of city interpretation, governance and administration. New urban complexities and demands force the restructuring of policy and administration fields, urban complexity clearly demanding major efforts to clarify capacities, competences and legacies. There is</p>

		<p>proposed a concomitant redirection of organizational structures, competences and resources.</p> <p>Proposed lines of action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The expansion and redirection of several areas and fields of city policy, administration and regulation Urban Policy definition through 3 Lisbon's main scales: Global capality, Regional centrality and Local proximity Lisbon as a relevant political voice in several global domains (citizenship/human rights, environment/energy/sustainability, etc.)
	The Highest Proximity in Urban Administration	<p>The need to direct city public management and front-office procedures towards the most local scale (enthraling the notion of Habitat), via consistent devolution, decentralisation and subsidiarity processes incorporating both technical and administrative competences as well as political responsibilities and autonomy.</p> <p>Proposed lines of action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a double process of municipal deconcentration (municipal local units) and political decentralisation (reinforcement of local Parishes competences and resources, including its reorganisation). Appointing Territorialised political cabinets (councillors) in the municipality Debate and approval of territorialised strategies
	The Best City Information and Knowledge	<p>The need to provide into the most varied spaces and sociological realities of the city with high degrees of information and knowledge - both specifically about Lisbon and generally about urban issues as a whole. Knowledge as a central factor of civic involvement, civic confidence and community enhancement.</p> <p>Proposed lines of action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Policy for urban knowledge gathering and divulgation New studies/statistical municipal institution Urban/Municipal educational and training policy
Governing Principles	A Qualified and Efficient Administration	<p>The need to assure a transition from a too bureaucratic and reactive administration towards a more efficient, flexible and motivated one, much closer to the ongoing evolution and needs of the city. An accountable public administration directly linked to the strategies and objectives set.</p> <p>Proposed lines of action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Strong bounding and administrative rationality towards global, sectorial and territorial strategies and its objectives Overall reorganisation of the municipal functional and departmental structures A managerial attitude on the public departments, managing by objectives ('aim and manage') and evaluating by results Strategy for qualification and refreshment of municipal HR skills Recruitment processes base on merit - namely for directive positions Implementation of more permanent accountability and evaluation processes Restructuring of the financial and budgetary foundations of the municipality - namely through the management by objectives and through a closer link to the city's social and economic development
	A Dynamic and Inclusive Governance	<p>The development of networks of subsidiarity between the diverse actors of the city implies the need to structure interdependencies, to sustain networks of dialogue and interaction and to consolidate networks of trust in most urban debates, policies and programmes - assuming social viability as necessary as technical and resources viability.</p> <p>Proposed lines of action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Openly debated and consensualised urban strategies, sectorial pacts and neighborhood objectives;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Creating urban councils: a global city council, sectorial councils and neighborhood (or district) councils. c) Embedding rationalized participatory processes - like the participatory budgets and the Local 21 Agenda processes d) Embedding e-citizenship and e-government procedures e) Appointing a political cabinet (municipal councilor) for Participation, Governance and Associativism.
	An Effective Participation and Civic Involvement	<p>The need to curtail the distance (in space and in time) on the relationships between every citizen and the overall structure of city's government and administration.</p> <p>Proposed lines of action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assume a participative urbanism - namely through participatory and Local 21 Agenda processes b) Opening at least one Civic Centre (including permanent municipal front-offices) in every urban district c) Embedding e-citizenship and e-government procedures d) Appointing a political cabinet (municipal councilor) for Participation, Governance and Associativism.

F. Conclusions

Supported by a strong political commitment and having been developed through a considerably open and debated process, the chart proposal was delivered to the municipality after four months of work, just before summer 2009. However, more than one year after the chart formal delivery - a moment that would open public discussion - the enforcement of its positioning and contents has not still been followed by any specific political process or approval, thus slowly relegating the proposal to an unknown future. If by one side it seems that some of the more specific proposals there included have inspired recent municipal policies in areas like public housing or mobility, by other side this stalemate also seems to show that the municipal executive has not been truly capable - or maybe truly interested? - in effectively open a wide public discussion upon it and, furthermore, to effectively position large-scope strategic instruments for the future political panorama of the city.

These are therefore doubts that enthrall with the dilemmas presently facing the global evolution of European city politics and the reconfiguration of urban power systems. In fact, even the relatively shaded diagnosis above stated around the state-of-the-art on three vertices of the Lisbon govern system might not exclusively report on the socio-cultural and political-institutional structures of the Portuguese capital.

This present stalemate in Lisbon strategic policies provides interesting conclusions. What shows to be the case is that the expectations, tensions and crossed strategies framing urban stakeholders on the current govern system of Lisbon are still largely structured by logics and rhythms based on classic paradigms of administrative representation and power. Notwithstanding it is evident that beyond all

the different actors expectations and attitudes there exists a continuous pace of urban evolution and change. The perceptions and consequent logics of action displayed by several of Lisbon main actors - in particular those connected with institutional structures of government and administration - still do not reflect a clear consciousness of the changes occurring in the urban socio-cultural paradigms. Occupied in complex and bureaucratic legal and administrative procedures as well as in the maintenance of their reciprocity networks, they still search to understand the city and its complexities through cognitively safer functional perspectives. As Michel Crozier wrote some years ago in his rather interesting essay titled *'The crisis of intelligence'*: "it is not society anymore that is blocked, as I wrote in 1970, it is its political-institutional system, or better said, the system of its elites and, within them, that intelligence itself is to be found blocked. It is therefore in the mutation of intelligence that it is necessary to invest" (1995, p.12).

This process also as been showing that the efforts to reduce the gaps between the urban systems and the urban political systems bring in itself obvious and relevant threats to the classical and long existing political and administrative spaces in the city. Even considering the strong initial political commitment to this specific process, and mostly the different and surely paradigmatic transformation dynamics occurring in an urban society like the Lisboa (as we have previously seen), the confrontation between the vast array of classical institutional, bureaucratic and economic enforcements and the political proposals for new types of policy visions and foundations, is still quite evident.

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