

THE LONG WAY TO ITHACA. THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE URBAN POLITICAL SPACES IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

João Seixas

University of Lisbon, Institute of Social Sciences

Lisbon Municipality

E-mail: jcseixas@ics.ulisboa.pt

Fecha de recepción: 01/05/2014

Fecha de aceptación: 30/07/2014

Summary

This text frames a reflection upon the recent evolution on the sociopolitical and governance landscapes in urban Southern Europe. A global analysis of urban/metropolitan geographical and political tendencies is here made, from the most recent economic crisis and austerity politics years, towards expected future perspectives. The example of Lisbon metropolitan Area is exposed as a concrete case to show the pressures and the induced (and deduced) changes presently at stake. The analysis is set out on three different parts: a general reflection upon urban paradigm shifts and it's still quite relevant unbalances and misunderstandings; an overall southern European geographical and political urban analytical perspective; and a proposed systematization of consequent political as well as research development needs. The text concludes with a systematized proposal of main diagnosis vectors, as well of possible main drivers and focuses for present and future southern European urban sociopolitical analysis.

Key words: crisis; austerity politics; sociopolitical landscapes; urban governance; southern Europe; Lisbon metropolitan area

EL LARGO CAMINO A ITACA. LA RECONFIGURACIÓN DE LA ESPACIOS URBANOS POLÍTICOS EN EL SUR DE EUROPA

Resumen

Este texto presenta una reflexión sobre la evolución reciente de los paisajes sociopolíticos y de gobernanza en las zonas urbanas del sur de Europa. Se hace un análisis global de las tendencias geográficas y políticas urbano-metropolitanas partiendo de los años más recientes de crisis económica marcados por políticas de austeridad y se plantean escenarios futuros previsibles. Se expone el ejemplo del área metropolitana como caso de estudio para mostrar las presiones y los cambios inducidos (y deducidos) actualmente en marcha. El análisis cuenta con tres partes diferentes: una reflexión general sobre los cambios habidos en los paradigmas urbanos, en los que todavía se observan desequilibrios y malentendidos muy relevantes; una perspectiva geográfica de análisis de las políticas urbanas en el sur de Europa; y una propuesta de sistematización de las consecuencias políticas. El texto concluye con una propuesta de diagnóstico, así como de posibles guías para el presente y futuro análisis sociopolítico y urbano en el sur de Europa.

Palabras clave: crisis; austerity politics; paisajes sociopolíticos; gobernanza urbana; Europa del Sur; área metropolitana de Lisboa

LA LONGUE ROUTE À ITHAQUE. LA RECONFIGURATION DES ESPACES URBAINS POLITIQUES EN EUROPE DU SUD

Résumé

Ce texte encadre une réflexion sur l'évolution récente des paysages socio-politiques et de la gouvernance dans les zones urbaines de l'Europe méridionale. On fait une analyse complète des tendances géographiques et politiques des aires urbaines et métropolitaines pendant ces dernières années caractérisées par la crise économique et les politiques d'austérité, et on présentent des scénarios prévisibles futurs. L'exemple de la région de Lisbonne métropolitaine est exposé comme un cas pour montrer les pressions et les changements induits (et déduits) actuellement en jeu. L'analyse se compose de trois parties: une réflexion générale sur les changements des paradigmes urbaines, qui sont encore le théâtre des déséquilibres et des malentendus très importantes; une perspective géographique general et d'analyse des politiques urbaines en Europe du Sud; et une proposition de systématisation des conséquences politiques et de la nécessité de poursuivre les recherches. Le texte conclut avec une proposition systématique des principaux vecteurs de diagnostic et des possibles lignes directrices pour l'avenir, ainsi que des possibles guides et centres d'intérêt pour l'analyse sociopolitique urbaine présente et future de l'Europe méridionale.

Mots clés: crise; politiques d'austérité; paysages sociopolitiques; gouvernance urbaine; Europe du Sud; région métropolitaine de Lisbonne

1. INTRODUCTION

This text frames a reflection upon the recent evolution on the sociopolitical and governance landscapes in urban Southern Europe. This evolution is being made upon a complex context of economic, environmental and political crashes; beneath the consequent crisis and the following imposed austerity policies; but as well in the midst of relevant but still considerably unclear structural changing processes happening on the social, political and civic urban dynamics.

A global analysis of urban/metropolitan geographical and political tendencies is here made, from the most recent economic crisis and austerity politics years, towards expected future perspectives. The example of Lisbon metropolitan Area is exposed as a concrete case to show the pressures and the induced (and deduced) changes presently at stake. The analysis is set out on three different parts: a general reflection upon urban paradigm shifts and it's still quite relevant unbalances and misunderstandings; an overall southern European geographical and political urban analytical perspective; and a proposed systematization of consequent political as well as research development needs.

The analysis of the strong and mostly long-term impacts of the European crisis in its urban realms can be understood from the urbanization economies differentiated crashes (from financial to ecological) to the consequences of the severe austerity politics restructuring; in the midst of the development of different forms of demographic pressures as well as of new sort of urban local and regional systemic economies.

The reflection will follow through main sociopolitical and governance dynamics on course on the southern European urban/metropolitan political spaces. A critical analysis is made around the ongoing processes of political, fiscal and administrative reforms – whether local responses or under the effect of national and other external pressures; around the trends on social and cultural capital changes; and around the changes occurring on the

corresponding urban regimes and its political communities of power. The case of Lisbon is somewhat detailed in its most relevant issues here under scope.

The text concludes with a systematized proposal of main diagnosis vectors, as well of possible main drivers and focuses for present and future southern European urban sociopolitical analysis; including research focusing directions; in order to foster more comprehensive interpretation as well as stronger critical debates and better political orientation. Recognizing that, at least for what concerns the growingly relevant urban – or should we say, territorial – dimensions on the Mediterranean realms, there is the need to be based on much more structural or long-term visions. Therefore, the presently faced ‘Trojan war’ is, none withstanding its consequential stakeholders and pressures, still to endure. And after words, the road to Ithaca will surely need not only a decisive course; but also the recognition that it will take a long time.

2. THE (STILL MISUNDERSTOOD) SOUTHERN URBAN POSITIONING

2.1. An evolutionary but disruptive state of the art

Cities have been positioning themselves in most recent decades in a historical moment of crossroads – after a long industrial and nation-state large dominion time, on a considerable secondary role or even as mere spatial projections of politics and political economy. This has been a paradigmatic projection already previewed some decades ago by brilliant thinkers such as Henry Lefévre, David Harvey, Edward Soja, Manuel Castells. However, and probably as in most if not in all historical moments of paradigmatic changes, the inevitable clashes between the agents of evolution, the resistances of the status-quo structures, and the strategies of several non-integrated marginal conjuncture beneficiaries; is misleading much of the possible ways of development. None withstanding the inevitable pace of changes under pace, these clashes and misleads are contributing to a paradoxical rise, in several landscapes, of restrains in fundamental domains as in territorial and social equity, quality of life, environmental sustainability, even freedom. Exactly the opposite of what development tend to be understood under most of the new progress perspectives.

In European urban areas in particular, there can be noted the confluence of two major rhythms. By one side the steady pace of the ‘city’ or the ‘urban’ as relevant imagetic positioning, including in politics, seems to have been assimilated by most agents, if not even turned into a strange cultural vertigo. At the same time, relevant stalemates or even backwardness’s realities have been installed in the inner hearth of Mediterranean urban condition. Due to inner meridional reasons (that we will attend later on, on this text); but also due to the widen maintenance of mainstream ideas of progress, as well as due to the strict European politics being followed since the crisis upheaval.

These are being painful times for southern European urban areas. Due to the conjunction of the financial crisis perceivably started in 2008, with the following European political responses. The developed reaction was to put in place austerity measures that deeply disrupted social, economic and territorial tissues as well as the fundamentals of an inclusive and sustainable driven society. But the crisis we have been is not just a financial crisis; it has multidimensional reasons, and above all, it must be perceived as a crude

evidence of the crash of the old economic order, namely its support on large amounts of non-secured credit – financial, but also social, territorial and environmental over-credit. As expressed by the Green New Deal group (2011, p.2), “the global economy is facing a ‘triple crunch’. It is a combination of a credit-fuelled financial crisis, accelerating climate change and soaring energy prices underpinned by an encroaching peak in oil production. These three overlapping events threaten to develop into a perfect storm, the like of which has not been seen since the Great Depression”.

As the European Commission itself recognizes, “the European model of sustainable urban development is under threat” (2011, p.14). A threat that is developing not only from the crisis upheaval and the crash of urbanisation models based on several types of credit; but now with mainstream political and financial responses to the crisis itself. This bringing new pressures on urban socioeconomic and environmental ecosystems; particularly on the growing spatial polarisation and disparities both on income as well as on universal access to urban rights; and to higher difficulties to effectively develop new models of social and economic progress in parallel with an ecological regeneration.

But if it is on the European urban fabric that we can most crudely see what is happening; it is on the very same urban fabric that we will be able to materialize new and alternative models for progress. And if this is particularly true in wider Europe, the history and positioning of its Mediterranean urban territories makes their role highly important. In a time of crisis and austerity, cities will reinforce their crucial role as engines for transition. Their very nature makes them inevitable places for connectivity, citizenship, creativity and innovation - all fundamental characteristics to provide us with the necessary tools to face the times ahead.

2.2. Unbalanced sociopolitical and institutional changes

These pressures are conducing to the development of several novelties in the European governance stances. Multiple urban-driven strategies and new type sociopolitical configurations have been recently developed, many with quite interesting degrees of innovation and political openness and inclusion. However, other directions have been raising doubts upon democratic procedures and cost-benefit effective public deliverance. New types of urban projects and urban policies were tried; varied institutional structures were created; processes of administrative deconcentration and political decentralization, some against relevant odds, were slowly raised; different arrays of principles and tools for urban strategy, urban planning and even civic participation and civic rights, have been under proposal; more elaborated and influential forms of critical questioning upon urban socio-political regimes have been consolidating; political and instrumental improvements in social engagement and civic participation have been raised. At the same time, several practices of political, administrative and civic pro-activity can be noticed in many arenas. With the existence of a wide and otherwise consolidated normative and political-institutional structure of government, there can be seen several areas of policy and administrative innovation, strategic thinking, democratic improvement.

It is without surprise that these innovative processes are being mostly driven by local or regional stakeholders – the capacity of the respective agents, as well as of the civic

pressures, mostly driving urban political changes. However, other levels of government have also some influence. Namely the European Union and its regional development policies, pressing the demands for administrative decentralization enforcements as well as for stronger multi-local responsibilities and correspondent new legal and fiscal frameworks. This altogether implying new demands, new attitudes and new positioning for urban and metropolitan governments.

The unbalances are, however, still quite evident. Notwithstanding all these processes, the most recent years have also revealed relevant blockades. 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 accountability enforcements in face of several deviations of resources and even dubious 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’.

2.3. A southern European urban literature

Some authors have been working upon the differences and specificities of the South European urban territories and societies, namely in face of the most recent urban major challenges (see Seixas and Albet 2012, Nel.lo 2012, Leontidou 2010, Chorianopoulos 2002). Most of these authors consider that for a large part of the southern cities and metropolises, there have been distinctive paths on urban development and restructuring as well as distinct modes of governance at least throughout the major part of the industrial and even post-industrial eras. Among other geopolitical and cultural specificities, this caused not only quite specific urban production processes – strongly seen in major trends like in the peri-urbanisation of vast Mediterranean urban and coastal areas – but also in relevant curtails in city qualification and competitiveness (Chorianopoulos, id.).

The relevance and the differential focusing understood on these critical reinforce our view that the Mediterranean city *genius loci* still remains quite weakly analysed by the academia, if not misled. As Leontidou expressed more than 20 years ago, “*some of their everyday manifestations like informality, community life and socializing, song and football attendance, or mutual aid and illegal building, meet the indifference and scorn*” of most of the academic and socio-political theorizers, deeply sustained on Marx, Weber and other major northern/Protestant social thinkers, and “*are taken advantage of by the State*”, this leading to a situation where “*creativity and spontaneity thus oscillate on the verge between opposition and cooptation*” (1990: 2).

In spite of the contemporary worrying pressures –or even including them– the debate whether there are differences, pluralities and common features structuring urban governance in metropolises like Athens, Marseille, Palermo, Barcelona or Lisbon is a fascinating one. None withstanding its intrinsically differential geographical, cultural and sociopolitical territories, Southern Europe has undoubtedly major environmental and historical common features (Braudel, 1949); which in our view gave rise to contemporary urban governance common specificities that are most relevant to understand. Urban governance in particular – including its networking landscapes, stakeholding projections,

democratic and non-democratic structures and expressions – is a dimension that deeply reflects the specificities of every region. These specificities mostly lying on social and cultural pillars, often more impacting than several institutional and governmental structures and all its normative and regulatory edifications (Seixas, 2008). And this is a continuing – or strong path-dependent – process; even when decades of semi-formal urban governance have given rise to large processes of standardisation of urban projects and products, contributing to a relative banalization of urban Mediterranean culture itself (Harvey and Smith 2005, Muñoz 2008).

Nonetheless, and besides the prominent roles of the local and European scales in innovative proposals, Nation-State still preserves a major role in defining city's positioning and evolution through urban governance configurations and dynamics. This seems to be true even in considerably decentralised states as Spain, or in cities with a powerful economy like Paris or Milan. For most, "La République contre la Ville" as expressed by François Ascher (1998), still shows to be the major framework where the national, regional and urban governance networks structure themselves. And this is also the case even when, as still happens in vast urban Mediterranean territories, the dominant role of the national governmental institutions shows to prove a distant and severe role. Thus arresting relevant political and regulatory functions from the local level (Chorianopoulos, id.), and developing relevant distortions and gaps on the confrontation between urban needs and each city's governance capacities (Seixas, 2006).

This most complex contemporary political landscape installed in most southern European urban territories, can be very much understood, in our view, by the example of the most recent developments occurred in the metropolis of Lisbon; as the following section will detail.

3. PRESSURES ON URBAN REGIMES: THE LISBON EXAMPLE

3.1. The different phases of the crisis

The 2008 financial crisis marked the beginning of a profound change in Portuguese society and politics. Portugal was already suffering through the first decade of the century, several major shocks producing profound impacts on its major assets. For adopting a strong currency, the Euro; for suffering the impacts of global liberalisation and on Chinese exports on traditional Portuguese export markets; for receiving the oil and energy shocks since mid-2000. All this lead to the so-called "lost decade" (as it was commonly termed by media) for Portuguese economy; none withstanding several focuses of innovation and neo-modernity in the country. From 2000 to 2010, Portuguese GDP grew at an annual average rate of only around 1%; and the country seems to have been answering to these shocks through a progressive shift towards an economic model grounded on low wages – and growing inequality – rather than investments in sectors with high added value (Reis & Rodrigues, 2011).

The Troika's (the EU, the IMF and the European Central Bank) therapy consisted mainly on a supposedly neo-classical or neo-liberal agenda for the country. It included the obligation towards drastic cuts in public spending and public investment as well as in

restructuring and liberalisation policies. State administration, public services and public salaries were to be strongly reduced, as well as public spending in fundamental areas as health, education, poverty and inequality reduction and unemployment benefits. A mix of tax increase was imposed over work and pensions revenues as well on consumption. A vast privatization program was implemented in strategic economic sectors as transport, energy and communications, postal services, airports.

The main social and economic effects of the “adjustment program” carried out from the bailout in 2011 cannot be understated: since then, Portuguese GDP fell 5,9% and is expected to fall again in 2014. In 2013, private consumption has returned to the levels of 2000, public consumption has fallen to the figures of 2002. As far as (both public and private) investment rates are concerned, there is no memory (i.e. no statistical data) of such a collapse. In the first trimester of 2013, the net investment in Portuguese economy was 20% lower than in 1995 (Abreu et al., 2013). From 2011 to 2013 national available income dropped 4%, whereas work income suffered a significant reduction of 9,7%¹. These figures can be interpreted as a lowering-wage pressure typical of a recessive economy, but were certainly induced both by government continuous wage cuts in public sector since 2010, and the effects of massive unemployment.

In analyzing the impact of the European crisis and of the consequent austerity policies in Lisbon metropolitan area (LMA), key indicators were considered: unemployment, poverty, social deprivation, political instability, cuts, public debt of local authorities and the central state; this being sought to realize the extent of the crisis impacts as well as resilience and responsive factors².

Having analyzed the impact of economic crisis in LMA through a set of socioeconomic and urban indicators; some relevant conclusions could be made. Regional and local data evidences on the Lisbon Region suggests that rather than a simplistic ‘crisis approach’, a series of differentiated causes and consequences have followed the global financial breakdown. Two main temporal phases are to be highlighted. In the first phase the long-wave of the structural financial and ecological crisis affects strongly the economic areas mostly dependent on urbanisation and space production. In this phase, and as main urban and diversified hub for the country, the LMA seems to show some resilience; albeit increasing internal polarization. The second phase, marked by the implementation of national austerity policies, and then with renewed vigour with the 2011 bailout; configures the widening of the impacts over vaster areas of the social and urban and metropolitan fabric. The effects are now particularly strong over middle-classes, public employees, as well as increasing pressures on poverty-risk and elderly populations. The correlation between the austerity measures and the social impacts of the crisis are evident; and here more in-depth analyses will be necessary in order to accurately discern the main drivers and its effects.

¹ Source at Pordata (www.pordata.pt/).

² This paragraphs own much to two projects: “Lisbon in times of crisis”, developed on the ICS-University of Lisbon; and “Planning and governance in the Portuguese cities in times of European crisis”, developed on both the ICS-UL and the University of Aveiro. The correspondent data collection and analytical work was mostly made by Simone Tulumello, Susana Corvelo, Ana Drago and José Carlos Mota. The author wishes to reference as well as to strongly thank their work.

But a third phase now seems to be showing. The recent migration trends, boosting drainage of not only poor as well as younger and skilled people, prefigures a potential third crisis-effect to come, in the form of a skills and demographic depression. Nonetheless the statistical data available is not still complete for a clear picture of the complexity of localized trends.

Sociopolitical evolutions in the Lisbon metropolis

Between European and national austerity pressures; and multiple local and civic differentiated responses, Lisbon region clearly shows a complexity – when not a contradictory – political landscape; both within and beyond the crisis contexts. The section is set out around three themes: local government capacitation and national reforms; local government responses; new civic profiles of socio-political empowerment.

The first picture to expose considering Portugal's territorial politics is the secular limitation of sub-national territorial powers – or what it might be called a secular 'austerity localism', driven by central politics. The country remains one of the most politically centralized societies of Europe – being the second non-micro EU country (after Greece) with the lowest proportion of sub-national public expenditure decisional competence (i.e. regional and local public expenditure) – which accounts for around 15% of public expenditure, well below EU27 average (~25%) (Dexia & CCRE, 2012). Moreover, the regions themselves (accounting for around 4,5% of public expenditure) have no politically autonomous governments, rather deconcentrated bodies of the national government. This severely centralized pattern is the main reason for the structural capacitation weaknesses of Portuguese local administrations, coupled with chronic issues regarding fiscal and financial support of its own existence (Seixas and Albet, 2012). Furthermore, these historically weak resourceful capacities are now being even more curtailed by the fiscal stress induced not only by the economic crisis but also by the reduction of national transfers promoted since 2010, one of the austerity measures being the reduction towards territorial political capacitation. As a result, municipal budgets within the AML have seen, with few exceptions, steep reductions since 2009/2010 – in the order of 20-30% in three/four years.

In addition to local budget cuts, the national government has been carrying on fiscal and administrative reforms of local powers in the frame of austerity policies. Firstly, a strong suppression of municipal economic and real estate taxes is to be envisaged for 2018. Secondly, the Law 22/2012 about administrative reorganization of municipalities is targeted to expenditure cuts through the elimination of 27% of parishes. Seemingly on other hand, there was envisaged a decentralization process, through the transference of public competences from central Estate to municipalities, and from these to the parishes – but this movement not being accompanied by a minimum reinforcement of resources.

The administrative reorganization of the parishes throughout the whole country, decreed by the central government in 2013, is a clear demonstration of the very specific austerity strategies followed on the territorial political spaces, developed by very closed central political communities and lacking a minimum of democratic and governance capacity. Municipal assemblies were asked to elaborate in 90 days a proposal for internal reorganization in respect of the parameters established by the law. The national

association of parishes has contested the reform, advocating that the reorganization should have been grounded on voluntary aggregations rather than semi-automatic demographic parameters (ANAFRE, 2012). Several civic protests arose throughout the country. Of the 18 municipalities in LMA, 14 deliberated against the administrative reorganization and two (Sesimbra and Sintra) did not submit any proposal within the given terms. As a result, the working group established at the national parliament imposed administrative restructuring to 14 municipalities (in two cases the former parishes have been kept). The sole municipalities of Lisbon (the main centre of the metropolitan region) and Amadora elaborated alternative proposals. The municipality of Lisbon was working since 2009 on an administrative reform and could thus previously forestall the national law – with its pressing temporal terms. The Lisbon-city reform has been grounded on a study developed by a multi-disciplinary scientific team (Mateus, Seixas and Vitorino, 2010) and the reduction of parishes (from 53 to 24) is being implemented as one of the elements for the all-round enhancement of governance quality, where crucial is the transference to the parishes of several competences: management and maintenance of public spaces; permissions and licences; project and management of proximity services; promotion of cultural and social programmes. This municipal reform has undergone a consultative process which received more than 7.000 contributions. Overall, paralleling its own objectives of urban politico-administrative qualification, the Lisbon-city administrative reform as also placed itself as a ‘protestant reform’, against the centralised and austerity-driven national territorial reforms.

The Law 75/2013 was a further centralised step towards attentive reforms of local power, with four aims: decentralization, strengthening of municipal power, backing of voluntary associations of municipalities, promotion of territorial cohesion and competitiveness. Metropolitan boards – Lisbon and Porto, instituted in 2003 – and municipal associations (instituted in 2008) are nonetheless kept as coordination bodies without actual competences and elected boards. This law envisages the delegation of competences from the national towards the local and inter-municipal level; however the only transferees actually prescribed are those from municipalities towards parishes. The creation of regional bodies with actual competences remains outside the horizon, the discourses about “decentralization” not resulting at all in any evident measures.

Beyond the reactions to politico-administrative reforms, the implementation of participatory instruments can also give a good exemplification of the complex patterns of institutional local responses towards contemporary urban governance challenges in LMA. Most common instruments are Agendas 21 (implemented in 5 municipalities of the metropolis) and participatory budgeting (see below), plus a number of other consultative tools such as public debates (Almada, Setúbal, Barreiro), digital tools for citizen/government communication (Lisbon, Cascais). Deliberative participatory tools are nowadays active in 5 municipalities – Amadora, Cascais, Lisbon, Oeiras, Vila Franca de Xira. Participatory budgeting is the most diffused tool (9 municipalities out of 18 have been implementing it) although with some lack of consistency in its application. Some municipalities had to cut budgets in recent years (Lisbon and Cascais); other have not been constant through the years (Odivelas, Oeiras, Sesimbra); in further cases, the so-called “participatory budgeting” have been consultative tools only (Alcochete, Palmela). In

sum, the AML mirrors the recent Portuguese history of participatory budgeting, characterised by a lot of experimentation with some inherent “instability” (Alves & Allegretti, 2012).

This analysis of Lisbon sociopolitical recent tendencies concludes by focusing on changes in the profiles of civic participation and citizenship practices. As far as political-electoral patterns are concerned, the last three rounds of municipal polls (2005, 2009 and 2013) show a consistent trend of growing disaffection to politics, especially in 2013 where the number of voters dropped by more than 7% in comparison to 2009 elections. Contextually, blank and spoilt votes have showed a boom in 2013, reaching 8% of total. Moreover, a significant growth of independent parties is to be highlighted, a phenomenon almost non-existent until 2009. Overall, the traditional parties lose significant portions of their constituencies in the reference period: the centre-right coalition experienced an out-and-out break-down in 2013 – in correlation with the national discontent for austerity policies implemented by national government – but the votes did not move towards other classical political forces. The only exception was the centre-left Partido Socialista in Lisbon-city, driven by the boom of consensus for the strategies of mayor António Costa and his team – whose party received the absolute majority in the municipal board and in the municipal assembly; as well as in the boards of 17 out of 24 parishes. Meanwhile, the May 2014 polls for European Parliament have confirmed the trends for reduced participation and fragmentation of constituencies in LMA.

The growing disaffection to politics seems to be mirrored by an emergence of new profiles of civic participation and protest. In 2006, the landscape of civic dynamics in Lisbon – formal grass-root organization and further forms of mobilization and intervention – was considerably small, although in expansion (Seixas, 2008). An enquiry conducted in 2009 (main results in Mateus, Seixas and Vitorino, 2010) highlights the emergence of new socio-political cultures, mainly amongst most educated and younger classes but widening in denser urban areas. In times of crisis and austerity politics, some signs of a renewed civic participation are evident on two grounds. On one hand, protests against austerity measures promoted since 2011 by non-party organizations – such as *Que se Lixe a Troika!*³ –, although not comparable with the protest energies of similar Spanish and Greek movements, have been the biggest mass protests in history of democratic Portugal. On other hand, a number of alternative urban movements were born. To mention just a couple as exemplary of the growing civic dynamism: *Habita*⁴ is the first network to offer advice and support to dwellers against evictions-without-rehousing on shanty towns and against rent's rising in council housing; *Plataforma Gueto*⁵ promotes immigration inclusion and analysis of laws and policies, provides assistance to families victims of police violence and agorafobia trends in several peripheral areas of Lisbon.

Lisbon-city anti-crisis local policies

Quite different local governments – including in its partisan and ideological diverse components – in LMA have been trying to develop reinforced policies and new

³ See <http://queselixeatroika15setembro.blogspot.pt/>.

⁴ See <http://www.habita.info/>.

⁵ See <http://plataformagueto.wordpress.com/>.

governance and institutional practices in order to respond to main crisis urban problematic. Amongst those, the municipality of Lisbon-city has been a political space where a large scale and strategic response has been developed since long. This has been happening thanks to a considerably stable political community since 2007, guaranteed by a centre-left government. The efforts towards sustained reform and political empowerment have been shaped around keywords such as “innovation” and “participation”. In addition to the aforementioned administrative reform and participatory tools, the analysis of four policy areas is able to show the approaches of local power.

Firstly, participatory budgeting and Agenda 21 are a piece of a wider attention to grass-root planning and social innovation, complemented by some rent support schemes and BIP/ZIP programme about priority intervention neighborhoods⁶. The BIP/ZIP promotes micro-actions for urban regeneration through neighborhood participative budgets funded with yearly competitive processes: although an innovative scheme is designed, the still scarce allocated funds (1 M€ a year, around 0,25% of municipal budget) cannot fully impact on the regeneration of deprived areas.

Secondly, several strategies to foster economic activity and employment were also developed. Urban entrepreneurship support schemes have been launched, namely for business incubators, incentives to new businesses, support of retail initiatives. It is, in this specific area, worth mentioning how important have been the EU cohesion policies within this frame, and particularly the urban regeneration programmes funded through the Portuguese 2007-2013 framework for Structural Funds. To cite a known sectorial example, the strategy for designing urban policies to attract international flows of tourism, although not new and growing in its contradictions between the priorities towards local life, has been also at the core of the efforts of the municipal government.

Thirdly, a new emphasis on building rehabilitation and urban regeneration has been envisaged as a cornerstone planning policy around investor-friendly actions, fiscal and edification incentives. As a result of thirty years of demographic contraction, a significant volume of vacant dwellings (around 50 thousands) is found in Lisbon-city, most particularly in its historical centre. Political discourses have since the 1990's emphasized the need for a public policy that would encourage building's rehabilitation, but for a long time that was not visible at all. With the crisis major and initial impact in the construction sector, and namely in the sprawl continuity, rehabilitation of derelict buildings has become a more tangible activity, both for public and private strategies. Just recently central Government has introduced new regulation to lower technical requirements and to reduce rehabilitation costs in over 30%. In addition to stimulus to requalification of private dwellings, Lisbon municipality has elaborated a strategic plan for the requalification and management of council housing – around 30.000 flats – with the final aim to alienate the stock in few decades (CML, 2011). However, and given the credit crunch which has been affecting middle-class families and their housing strategies, political critiques have addressed the risk that real estate investors only will be able to respond to the challenge, and that gentrification trends are to be expected in the next future in Lisbon centre – also as a consequence of tourism friendly policies.

⁶ See <http://bipzip.cm-lisboa.pt/>.

The territorial clashes of quite different perspectives

The drivers of sociopolitical differential changes here debated for the case of Lisbon show a complex framework made of responsive, contradictory and thus clashing trends. Generally speaking, two main trends show to be restructuring urban politics in the Portuguese capital city. By one side the central state policies, most particularly when sustained by the 2011 Troika bailout and the support of EU main cupules. And by other side; and non withstanding some clear contradictions between its inner strengths and fragilities; the local – or maybe better said, the urban – political actions and reactions. These latter founding some support, from its part on some structures of the EU itself (i.e. the principles and main tendencies of the cohesion policies, now for 2020), as well as on fast growing components of the society and its stakeholders (like universities, sociocultural institutions, and even corporate associations). As far as institutional processes are concerned, a clash between the harsh top-down austerity curtails; and the bottom-up urban evolution dynamics; is clearly ongoing and developing, through a complex frame of multi-scalar intersections. The historical and now renewed pressures for austerity localism in Portugal are colliding with local empowerment and resistances, shifting urban regimes towards a still unknown future. Furthermore, a steady evolution of grass-root activism and civic participation adds a most relevant and surely growing pressure both on top-down and bottom-up institutional drivers.

4. POLITICAL SPACES FOR A NEW URBANITY IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

In the battlefield: between pressures and opportunities

The analysis here developed, including Lisbon's most recent geographical and political developments, permits in our view the inference of relevant findings and correspondent critical analysis. The urban scenarios are primordial places where social, economic and cultural dynamics are driving towards deep restructuring of sociopolitical patterns. The analysis of both geographical and sociopolitical trends in Lisbon during the course of the European crisis and its mainstream political austerity measures, as well of its more localized – or should we say glocalized – urban responses; show not only that there are different phases and crisis effects and drivers; but also that a clear geopolitical knowledge and planning conflict seems to be widening.

The evolution of main indicators in Lisbon Region shows that there have been developing three considerably different crisis-impact phases. The first phase impacted strongly on the urbanisation driven economies and its most dependent sectors and territories; the second phase is impacting widen throughout most of the urban territories of the metropolis – namely on the 'social transfers' poorer classes but as well as on middle-classes and public employment; the third phase is approaching now and derived from the skills and demographic depression, due precisely to the lack of systemic economic and labor opportunities. On one hand, the relevance of national pressures – and hence of European politics, at least in the Portuguese case – is quite evident in the dual evolution of the crisis around early economic impacts of the economic burst, as well as on the socio-economic impacts of the austerity policies. And on the other hand, a

confrontation is clearly growing between these austerity pressures and the developing sociopolitical local dynamics; which at the same time still lie in unstable capacitation grounds; none withstanding being reinforced by a steady civic capacitation.

As stated in previous analyses, for many southern European urban areas there has been a distinctive path of development and restructuring, as well as distinctive modes of governance, at least throughout a major part of the XX century. Causing not only specific urban production processes (strongly understood in major trends like the peri-urbanisation of vast Mediterranean urban and coastal areas), but also curtailing city qualification and competitiveness itself. Today, the hyper-positioning of urban geographies and human daily realities is bringing a complete set of dilemmas and challenges to Southern European cities (Seixas and Albet, 2012). This is an already complex panorama that the present crisis pressures seem to be widening even more; as the Lisbon metropolitan evolution since 2008 to present is showing.

The specific case of the politico-administrative reform in Lisbon-city clearly reveals the importance of a smart political negotiation and the ability to intervene in territorial delimitation with a concern of allocating competences – even in times of severe curtails. But on the other side of the mirror, the national administrative reforms for the parishes, developed under austerity perspectives, crudely shows the complete lack of any sort of prominent and integrated spatial developmental visions.

This is an evolution that is revealing that in times of crisis and particularly in lack of a concrete national territorially-driven public policy as well as of overall financial resources, there are growing both spatial as well as civic capacitation, mostly by exploring and mobilizing social and knowledge resources and to pressure on alternative and effective local public policies, which requires appropriate reflection on how to inspire new urban policies facing societal challenges.

As far as forecasting which of these pressures will be the deepest and the strongest, that would be for the moment a somewhat unattainable exercise, for several areas are still unclear. We posit, therefore, that to put the right questions is an urgent need. Particularly: are local governments and communities developing effective alternative developmental narratives? If so, will these narratives be able to go beyond secular path-dependencies and be able to construct solid and embedding urban public policies structures? Or will growing socio-spatial fractalization continue, fostering socio-political splintering? If the building of new patterns of urban equity and quality within politico-economic global curtails is to be followed (or justified) by the crisis; which might be the possible political spaces to be built?

Although these questions were set out from an analysis of Lisbon metropolis, several hints from this volume suggest for a considerable generalisation to the field of the European city in times of crisis. The efforts towards such a generalisation might be a privileged field of research and interpretation; with the aim of understanding fundamental contemporary reconfigurations – and not only on the urban realms. If we agree that the city is above all a socio-political construction, a dynamical space in which the social and political dimensions act and mutually retro-feed; there will be the need to further understand how the contemporary crisis and its main drivers are fostering new paradigms: of citizenship, between participation and resistance; of knowledge, around a

renovate need in linking theory and practice; of politics, in the restructuring of the political spaces and the capacity to (re)generate sound equitable and ecological policies.

The long way to Ithaca:

A difficult but inevitable reinvention of urban politics in the south of Europe

Reinventing urban politics today means to know how to better understand and construct collective action instruments, commitments and corresponding institutional management processes, able to better expand the human, cultural and relational wealth, thus improving social and civic capitals and generating clearer responsibilities upon collective problems (Subirats 2001). The perspective of cities as local societies (Bagnasco and Le Galés, 2000) mostly configured by informal and organic governance networks turns out to be highly relevant to the cities of the Mediterranean, being through this perspective that lie their most triggering paradoxes. It is in the balancing between the strength of its socio-cultural complexities; the deep fragmentalities inherent to its spatial and political projections, now severely expanding throughout the different drivers and phases of the crisis; and the more recent pressures towards different public policy rationalities and civic exigencies, that is posed the potential to surpass some of its deeper outwards pressures as well as inner inertias and particularisms; and to develop decisive responses towards the new urban complexities. But a complex balancing in itself; still needing to have more assertive supportive pillars, mostly in a deeper nexus connection between civic rights, knowledge production and public policy construction (on the different political spaces, including the European one).

The different paces addressed in metropolises like Barcelona or Seville, and several French and Italian cities (notwithstanding the critics posed to the relative variation of its outcomes) show nonetheless that urban governance networks can evolve through plural empowering manners, following pro-collective processes and widen public deliveries. Surely in these cities there exist specific characteristics that own very much to relevant grounds of considerable social capital directed towards urban and territorial self-development and autonomy (like the Catalan case), or to strong political enforcements and complex stakeholding governance networks (mostly the case of France). But these are precisely cases whose frameworks and dynamics should be better analysed and interpreted at the light of urban governance possible developments.

It would be obviously too naïf to draw strict and overall generalisations when it comes to a territory as large and diverse as is the one that spans from Lisbon to Istanbul, crossing quite varied political realities from local to national and inclusively European scales. Some major frameworks on the Lisbon city region – from its central State path-dependencies to specific configurations of its society's social and cultural capital – surely differ substantially from parallel frameworks for other meridional city regions like Barcelona, Marseille, or Tessaoniki. The consequences on each city of the tendencies above expressed show to be considerably dependent by the potentialities, limitations, inner forces and dilemmas underlying the socio-cultural, political and administrative structures existent in each city. This growing importance of the local and cultural spheres shows that it will very much depend on the urban socio-cultural capitals and stakeholding networks of each city and urban society, the resources of responsibility and capability for

the secure and qualification of its own future. But following precisely this reasoning that puts culture as the most structural influential element for urban governance, one must at the same time to rise careful attention to the common cultural legacies affecting all these urban societies and territories – the Mediterranean culture.

Whatever the differential cases may occur for more definitive or still doubtful ways in the present transformations occurring on Southern European urban contexts, both our bibliographical readings and the analyses here showed - including the specific but believably exemplary case of Lisbon most recent evolution in its several developments and clashes – some common features and respective interpretations might be possible, and stand out towards a surely crucial critical reflection.

- a) A new paradigm in urban societies and territories is clearly emerging; this being also the case for the large metropolises of the South of Europe. Taking the need of decisive sociopolitical restructuring, in order to better bridge individual and collective intelligence, qualifying public policies, political representation, civic manifestation. Accordingly, we have been assisting to the development of very different transforming agendas; although in quite different or even oppositional ways. By one side, with the heavy balancing of the financial and ecological crunches, there has been the installation of severely restrictive economic agendas, mostly followed by main EU stakeholders as well as by several nation-state governments, very much disrupting the state capabilities towards territorial cohesion and development. However, by other side there is also the pressure on urban sociopolitical catalization, this being made by several local and regional territorial powers, also being backed-up by concrete EU directives, namely by the cohesion policies.
- b) At first stance, in what concerns to territorial politics, the austerity pressures are being strongly backed by a culture of meridional secular limitation of local powers. The fact is that in many Mediterranean countries the continuing weaknesses of local administrations, coupled with chronic issues regarding fiscal and financial support of its existence, have by and large conditioned their autonomy and political competences in terms of drawing up their own policies and thus local empowerment. But presently, this is a panorama that is conducing to an enormous paradox: faced with the need to work towards more decisive negotiative and resourceful capacities, urban and local governments have become even more restricted in their capacities. This paradox is also contributing, in many territories and particularly in the ones with deeper gaps between cultural affirmation and administrative autonomy, to identitarian political vertigos.
- c) The perspective of the city – or better said, the urban fabric – as a socio-political construction, permits us to hypothesize contemporary sociopolitical dynamics. The considerable sprawl and socio-spatial fragmentation of the Mediterranean city – in a relevant manner caused by meridional socio-political stakeholding structures and by the corresponding effects on the urban production models – seems to be, on the absence of relevant political spaces, like for instance effective metropolitan identity

patterns, also fragmenting the traditional modes of urban governance and fomenting the loss of historical organic processes of local political stakeholding. The 'two systems' – geographical and political – are therefore retro-feeding themselves, as probably always, both in its strengths as well as in its derives. This meaning that fractal and differentiated structures have also been developing in territorial politics. The question is therefore made on whether this will be a tendency that might be growing even more the political lags on administration, strategy and policy formation or, on the contrary, might be contributing to configure new governance structures more based on territorial perspectives, and more directed to effective urban delivery issues? The development of new political spaces in the urban Mediterranean is therefore much driven by these fractal and even contradictory developments. The still relevant gaps – in scales like the metropolises, or the neighborhoods – are being driven through a semi-organic fulfillment, this also contributing to the reconfiguration of the urban regimes. Nonetheless, the development of new political spaces is not a question of simple fulfillment (with institutions, resources, etc.), like containers. To be successful, they must be a dynamic product of social, political and civic structures, tools and reinvidications.

- d) The EU, most namely through its cohesion policies and the new 2020 strategies, is a relevant actor that is contributing to the empowerment of the territorial and 'urban values' – including in the materialization of more territorialized and subsidiary lgovernance exigencies. For long, and influenced by European directives, territorial strategies in much centralist countries like Greece and Portugal have objectively recognised cities as a main asset for development and sustainability, thus raising the political and symbolical relevance of their own urban territories. This is a tendency already consolidating for some time in regionalised Spain and in the quite territorially politicized France – precisely the two countries where the differential paces are particularly noticeable in urban policy and territorial governance realms. This point also highlighting the relevance of the State and its perspectives of political and administrative reorientation and restructuring, as a main actor precisely to permit (or cutback) the reinforcement of democratic metropolitan and local governance.
- e) Finally, it is the case to recognise most relevant novelties occurring in the civic dimensions on the Southern European urban territories. As Leontidou recently expressed (2010), there has been a highly relevant cultural tendency on the southern European civil societies, pace by pace observing the maturation of the cosmopolitanism of its urban inhabitants. These are transformations that can be understood through the widest social landscapes, from quite different life-styles and quotidianities to the most varied urban social movements and to the growing civic exigencies vastly seen on the squares and streets of southern European cities. For Leontidou, this is an evolution that deconstructs the traditional North-South divide (and several other dualisms) and at the same time "*broadens geographical imaginations in Europe*" (id. p.1197). For one part, there is the need to recognize that this mutative social landscapes still tribute to heavy historical sociopolitical and

cultural meridional conditions; still showing considerable path-dependency behaviors. In fact, the conjunction between sociospatial pressures and exclusions, and the imagetic simplifications (or even the simulacre constructions, as Baudrillard (1991) explained); gives a panorama of a diffuse formation of 'tensions' and 'intensions'. But, by other part, it is also recognizable that these urban civic expressions are rapidly moving towards much more sophisticated forms and contents, their development being itself made through much more organic-driven processes. Overall, a civic and cultural dynamic panorama that is certainly framing a new political culture and that will certainly have deep and long-term influences on the governance and political spheres of the Mediterranean cities.

One final word, following the above reflections and paralleling the analyses still under development, in listing research areas that might be, in our opinion, most relevant to develop. Recognizing at the same time that the institutions and corporations responsible for urban knowledge production are also on the verge of change. Thus needing, in the midst of finding evidently further trans-disciplinary interpretative capacities, as well as much deeper public-policy deliverability approaches; the capacity to reinvent also themselves. This needing to be made between a landscape of some 'orphan disciplines' (like in urban planning and urbanism, for instance) and other scientific domains with a still too much 're-active culture' (in urban sociology and urban politics). Undoubtedly, several 'scientific spaces' are also in the need of a clear reconfiguration dynamic.

The research areas that in our view are fundamental to follow in face of the clashes and challenges being faced by European urban societies are: a) citizenship formation; its reasoning bases and the ways conducing to both participation and indignation; b) the political spaces; its capacitation dynamics and the ability (and disability) to change political paradigms; c) the present sociopolitical time-scales reconfiguration; its complexities, externalities, centrifugal trends; and d) the urban knowledge; and the ways on how to develop a much stronger combination between theory and practice; thus with more effective application as well as monitoring of public policies.

These show to be fundamental areas for, at least in the dimensions of urban governance, the southern European cities to better envision their way to Ithaca. Not a way back; not an old Ithaca; but a different one. Not only because almost ten years have already being reached since the crisis breakthrough; mostly because a new city, and in it, new urban life rights and principles, is in fact most necessary to defend. Due to its major complexities and inevitable long-term envisioning and efforts, the 'Trojan war' presently facing southern urban governance is most likely still to endure. Whether we, as Mediterranean people and sons of Ulysses, will be able to make better or worse our way to Ithaca; that will depend very much on our ability, for a certainly long travelling, to envision and effectively apply the fundamentals of urban life.

REFERENCES

Abreu, A.; Mendes, H.; Rodrigues, J.; Gusmão, J. G.; Serra, N.; Alves, P. D.; Mamede, R. P. (2013). *A Crise, a Troika e as Alternativas Urgentes*, Tinta da China, Lisboa.

- Alves, M. L.; Allegretti, G. (2012). "(In)stability, a Key Element to Understand Participatory Budgeting: Discussing Portuguese Cases". *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 8(2), article 3.
- ANAFRE (Associação Nacional de Freguesias) (2012). *Proposta de Lei n.º 44/XII/1.ª (GOV) – Aprova o regime jurídico da reorganização administrativa territorial autárquica. Parecer*. Available at www.anafre.pt/freguesias-associadas/reorganizacao-administrativa/parecer-anafre [Accessed June 2014].
- Ascher, François (1998) *La République contre la Ville. Essai sur l'avenir de la France urbaine* Editions du L'Aube, Paris
- Bagnasco, Arnaldo and Le Galés, Patrick (ed.) (2000) *Cities in Contemporary Europe* Cambridge University Press
- Baudrillard, Jean (1991) *Simulacros e simulação. Relógio d'Água*, Lisboa
- Braudel, Fernand (1949) *La Méditerranée à l'époque de Philippe II A. Colin*, Paris
- CML (2011) *Programa de Intervenção Estratégica no Património Habitacional Municipal e nos Devolutos Municipais. Relatório final*. CML, Lisboa. Available at <http://habitacao.cm-lisboa.pt/documentos/1311251995R4tIF4ck3Mk47RF8.pdf> [Accessed September 2014]
- Dexia & CCRE (Conseil de Communes et Régions d'Europe) (2012). *Subnational Public Finance in the European Union. Summer 2012*. Available at www.ccre.org/docs/Note_CCRE_Dexia_EN.pdf [Accessed June 2014].
- European Commission (2011) *Cities of Tomorrow: Challenges, Visions, Ways Forward*
- Green New Deal Group (2011) *A Green New Deal – Joined-up policies to solve the triple crunch of the credit crisis, climate change and high oil prices* International Energy Agency (2009). *World Energy Outlook 2009*. IEA, Paris.
- Mateus, A.; Seixas, J.; Vitorino, N. (eds.) (2010). *Qualidade de Vida e Governo da Cidade. Bases para um Novo Modelo de Governação da Cidade de Lisboa*. ISEG, Lisboa. Available at http://www.reformaadministrativa.am-lisboa.pt/fileadmin/MODELO_GOVERNACAO/Documentos/ISEG_governacao_abril2010.pdf (Accessed June 2014).
- Harvey, David and Smith, Neil (2005) *Capital Financiero, propiedad inmobiliaria y cultura* Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona
- Leontidou, L. (2010). "Urban Social Movements in 'Weak' Civil Societies: The Right to the City and Cosmopolitan Activism in Southern Europe". *Urban Studies*, 47(6), 1179-1203.
- Leontidou, Lila (1990) *The Mediterranean City in transition – Social change and urban development* Cambridge University Press
- Muñoz, Francesc (2008) *Urbanización. Paisajes comunes, lugares globales* Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona
- Nel.lo, Oriol (2012) *Ordenar el Territorio – La experiencia de Barcelona y Cataluña* Tirant Lo Blanch, Valencia
- Reis, J.; Rodrigues, J. (eds.) (2011). *Portugal e a Europa em Crise. Para Acabar com a Economia de Austeridade*. Actual, Lisboa: Actual.
- Seixas, J.; Albet, A., (eds.) (2012). *Urban Governance in Southern Europe*. Ashgate, Farnham.

- Seixas, J. (2008). Estruturas e Dinâmicas do Capital Sócio-cultural em Lisboa. In Cabral, M. V.; Silva, F. C.; Saraiva, T. (eds.). *Cidade & Cidadania - Governança Urbana e Participação Cidadã*. Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, Lisboa, 177-210.
- Seixas, João (2006) *A Reinvenção da Política na Cidade – Perspectivas para a Governança Urbana* in *Cidades, Comunidades e Territórios*, Nº12-13, Centro de Estudos Territoriais, ISCTE
- Subirats, Joan (coord.) (2001) *Elementos de Nueva Política* Centro de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona