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João Seixas [a]

[a] Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

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Catalysing governance in a paradoxical city: the Lisbon Strategic Charter and the uncertainties of political empowerment in the Portuguese capital city

João Seixas*

Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

This article describes and reflects upon the most recent sociopolitical strategic proposals set to the political and governmental dimensions of the city of Lisbon. In this framework, a specific process is detailed: directly requested by the president of the Municipality, in 2009 an independent commissariat developed a proposal for a strategic charter for 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 of 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 level of urban systems and in terms of 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 sociocultural capital in the city. The final part of the article reflects on the present stalemate in the charter process, thus deriving some overall reflections with reference to contemporary urban politics.

Keywords: Lisbon; govern; governance; urban politics

Introduction

At the beginning of 2009, following recent municipal elections and in parallel to some wide-ranging strategic initiatives, the president of the Lisbon municipality António Costa – a political leader with considerable national relevance[1] – asked for a group of independent experts and urban thinkers to develop a proposal for a future strategic charter for the city. As stated at the time, the charter was to function 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 – on this basis it was expected that, in the long term, there would be a considerable shift in city government, in urban policy and in the rationales of local public administration.

The initiation of this process emerged from several backgrounds. First, a growing recognition of the new type of challenges confronting the city, extending through several types of sectors and dimensions and demanding public and socio-economic responses which the city was not fully aware of or prepared to tackle. Among these challenges in

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*Email: jseixas@ics.ul.pt

Lisbon were an ongoing metropolitan sociospatial fragmentation (after three decades of demographic haemorrhaging unparalleled in European urban history); the slow pace of 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 thinking on the challenges posed to the city core basis of urban competitiveness and employment; the wide array of environmental and sustainability challenges; the need to put into practice new type of regulation, fiscal policies, urban instruments and administrative practices; and the need to rethink and restructure most of the institutional and administrative structures of local government. Irrespective of the Portuguese capital city continuing to be undoubtedly the main national social, cultural and economic driver, notwithstanding the new urban-driven sociocultural paths clearly evident in dimensions like the housing market and international tourism, and despite several 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 growing pressing challenges. The most recent economic crisis, keenly felt in Portugal, revealed above all a crisis deeply felt in the governmental and policy orientations, thus producing in Lisbon a stronger recognition towards a shift on its urban political dimensions.

Second, there was a parallel recognition that an important part of the inability to develop new sociopolitical and administrative responses was due to a conjunction of rigidity and disorientation in several political and institutional local and regional structures. Despite being the location of major sociopolitical and cultural stakeholders, Lisbon paradoxically faces the exhaustion of important parts of its classical political administration landscape and a recognized level of publicly driven ineffectiveness. For too long, many public policies and attitudes continued to lack long-term rationality and merit, being mainly driven by short-term political projects and corresponding closed policy and bureaucratic communities. As considered later in this text, this situation has been increasingly recognized – and debated – by a broad majority of the city's urban society and its main stakeholders.

Third, by a steady development of a new civic consciousness 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 by what has been developing in the Mediterranean urban world, reducing the traditional north–south cultural gaps of civic assertiveness and social capital (Leontidou 2010). As confirmed by researchers, and notwithstanding some relevant elements such as the considerable sociospatial fragmentation or the deterioration of traditional associative institutions like corporate and labour unions, the sociocultural capital of Lisbon society – analysed and understood through new forms and dynamics of civic awareness and involvement – is revealing an overall growing and acknowledged activity, namely when considering several urban-driven topics (Cabral *et al*. 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 this demanding background. Along with the powerful new leadership the newly elected municipal team included several new elements. These included some recognized non-party independents and several new types of proposals already contained in the winning political programme – namely the commitment towards the reform of the city government and several new strategic instruments and processes (such as the revision of the general urbanistic plan, a new housing strategy, a new culture strategy and a complete financial recovery plan). Following from these political perspectives, a proposal for a strategic charter for the city was then asked for and developed.

The slow repositioning of urban Europe

European cities have been (re)positioning themselves at a historical crossroads moment. The changes and restructurings occurring in their fluxes, densities and landscapes, as well as in their cognitive and cultural dimensions, are producing new types of urban pressures and challenges. These developments pose fundamental challenges to their classical sociopolitical urban contexts and are marked by parallel confrontations and pressures from main references – from higher time–space flexibility and modularity of the economic and sociocultural chains; to the crisis of the welfare state that is raising new types of social needs and exigencies.

These disruptive times, conjoining the heritage of what François Ascher called the Fordist–Keynesian–Corbuosian paradigm (1995) with the development of hyper-territories configuring meta-relationships and increasingly 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 sociopolitical structures and stakeholdings seem to be undergoing change by urban transformations. Today it is widely recognized by most of the political, sociocultural and academic communities that this historical transformative scenario demands a reinterpretation of sociopolitical structures and attitudes on urban politics, city administration, urban governance and local actor's stakeholding (Bagnasco and Le Galés 2000, Jouve 2003).

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 raised growing doubts over democratic procedures and the cost-benefit effectiveness of public delivery. Nonetheless, what seems certain is that a wide array of new types of urban projects, urban policies and urban interpretations are developing in European societies. A variety of new urban and local institutional structures are being created; different processes of administrative deconcentration and political decentralization, some against significant obstacles, are slowly developing; 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 detailed and influential forms of civic and academic questioning of urban sociopolitical regimes are widening.

Notwithstanding all these innovative processes, the last two decades have also revealed relevant uncertainties and blockages, particularly when considering the general configurations of the institutional arrays deployed in the city. Even for some of the seemingly most necessary political developments – like the creation of metropolitan political authorities corresponding to the need for stronger governance commitments at scales necessary for urban collective regulation and action; or the need for new public actions in the face of misuse of resources and democratic procedures – many urban societies have experienced that the pace of development in their 'real cities' is not being matched by corresponding developments in their 'sociopolitical cities'. On the one hand, we have witnessed the gradual evolution of post-fordist urban policies – and more recently the reconfiguration of neo-liberal policies themselves – which tended to prioritize neo-Schumpeterian perspectives and to promote the entrepreneurship and competitiveness enforcements (Jessop 1994, Harvey 2001, Brenner 2004). But, on the other hand, some severe criticisms have developed on 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 questions around the potential deployment of main urban values such as equity, social justice, even democracy.

European cities – and more particularly southern European cities – with their stake-holding structures and dynamics – have been under most recent sociopolitical pressure for several reasons (Seixas and Albet 2010):

(1) By new forms of dysphasia experienced by European urban citizens. This occurs in the tensions created between the new urban opportunities and experiences provided by different cultural and economic paradigms and the growing pressures encountered in primary elements such as employment, housing rents and social inclusion.

(2) By a continual weakness of local governments in developing more negotiation and innovation capacities, coupled with chronic issues regarding fiscal and financial support. Notwithstanding the regional and local decentralization 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 the enlargement of gaps in overall policy delivery, political competences and sociopolitical empowerment.

(3) The considerable sociospatial fragmentation of several European metropoles, 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 fractal, highly personalized or even populist, and weakly oriented to collective strategies or democratic accountability.

(4) By the influence of EU territorial policies and directives. These are becoming increasingly relevant, in both financial, symbolic and political terms. To a large extent due to European directives, for the first time national strategies of countries such as Greece and Portugal have recognized cities as a main asset for the development and sustainability, thus raising their political and symbolic importance.

(5) Finally and as already expressed with reference to Lisbon's contemporary society, by the fact that European urban cultures are experiencing the maturing of new forms of cosmopolitanism. These highly visible transformations range from the most differentiated lifestyles to the most varied urban social movements and forms of civic expression rapidly moving towards much more sophisticated forms and contents. A civic and cultural panorama framing a new political culture that will have a profound and long-term influence on the governance and political spheres of European cities.

These paradoxical European urban scenarios are not at all clear – they seem to have within them a wide array of possible future directions. On the one hand, a series of diverse opportunities for political development and socio-economic equity are expanding; but on the other, these most challenging impasses seem to correspond with what Henri Lefébvre was referring to more than 40 years ago as the long period of disorientation with the (then) expected outcome of the urban revolution (1970).

Applied theories on contemporary urban politics

Urban politics comprehends a vast space in which there coexist quite different dimensions ranging from national strongholds to local political communities, to civic neighbourhood responsibility, from metropolitan strategic planning to human resource administration and to real estate and swap finance. Here, amidst the evolution of the forms of dialogue and conflict and of collective strategy development, the understanding of tendencies whereas more or less shared or divided political spaces are built between different urban actors (between governmental and institutional organs themselves but also between these and the various actors of civil society), poses major challenges and raises important questions.

These perspectives emphasize the importance of taking into account 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 spaces and flows (Guerra 2002). The recognition of what the literature refers to as *social* and *cultural* capital, as systems *of action* in a city, questions the perspectives that urban policies are bound not only to specific urban designed or planned configurations but are as much a result and reflux of its sociocultural and economic structures, but also to the civic and daily energies that leverage quotidian urban life.

Nonetheless, the inclusion of these perspectives on city politics should be supported by the existence of a corresponding rationality in governance planning and management itself, thus implying the existence of dialogue, compromise 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.

Comparative analytical studies on trends in European cities (based on performance standard indicators), carried out over the last two decades[2] and unsurprisingly reveal a considerable correlation between urban qualification and political innovation and inclusion. The cities with the best performances and standards of quality of life and wealth have also been those that, in 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 sociopolitical 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 require more thorough examination, including the reinterpretation of the role of the State in the city (Brenner *et al*. 2003); the deepening of the scope and practices of urban governance (Bagnasco and Le Galés 2000); the evolution of city values and principles (Borja 2003); the consolidation and strengthening of strategic planning; a whole array of possibilities in institutional and administrative reforms; greater attention to qualitative dimensions such as the quality of life, public spaces, landscape and urban rhythms; spaces and processes for deeper citizen participation and community involvement; new perspectives on areas such as the communitarian and cognitive local economy, or reflexive and citizen-driven urbanism.

In this article, 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 sociopolitical 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 for the city political system – based on the classical assumption of the *polis* being understood as an umbilical connection between the *urbs* and the *civitas*.

Extending these conceptual premises, interpreting the city as a collective system and following theoretical proposals from Ferrão (2003) and Seixas (2008), a theoretical structure is proposed with three elements representing the body, fluxes and soul of the city-system and of the sociopolitical city-system – the latter, comprising the city of institutions and organizations (body), the city of governance (fluxes) and the city of collective sociocultural capital (soul). This structure will be the conceptual base for both the urban sociopolitical diagnosis and the consequent critical analysis of the Lisbon Strategic Charter processes and its contents (Figure 1).

(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, urban districts and so on.
(2) The life of the political city (or the fluxes of sociopolitical 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 conceptualization of urban politics attributes equal value to landscape, openness and democracy:

Figure 1.   The conceptual triangle for interpreting urban politics.
Source: Ferrão (2003) and Seixas (2008).

(1) The *Landscape* of urban politics frames the city of institutions with the city of governance. In this sense, a good political landscape requires adequate support in terms of resources and political instruments, directly or indirectly positioned within the city's government dynamics. This means that there should be 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.

(2) *Democracy* in urban politics 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.

(3) *Openness* in urban politics requires the interrelation of governance networks with the city's structures of social and cultural capital. A political framework, established by the presence of considerable amounts of openness, proximity and connectivity across its networked spaces, facilitates the inclusion of a wide range of urban actors, thus fostering a deeper sense and exercise of citizenship, consolidating the *public space of city politics*.

Lisbon: sociopolitical state-of-the-art

Lisbon is deeply structured by its geography which includes a long history of more than 2500 years of urban occupation and expansion, a geopolitical semi-peripheral positioning in relation to European history and its driving forces, the large Tagus River Estuary, a vast regional hinterland, and a city-region of around 3 million people and approximately 45% of the Portuguese GDP. Only around 500,000 inhabitants (i.e. less than 20% of the urban region) reside in its main municipal core, reflecting at least four decades of continuous territorial diffusion and a process that has passed from suburbanization to urbanization and now to trends of metropolitanization and hyper-regional socio-economic expansion. These trends include large-scale projects like the new airport, new logistic platforms and expected urban developments in locations 60–80 km away from the old historical origin. Like several European urban regions, it is undergoing a rapid move towards an economy based on services, culture and tourism. Changes are taking place despite difficulties in the modernization and reconfiguration of crucial policy and regulatory dimensions on the different tiers of the State. A situation understood by a range of data such as the fact that Portugal is the OECD country with the second smallest public investment capacity on the part of both local and regional tiers of government (Figure 2).[3]

In the institutional core of this urban meta-territory stands the Municipality of Lisbon. Representing the autarchic power of the capital city of Portugal, historically closely mirroring the Portuguese (and European) periods of expansion and decadence, it exists as a relevant institution since Roman times and has a history of relative political importance. This considerable stakeholding has however been under pressure since absolutist times and most drastically during the dictatorial regime of Salazar in the twentieth century.[4] Only after the 1974 revolution and the establishment of the democratic Third Republic did the local administration in Portugal regain its political significance, although even today it lacks the full range of competences typical of most European local and regional structures (Crespo and Cabral 2010).

As a result of its long historical development, Lisbon's sociopolitical and institutional panorama is intrinsically quite complex. The Lisbon autarchic government structures are mainly based on a large-scale municipal institution, functionally structured through some
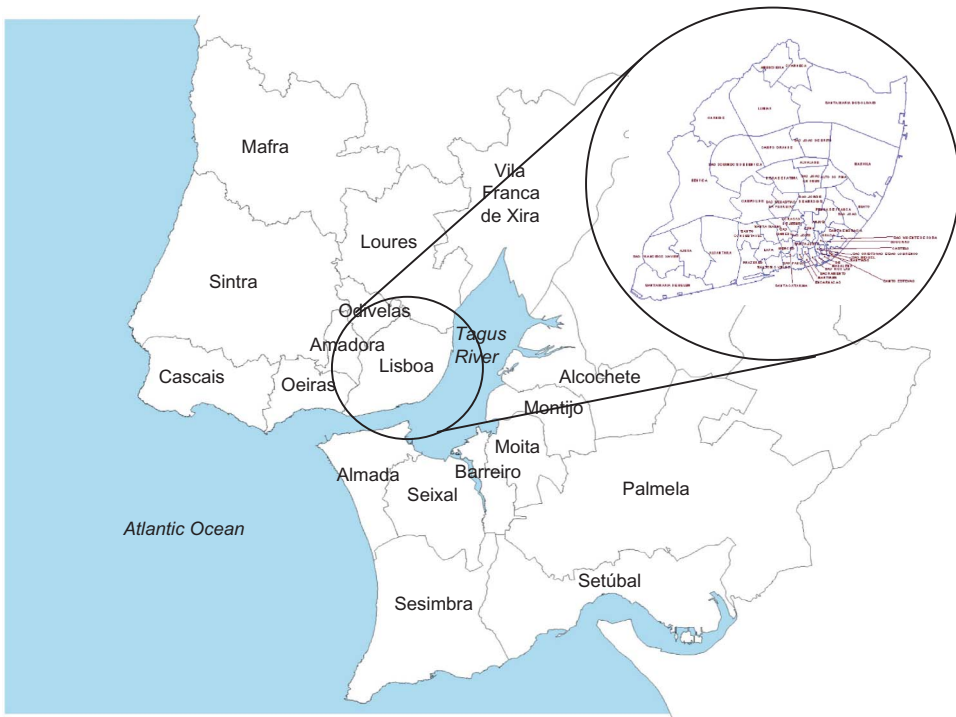
Figure 2.   The metropolitan and municipal core territory of Lisbon – Metropolitan municipalities and Lisbon Parish territories.

300 departments and divisions and employing approximately 11,800 members of staff. Its political-executive management is carried out by minority or absolute majorities derived from a total of 17 councillors. There also stands the Lisbon Municipal Assembly, which has general powers of legislation, oversight and supervision. Both political organs hold considerable political autonomy reflected in separate electoral ballots. At more local levels in the Lisbon municipal territory, there are 53 Parish Councils (each with their respective assemblies and executives) with highly unequal territorial distributions and social structures. The reduced scope of parish council actions and the daily difficulties faced has gained widespread recognition by Lisbon citizenship, turning this political and administrative borough landscape into one of the main paradigmatic examples of the stalemate reached in the governance of the city.

Based on the systemic conceptual structure set out above, focusing on the three vertices of the theoretical triangle – cosmopolitanism, places, and networks of urban politics – and on multiple analyses carried out on the city and its society over the last decade (including the debates on the Lisbon Strategic Charter[5]), we have developed a sociopolitical critical analysis. Tables 1–3 provide a systematized summary of the main conclusions arising from these researches and its corresponding developments.[6]

Cosmopolitanism: sociocultural capital in the Lisbon urban politics

Despite an entrenched strength within its urban culture and identity, as well as in most of its neighbourhood social structures, the sociocultural capital of Lisbon's urban society retains

Table 1.　Summary of Lisbon political diagnosis: sociocultural capital.

A. The cosmopolitanism on urban politics: 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 sociopolitical object. Decision making elites continue to display little
interest in the city's problematic and are much more orientated to the National and International
arenas. The few locally 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 have not been clearly
discussed, placed and addressed. There is therefore an evident lack of strategy (namely a
collectively understood strategy)

Information and knowledge

There are few places and opportunities for developing an awareness of the realities and challenges
facing 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 many relational networks

Strengths/opportunities

Citizenship and sociocultural capital

The cultural and symbolic capital of Lisbon retains deep strengths (especially in the dimensions of
neighbourhood identity and of overall cultural and city identity). Currently new political attitudes
and civic engagement dynamics are developing, particularly among the youngest and educated
classes. Over the last 5 years there have been 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 cultured class that understands the city and its urban
livelihood as a key-dimension for development and sustainability

Strategy

Some recent strategic processes and instruments have been under construction, such as a new
urbanistic plan (PDM), new sectoral strategies and the Lisbon Strategic Charter initiative

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

a volatile consistency, especially when projecting community citizenship dynamics. Recent
research has shown how there are still important distances between passive citizenship and
active citizenship attitudes (Cabral *et al*. 2008). Our previous research (Seixas 2008) devel-
oped along six different vectors of urban sociocultural capital valorization (see Figure 3)
demonstrated structural limitations that still exist today. These include 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 sociospatial fragmen-
tation trends in the metropolis over the last three decades, fractionalizing urban energies

and urban benefits; knowledge deficiencies on urban and city problems, with a state of 'relative ignorance' as to what is at stake in the contemporary city, thereby permitting the maintenance of cultural and administrative structures with little capacity for developing transversal and multidisciplinary approaches. There is still a considerable absence of open channels of governance, 'public spaces' for dialogue and cooperation established beyond

Table 2. Summary of Lisbon political diagnosis: administration.

B. The sites on urban politics: public administration in Lisbon

Weaknesses/threats

Metropolis

The Lisbon Municipality – and all the municipalities in general – has little political and institutional weight at the metropolitan/regional scale. The degree, and extent, of coordinated and integrated strategies and policies at the metropolitan level is low (reduced political impact)

Organization and efficiency

The organizational structure of Lisbon Municipality remains highly Taylorist, segmented and vertically organized. There is weak administrative subsidiarity. There are significant difficulties in policy articulation/transversality between different public organizations and services. Organizational structure and culture mostly inward looking, non pro-active and not 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 time frames' and by limited/segmented cognitive perspectives on the city. Low turnover of public department chiefs. Hypertrophy of decision making responsibility in municipal political cabinets

Resources

A deficit in new and better qualified staff, particularly in core areas of municipal development. Local public resources face strong rigidities/deadlocks: a quite complex planning and administrative regulatory frameworks, low levels of human resource training (on average), a considerable financial debt, continuing bureaucratic and unrealistic budgetary procedures (not oriented to objectives)

Parish councils (Juntas de Freguesia)

These local government entities are 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/decentralization of local competences and resources

Strengths/opportunities

Responsibility

The profile of elected local politicians is gradually changing. It is noticeable that a different type of management of political timeframes and resources is emerging. 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 on the strategic charter

(*Continued*)

Table 2.   (Continued)

Organization and efficiency

Good levels of pro-activity and efficiency in various municipal administrative entities – namely those in close proximity with: strategic rationales, high autonomy and public visibility, cooperation and networking active involvement, concrete local territories. Several administrative areas are renowned for their 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 strong support from the municipality presidency, is under development. Proposals for new organization procedures based on the Lisbon Strategic Charter

Resources

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

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

Table 3.   Summary of Lisbon political diagnosis: networking and participation.

C. The governance on urban politics: networking and participation in Lisbon

Weaknesses/threats

Governance

Wide areas of the local administration apparatus operates within a closed circuit, standing apart from the city itself (an *internal Zeitgeist*). In some areas, there has been steady progress towards more cooperative and governance processes with socio-economic city actors. However most of these have only extended to a few processes with limited impact (and still lacking plurality). A notably lack of more permanent governance/dialogue instruments and institutions. Considerable power hypertrophy based on semi-closed political communities. Lisbon society retains a considerable mistrust towards the city's government and administration structures and officials

Strengths/opportunities

Social capital

As confirmed by a range of research, Lisbon society retains a relatively latent civic awareness and capacity for responsiveness – compounded by considerable difficulties in social and political mobilization. A very significant and important symbolic and social capital on the scales of the city's many neighbourhoods. Over the last 5 years there has been a considerable expansion of opportunities for debate and discussion of urban related themes (conferences, seminars, media, Internet and blogs)

Governance

Overall the local Parishes have very good relationships with the community – although their shortage of resources strongly curtails these potentialities. There have been some recent development of participative processes, like the Participative Budget process (since 2008, containing 7% of overall municipal investment), the Local Housing Strategy Programme and the Strategies for City Culture. Proposals for new and wider governance instruments in the Lisbon Strategic Charter

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

the usual debates held during election periods and public consultation procedures established in normative planning frameworks. Research also confirms the continuing 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
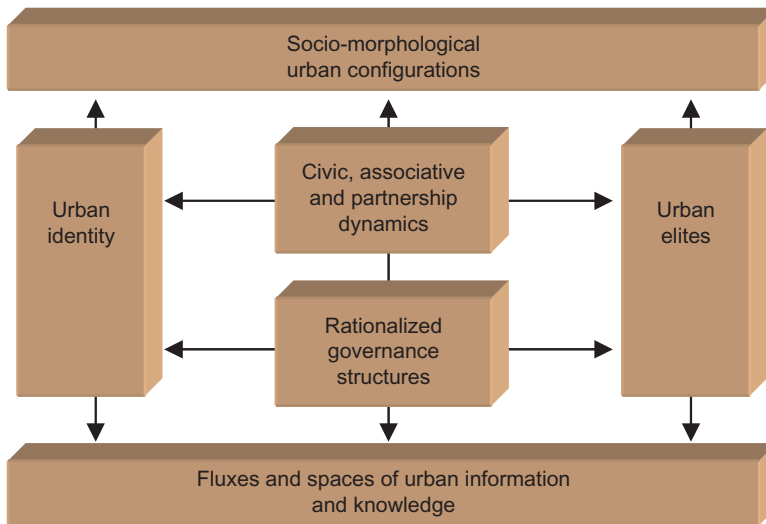
Figure 3.   Dimensions of valorization of the sociocultural capital in an urban society.

(Seixas 2008). This latter is an important factor that does not facilitate the development in Lisbon urban society of 'local political communities' (Jouve and Lefévre 1999), beyond political communities linked to more specific and particular goals.

However, notwithstanding this panorama of undeniable fragilities, our previous research also identified interesting aspects in the development of a wider 'urban social cognition' in Lisbon – and the development of corresponding political and civic involvement attitudes – in its neighbourhoods and communities, and expressed in NGO, academic and media attention. These included more debate, more civic intervention and social pressures (even beyond the common NIMBY type concerns), more scientific and general debates on city-related subjects. Moreover, the current rapid expansion of individualized expressions of citizenship through the Internet, supposedly quite fractal and kaleidoscopic, is contributing to an increasing awareness, based on a relative consolidation of cultural capital of urban cosmopolitanism, increasingly influential within the sociopolitical structures of Lisbon. Nevertheless, it is still not at all clear how these expressions will develop stronger structures of sociocultural capital, as well as becoming materialized in any form of more modern and democratic governance development.

Places: institutions in the Lisbon urban politics

Notwithstanding the vast number of public services provided by the public administration to meet the city's needs, our critical analysis of the local institutional and governmental fields also found important gaps – and structural difficulties in reducing them – between the city's political places and the city-system's problematic and challenges.

We need to refer to two important areas of shortcomings at two quite different scales. First, the recognition that the metropolitan scale has yet to create an empowered political institution; and second, the inner local parish/neighbourhood government configuration is totally 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 prevalent in the cultural structures and *ethos* of several public and political organizations. On the one hand, the power hypertrophy existing around executive political offices proved to be simultaneously a cause and consequence of the lack of proactiveness across most local administrative levels. On the other hand, the levels of administrative efficiency, delivery and account-ability reveal important weaknesses. Thus, entrenching a panorama of high political and administrative complexity with dispersed and poorly rationalized capacities for action – condensing a state of *a-topia* in the city administration, withdrawing motivational cap-ital, the capacity to conceive and discuss strategic objectives, a lack of focus on long term and structural reforms, and daily difficulties working with the city and its citizens. However, this *autarchic autarchy* has not prevented – it has even led to – the develop-ment of highly liberal and image-based policies, strongly based on financial, real estate and marketing fields. The result has been a move towards a discretionary politically supported urban regime broadly similar to the ones conceptualized by critical urban pol-icy researchers such as Jessop (2000, 2002) and Brenner (2004). Overall this situation has, to a large extent and for too long, left a relevant part of the main urban political agendas in Lisbon dependent on determinate actors and to specific partisan and private strategies.

We have, however, also noticed political and administrative proactivity in several areas – which has steadily evolved over the last few years. With the existence of a wide and otherwise consolidated normative and political–institutional structure of government, even if with important gaps and situations of malfunctioning, the political panorama of Lisbon also revealed several areas of administrative modernity, of strategic thinking and demo-cratic improvement. There is evidence of some perspectives for change developing. To this must be added other types 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 gov-ernment 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 the new national law for local finance and local resources, or an empowered structure of National city politics in Portugal), all which imply the need for new demands, new attitudes and new positioning by urban governments.

Networks: governance in Lisbon urban politics

Previous research also pointed to important weaknesses in the governance dimension. Beyond institutional structures founded on the classical logics of political representation, Lisbon does not contain many governance processes involving open and plural participa-tory processes. The organic links present in the dialogue and partnerships within the urban panorama, although natural and obviously healthy in any city, are, however, the almost absolute mirror image of the organic links in the governance panorama not based on clear and recognizable forms of strategic planning, of rationalized public action or of attitudes of authentic public openness. This situation has created high levels of uncertainty and insta-bility in urban governance processes and shapes a panorama that is naturally dominated by the dynamics and strategies of the dominant stakeholders who focus on urban com-petitiveness and symbolic urban cultures and images. In fact, cultural pressures and the expenditure of energies by Lisbon's governing system actors – including the citizenry – in their attention to the most mediatic, symbolic and competitive urban projects were quite visible in our interviews.

Therefore, as noted above, local political agendas are to a significant degree dominated by these logics, overshadowing more equitable 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 *et al*. 2003), perceptively more complex to develop and surely much more delicate to negotiate in the present institutional, party political and labour union contexts. With reference to one of the main questions proposed by the French literature in these fields – *who governs the city* (Joana 2000) – while 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 United States and Europe in 2004), in the last decade the Lisbon sociopolitical system has been framed to a considerable degree by power hypertrophy and sustained through semi-closed political communities.

The Lisbon Strategic Charter

As briefly addressed in the introduction to 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 charter for the city. The initial ideas by the local political leadership were threefold. First, to provide a framework for the development of global strategies and objectives to be followed by the city's policies and public administration. Second, for the charter to be developed through six different areas (or six questions 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; and institutions, administration and governance. Third, for the charter to cover a period dating from 2010 until at least 2024; this date marking the 50th anniversary of the Portuguese democratic revolution, thereby endowing the process and its correspondent main instrument with considerable political symbolism. 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-hearings. The group delivered its proposal (Commissariate of the Lisbon Strategic Charter 2009) in a formal presentation to the city and the municipality on 3 July 2009. The proposal[7] 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 overall Lisbon-governing dimensions, through a dual critical reading, considering not only the diagnoses previously developed and the charter proposals in the governing and administration dimensions, but also the strategic charter process itself – and its present stalemate.

The following provides a systematic discussion of the main proposals included in the sixth dimension of the charter, focusing on the city institutional, administrative and governance areas. The reason for this analytical choice is based on the conviction – supported by several years of research both on general urban politics perspectives and developments and on the specificities of the Lisbon sociopolitical panorama – that the future development for this (and probably any other) strategic and changeable process will strongly depend on its capacity to address and closely engage with the existing and future local sociopolitical and governance stakeholdings.

The proposals for the reform of Lisbon-governing and sociopolitical structures are based on a global vision that recalls 'the three modernities' of modern history (Ascher 1995), somewhat paralleling the specific evolution of the Portuguese political evolution, from the republican idealisms pursued since the nineteenth century, to the democratic
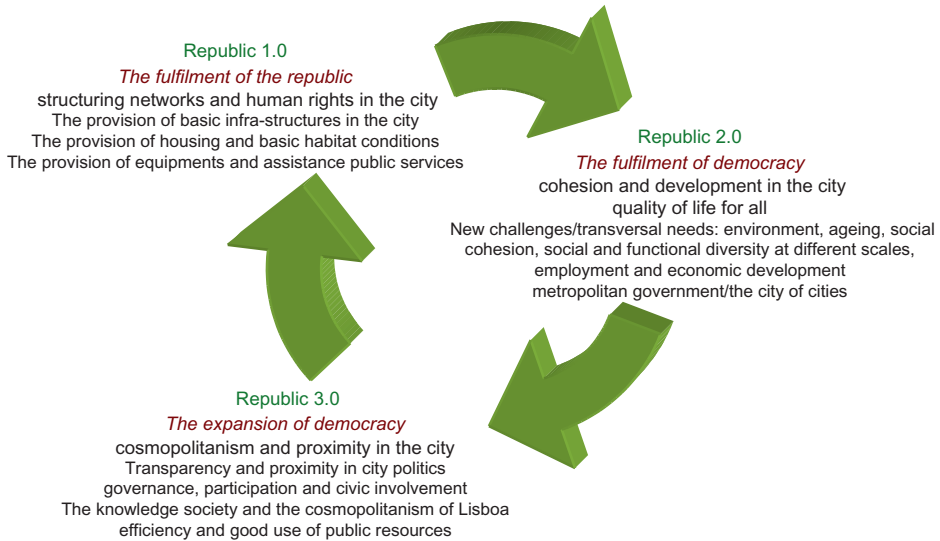
Republic 1.0
The fulfilment of the republic
structuring networks and human rights in the city
The provision of basic infra-structures in the city
The provision of housing and basic habitat conditions
The provision of equipments and assistance public services

Republic 2.0
The fulfilment of democracy
cohesion and development in the city
quality of life for all
New challenges/transversal needs: environment, ageing, social
cohesion, social and functional diversity at different scales,
employment and economic development
metropolitan government/the city of cities

Republic 3.0
The expansion of democracy
cosmopolitanism and proximity in the city
Transparency and proximity in city politics
governance, participation and civic involvement
The knowledge society and the cosmopolitanism of Lisboa
efficiency and good use of public resources

Figure 4.   Global vision for the Lisbon political and administrative strategies.
Source: Report 'Quality of Life and City Government in Lisbon' (ISEG/ICS 2010).

objectives followed since the 1974 revolution, and the still quite explorative perspectives for democratic expansion in this new century (see Figure 4).

As expressed in the corresponding text of the charter proposal:

> The proposed change to the Lisbon governance paradigms – or its political revitalization – 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 by strengthening citizenship that community is best built. 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 motto should be: 'Building Communities – City Policies as a New Public Space'.

For these global objectives, the charter text structures three base vectors for reform and innovation (Figure 5):

(1) First, a greater proximity between politics and the citizen:

> the revitalization 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 sharing the collective destinies of the city and of 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 appliance.[8] 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.
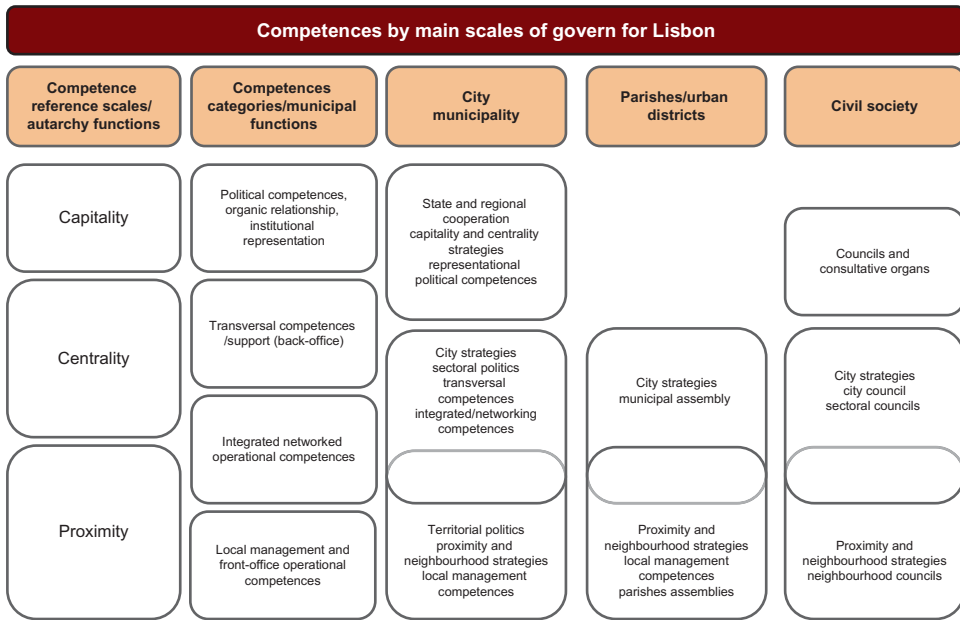
Figure 5.   Structure of competences by main scales of Lisbon politics.
Source: Report 'Quality of Life and City Government in Lisbon' (ISEG/ICS 2010).

(2) Second, a strengthening of administrative public capacities:

the political revitalization 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) currently 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.

(3) Third, a clear statement of the specificities of Lisbon itself:

the political revitalization 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 charter 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 systematized guidelines included in the charter's overall text: a strategy-oriented and cumulativeness of urban public policies (principle 1); the refocusing of sociopolitical action towards new urban scales and

dimensions (principle 2); the highest level of management and local administration proximity (principle 3); and the best information and knowledge of the city (principle 7). The other three principles target the three dimensions of urban politics: a qualified and efficient administration (principle 4); a more dynamic and inclusive governance (principle 5); and effective civic participation and involvement (principle 6) (Table 4).

Conclusions

Supported by a strong political commitment and having been developed through a generally open and debated process, the charter proposal was delivered to the municipality after 4 months of work, in the beginning of the summer of 2009. However, almost 2 years after the charter's formal delivery – a moment that would open a new phase for public discussion and political compromise – the implementation of its status and contents has not still been followed by any specific political process or approval, thus slowly relegating the proposal to an unknown future. On the one hand, it appears that some of its more specific proposals have inspired recent municipal policies in areas like public housing, mobility and institutional reform. On the other hand, this stalemate also seems to show that the municipal executive has not been capable of effectively manage a wide-ranging public discussion and political compromise. This demonstrates the existence of structural difficulties in the effective development of large-scale strategic instruments for the future political panorama of the city.

This present stalemate in what might – or could – be Lisbon's main new strategic process provides interesting conclusions, reflecting wider dilemmas currently facing the global evolution of European city politics and the reconfiguration of urban power systems. What it shows to be the case is that the expectations, tensions and intersecting strategies framing urban stakeholders in the current Lisbon political system are still largely structured by logics and rhythms based on classic paradigms of administrative representation and power. It is evident that beyond all the different actors expectations and attitudes there exists a continuous pace of urban evolution and change. However, the perceptions and consequent logics of action displayed by several of Lisbon main actors – in particular those connected with political parties and with institutional structures of government and administration – are still do not reflect a clear consciousness of the changes occurring in urban sociocultural paradigms. These central actors of the city's political arena remain preoccupied by complex and bureaucratic legal and administrative procedures as well as by the maintenance of their reciprocity networks; still searching for ways to understand the city and its complexities through cognitively safer functional perspectives. As Michel Crozier wrote some years ago in his 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 confirms that the efforts to reduce the gaps between urban systems and urban political systems bring evident challenges and even threats to the classical and long-standing political and administrative spaces of the city. Even taking into account the strong initial political commitment to this specific process, and the major pressures occurring in an urban society like Lisbon, the contradiction between the vast array of classical partisan, institutional and bureaucratic forces and the political proposals for new types of policy foundations remains evident.

Table 4.   Urban political principles and lines of action.

Type of principles	Principles	Definition and proposed lines of action
Transversal principles	(1) The strategy-oriented and cumulativeness of public policies	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 sectoral, 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 *confidence* of Lisbon communities
		Proposed lines of action: (a) Debate and approval of a strategic charter for Lisbon, thus providing a strong strategic Rationality for Local Administration and Urban Policies (b) Municipal leadership in strategy enhancement and monitoring (c) Consensual sectoral and territorial strategies/pacts (d) Usage of renowned processes like Local 21 Agenda
	(2) The focusing on new urban scales and dimensions	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 proposed a concomitant redirection of organizational structures, competences and resources
		Proposed lines of action: (a) The expansion and redirection of several areas and fields of city policy, administration and regulation (b) Urban Policy definition through Lisbon's three main scales: Global capitality, regional centrality and local proximity (c) Lisbon as a relevant political voice in several global domains (citizenship/human rights, environment/energy/sustainability, etc.)
	(3) The highest proximity in urban administration	The need to direct city public management and front-office procedures towards the most local scale (addressing the notion of Habitat), via consistent devolution, decentralization and subsidiarity processes incorporating both technical and administrative competences as well as political responsibilities and autonomy

(*Continued*)

Table 4.   (Continued)

		Proposed lines of action: (a) Development of a double process of municipal deconcentration (municipal local units) and political decentralization (reinforcement of local parishes competences and resources, including their reorganization) (b) Appointing territorialized political cabinets (councillors) in the municipality (c) Debate and approval of territorialized strategies
	(4) The best city information and knowledge	The need to provide the most varied spaces and sociological realities of the city with a high degree 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
		Proposed lines of action: (a) Policy for urban knowledge gathering and dissemination (b) New studies/statistical municipal institution (c) Urban/Municipal educational and training policy
Governing principles	(5) A qualified and efficient administration	The need to assure a transition from an overly 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
		Proposed lines of action: (a) Strong bounding and administrative rationality towards global, sectoral and territorial strategies and its objectives (b) Overall reorganization of the municipal functional and departmental structures (c) A managerial attitude on the public departments, managing by objectives ('aim and manage') and evaluating by results (d) Strategy for qualification and refreshment of municipal HR skills (e) Recruitment processes based on merit – namely for directive positions (f) Implementation of more permanent accountability and evaluation processes (g) 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
	(6) A dynamic and inclusive governance	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 much as technical and resources viability

(*Continued*)

Table 4.   (Continued)

Type of principles	Principles	Definition and proposed lines of action
		Proposed lines of action: (a) Openly debated and consensual urban strategies, sectoral pacts and neighbourhood objectives (b) Creating urban councils: a global city council, sectoral councils and neighbourhood (or district) councils (c) Embedding rationalized participatory processes – like participatory budgets and Local 21 Agenda processes (d) Embedding e-citizenship and e-government procedures (e) Appointing a political cabinet (municipal councillor) for Participation, Governance and Association
	(7) An effective participation and civic involvement	The need to curtail the distance (in space and in time) in the relationships between every citizen and the overall structure of the city's government and administration
		Proposed lines of action: (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 councillor) for Participation, Governance and Association

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

Notes

1. António Costa has been since 2003 the 'number two' of the Portuguese Socialist Party. 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 Internal Administration on the central 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 alliances with independent local lists.
2. See, for example, the studies by the London School of Economics and Political Science – LSE Cities at http://www2.lse.ac.uk/LSECities/home.aspx as well as more analytical approaches such as Borja and Castells (1997), Parkinson (2001) and Jouve and Booth (2004).
3. See the most recent Country Note for Portugal (2009) in www.oecd.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).
5. Namely, the ones concerning the political and institutional dimensions, open to the general question 'How to create an efficient, participative and financially sustainable model of governance?'
6. The research project is currently being prepared for edited collection due for publication in the near future.

7.   This can be seen in detail in http://cartaestrategica.cm-lisboa.pt.
8.   Like, for instance, the principles and processes underpinning Local Agenda 21.

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