



Projects for an Inclusive City

Social Integration through
Urban Growth Strategies

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SINERGI Project

Social Integration through Urban Growth Strategies

The SINERGI Project (Social Integration through Urban Growth Strategies) is a network of twinned cities that provides exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices of partner cities, Universities, civic organizations and social groups enabling better social integration through joint development of urban growth strategies. The project has enriched the sense of identity and mutual understanding between European citizens by bringing upfront problems and issues of urban life that are shared among them, but also by sharing common values, history and culture in an open dialog.

The network organized two seminars as a platform for creative and open debate between local authorities, academics, experts, civil activists and citizens from local communities about the problem of social integration in ever-growing cities. The SINERGI Book One: “The Projects for an Inclusive City” is the result of these two seminars. The purpose of this book is to provoke decision-makers and citizens to challenge their perception of the city and, through critical understanding of mutual interests and shared values, to create a sustainable and lasting network of cities and active citizens.



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Projects for an Inclusive City

Social Integration through
Urban Growth Strategies

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ABSTRACT:

In the last two decades, the involvement of civil society in policymaking has sought to respond to numerous challenges worldwide. In many cases, participatory processes have provided political agendas with new inputs and enhanced citizenry trust towards elected officials. Zooming in the Mediterranean area, the pervasive crisis of real economy and politics, together with the impact of austerity measures on society, has highlighted the need to tackle new forms of marginalization through participation.

The growing commitment with participation has put Lisbon under a new light in the last few years. Looking at the BipZip Programme, launched in 2011 by the Municipality of Lisbon, the intervention on urban areas affected by social, economic and territorial issues has assumed a new social and political weight. Furthermore, the political representative of the BipZip Programme has recently argued that it is time to enhance participatory mechanisms towards co-governance systems.

Taking inspiration from this declaration, the article aims to discuss the BipZip Programme principles, mechanisms, and achievements at the light of new possible steps. The paper will finally address the "good intention" expressed by the political representative on the need of co-governance by questioning the walkability of such "road" in Lisbon.

KEYWORDS: *participation; urban governance; co-governance; Lisbon; BipZip*

1 INTRODUCTION

Big challenges for democratic systems currently rest on the rapidly changing relations between States, societies and the financial market. As clearly stated by Bobbio (1995), as well as echoed by numerous scholars, the 'reduction' of democracy to the mere game of election is compelling social and political sciences to reconsider the very quality of democracy (cf. inter alia: Diamond and Morlino, 2005). The crisis of citizenry trust towards political institutions has often been followed by claims for new forms of shared sovereignty (Avritzer & Navarro, 2003). While so, new geopolitical boundaries, highly composite social identities, increasing circulation of information, and the pressing demand for more just and effective policies are changing the rationales of governance worldwide. The participation of civil society to policymaking has been viewed as a possible instrument aimed at recovering trust in democratic institutions and enhancing effectiveness in public policies.

This paper looks at the participation of civil society to policymaking as a specific way to involve citizens so as to give a say over public decisions. Towards the aim, the author of the paper takes advantage of his commitment with an important participatory Programme run by the Municipality of Lisbon which is aimed at implementing public initiatives in priority areas of the city. The paper will first introduce the main general assumptions for participation of civil society in policymaking, and secondly describe the specificities of the BipZip Programme. The Programme won the first prize in 2013 by the International Observatory for Participatory Democracy as best practice in the world and the article will develop an analysis assuming this fact to critically look at the previous editions. The impact of the Programme over policymaking needs is understood at the light of its methodology and context of application in 2011, 2012, and 2013 editions. The discussion concerning the results of the Programme and the 'walkability' of participation towards new models of co-governance, as argued by the political representative of the BipZip Programme, will finally frame some conclusive reflections.

2 PARTICIPATION IN POLICYMAKING

The implementation of new participatory mechanisms for the inclusion of social actors in policymaking relies upon – at least – two decades of experiences worldwide. However, the constant struggle over definition of problems, criteria for their classification, and assessment towards the bettering of democratic systems has always been the key concern of policy analysis (Lasswell, 1963). Against the rational choice trends, from 1970s onwards, theories on policy-implementation have pinpointed the need for new understanding of policymaking. Focus on implementation highlighted the process of putting policy into action as a process, neither an end nor a product of decision-making (Hill, 1997). On overcoming the clear-cut division between rational formulation - at the political level - and technical implementation - at the administrative level – 'bottom-up'

approaches helped to 'dis-cover' the multiple factors and systems of actors carrying needs, demands, claims and desires to be accomplished by policies. In other terms, these approaches have spotted a light on how things are done in policymaking and how things can generate new inputs, as well as how 'grassroots' actions and counteractions demand new forms of accountability to political institutions (Howlett, 2009). When understanding policymaking process as not responding to a single pattern of political and social "input / output" behavior - as argued by the rational choice model - the interaction between political diverse structures, interests, and actors demand new understanding of how new forms of knowledge and expertise can improve policymaking (Durose, 2009).

From the end of 1980s, new practices for civic participation in policymaking have been spreading in Latin America in order to replace economic resources on behalf of social-justice-oriented investments. 'Participatory budgeting' has rapidly gained enormous importance worldwide for aiming at approaching socioeconomic inequalities through the direct involvement of citizens (Sousa Santos, 2003; Avritzer, 2006). As previously stressed by Arnstein (1971) in his milestone contribution on participation, it is exactly the redistribution of information, resources and influence on decision-making that lay at the heart of these processes. Redistributing powers, gathering new agents for shared projects, reconsidering the borders between public and private, regenerating trust towards political institutions, are some of the main issues emerging by participatory experiences in the last few years (Sintomer, 2007). Stressing the role of participation in terms of both securing and creating rights, Gaventa and Barret (2010) have recently assessed that citizen engagement has broadly led to improvements in *"health, livelihoods and food, water, housing and urban services and education, usually through gaining increased government attention and responsiveness to issues that might have been previously ignored"* (*ibidem*, p. 36).

The dissemination of participatory processes in Europe in the last two decades has given force to new processes involving civil society and civil society organisations with governmental authorities at different scale (Sintomer & Allegretti, 2009)¹⁶. Either consultative or co-decisional approaches in public policy process have framed new forms of interaction where civil society has often achieved new influence over public decisions. Consultative approaches have based the opportunity for people to voice their claims while leaving the decision in the hands of policymakers. Co-decisional mechanisms have rather invited social actors to assume decisional power together with political representatives towards better policies. Though consultation is likely to look like a more 'narrow'

¹⁶ The "White Paper for European Governance" (2001) was issued as a response to widespread "democratic deficit" in Europe. Low levels of democratic participation in public life at local and regional level was identified by the European Ministers responsible for Local and Regional Government, as one of the most important challenges in the area of local and regional democracy. Therefore, the Council of Europe issued the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government (CETS 207) of 17 November 2009 on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority.

form of participation, Bobbio (2006) argues that it is likely to better allow high quality deliberation and empowerment of the actors. Deliberation is considered to overcome idiosyncratic viewpoints among participants and potentially resulting into more empowering outcomes (Fischer, 2009). The high-quality public reasoning should permit to go beyond the 'mere' bargaining of private interests and powers, as well as the division between professional policymakers and non-experts. The degree of 'openness' of the processes has evident effects over claims of social inclusion. Against consultative approaches, either open to all citizens or a sample, several scholars have argued that these are more likely to maintain *status quo*, without a clear commitment with accountability. As a matter of fact, and as Farrington et al. (1993) put it, participation could remain 'shallow' when approached as mere information or consultation. Yet, participation can have 'wide breathing' when people can effectively exert power over public policies.

The debate on effective forms of participation is lively and ongoing. Taking into account the phenomena of widespread electoral abstention, economic knock-on effects, and growing social conflicts that have affected Europe in the last years, participation in policymaking can help to understand the new challenges of governance. Urban contexts have been put under a new light in the last few years and the relevance of urban models of governance has turned political management and evidence-based policymaking a widely shared concern (Fortuna, 2002; Sassen, 2002). The importance of city as the context where actors and agencies can have a say over public decisions is being amplified worldwide. The local scale in Southern Europe is becoming a key area of study to understand the challenges of participatory processes against the endemic crisis. Towards the aim, Lisbon has represented one of the Southern European cities that more interestingly has compelled researchers and think tanks on the effects of participation combined with urban regeneration and social exclusion.

3 ZOOMING IN PARTICIPATION IN LISBON

3.1 The BipZip Programme

Portugal has been characterized by dramatic political changes in the last century until the establishment of parliamentary democracy and the opening of the national economy to the Market coincided with the global financial depression in the 1970s and the annexation to the European Union. Portuguese State is articulated through local powers having representative, decisional and executive administrative bodies: Parish Governments ("freguesias"), Municipalities and Administrative Regions. Parishes are further distinguished into neighborhoods ("bairros") which do not own political powers. Micro-territorialisation has been accompanied by struggles for power which has further fragmented inter-institutional networks among Portuguese municipalities. As one of the results, the

central State has displayed a paramount role in regulating political life in the last decades. For example, it is a fact that, from the middle of the 1980s, political directives concerning urban regeneration have been essentially provided by the National Government (cf. Ruivo et al., 2011).

Weak political participation has been claimed as one of the most confusing characteristics of Portuguese civil society, side by side with decreasing average of participation to elections. A pervasive dissatisfaction with public policies as well as the perception of insufficient integrated public actions have been recently pointed out by Portuguese academia (Costa Pinto, 2011; Costa Pinto et al., 2010). Yet, after some few experiences of citizens' direct engagement in local policy processes in 1990s, from 2000 Participatory Budgets (PBs) have definitely represented the most important initiatives in this field. PBs' main purpose is that of opening public arenas over spending and allocation of financial resources for public decisions. Against goals of economic resources' redistribution on behalf of social excluded groups, PBs in Europe have more plentifully approached electoral trust and administrative modernization as goals of PBs (Sintomer & Allegretti, 2009). After an initial stage, PBs have assumed a growing political relevance with peaks of dissemination from 2006 onwards in Portugal (Dias, 2010). As one of the European countries with the highest number of PBs today, Portugal has witnessed a progressive shift from consultative approaches towards co-decisional mechanisms, as well as a sort of 'contamination' of participatory principles in other public policymaking processes (Falanga, 2014).

The Municipality of Lisbon has played a central role in this scenario and, while running a thorough debate with two research institutions – the ISEG and the ICS – for a comprehensive reform of local administration between 2009 and 2010, a new analysis of social, environmental and urban issues concerning critical areas of the city was carried out by the Local Housing Programme (LHP)¹⁷. The combination of issues concerning society, environment and urban territory inspired a Public Consultation run in 2010 aimed at confirming the outcomes and possibly improve data on critical situations¹⁸. The identification of 67 priority areas was the beginning of the Bip/Zip Programme – hereafter BZ – acronym of

¹⁷ Local Administration Reform was issued on the basis of the agreement between the Portuguese Government, EU Commission, European Central Bank, and IMF and in consistence with four main lines of action: local entrepreneurship; territorial organisation; municipal, inter-municipal and financial management; and local democracy. One of the most discussed results has been the reduction from 53 to 24 and reorganisation of parishes' competences as issued by both the Legislative Assembly on 2011 July the 29th and the Decree of the President of the Republic n° 160/2012 (cf.: Chapter III in Diário da República, 2012).

¹⁸ The survey created for Public Consultation has been provided through both online (22% of responses out of 1039) and in the meetings (78% of responses out of 1039). The survey resulted into high average of participating citizens' confirmation to distribution and characterisation of the areas: 87% agree; 3% disagree; 10% do not respond. Part of the participants have also indicated further areas to be included in the BZ Chart (76 out of 244 free comments annexed to the survey).

“Bairros de Intervenção Prioritária / Zonas de Intervenção Prioritária” (Areas and Zones for Priority Intervention) (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. The BipZip Logotype

The BZ Chart – issued and approved by the legislative and executive powers on 17th of November 2010 by the municipal resolution 616/2010 - was included in the Urban Strategic Master Plan. The priority areas are classified into four typologies: (i) Municipal: 29 areas; (ii) Historical: 13 areas; (iii) Illegal origin (AUGI - urban areas of illegal origin): 7 areas; (iv) Other/Mix: 18 areas (Fig. 2).

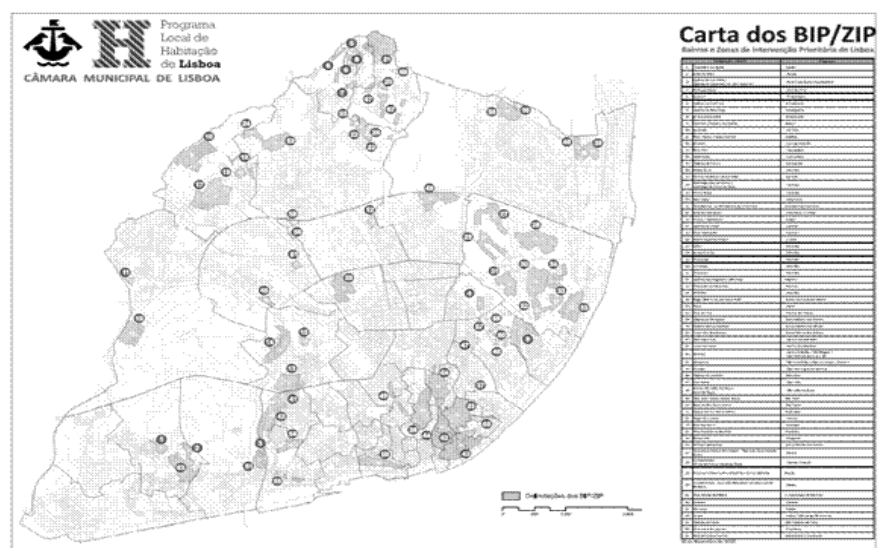


Figure 2. The BipZip Map

The constitution of a team of experts committed to the BZ Programme had the purpose to support local initiatives implemented by civil society, Nongovernmental Organisations, and Parish Governments¹⁹. The Programme has been publishing annual public competitions of at least one million euro budget for local partnerships whose proposals can vary between €5000 and €50,000 budget each. Projects can be understood as micro-local policies in that they may regard small interventions, services to community, etc. The selection of the projects is done by an independent jury composed of experts, public officials and elected officials of the Municipality of Lisbon, in accordance with BZ principles. In addition, from 2014, one of the BZ team members is included in the jury. The BZ team supports local partnerships with funding and technical provision while explicitly demanding to NGOs to involve local communities in their initiatives. In other words, beyond their formal role, local partnerships are demanded to play the role of community engager.

The promotion of local initiatives in priority urban areas to be implemented in partnership responds to the BZ guide-principles: (i) citizens' participation to the formulation and implementation of the proposal; (ii) responsiveness of the project proposal to the identified problems; (iii) local development and social cohesion through the enactment of the project; (iv) sustainability of the project; (v) innovative methods, objectives and partnerships.

3.2 Outcomes of the BipZip Programme

The author of this article has been involved as both a researcher (between 2012 and 2013) and expert advisor in 2014 for the BZ Programme. The look over the results of the Programme will take benefit of the insights worked out as researcher (cf. Falanga, 2013a) and practitioner, as well as from open data retrievable on the BZ websites (www.habitacao.cm-lisboa.pt; www.bipzip.cm.lisboa.pt). Towards the aim the focus of the analysis will take into consideration 2011, 2012, and 2013 editions and assume these first editions as leading the BZ to be awarded as Best Participatory Practice in 2013 by the International Observatory for Participatory Democracy. After introducing the major outcomes of the Programme, this section will look at the set of Local Partnerships that have partaken to the Programme in the three editions, as well as at the issues that such partnerships have pointed out as priority throughout the Programme.

As regards the major outcomes of the BZ in the 2011 edition, 77 project proposals were submitted and 33 of them have been selected in

¹⁹ The Local Partnership strategy demands to include not less than two different jurisdictional nature subjects per proposal: on the one hand the Parish Governments, on the other a wide variety of Nongovernmental Organisations. Each proponent cannot lead more than one project per priority area even if it can be partner in more than one project. Last, projects cannot receive additional funding while being supported by BZ Programme.

accordance with BZ principles (32 had been finally carried out). A total amount of 205 activities developed through the projects have been carried out affecting around 84 thousands dwellers. In the 2012 edition, 285 participants, 101 proponents and 184 local partnerships took part in BZ, with a total number of 28 accepted projects out of 106 proposed ones. A total amount of 185 activities developed through the projects have been developed in 36 areas of the city by 90 Nongovernmental Bodies and 7 Parish Governments for a potential public of 70 thousands dwellers. Finally, in the 2013 edition an amount of 352 activities have been proposed involving 47 promoter bodies and 125 partners applying on 59 out of the 67 areas mapped in the BZ Chart, and counting on over 2 million euro total budget.

As regards the articulation of Local Partnerships as either promoters or partners in participatory initiatives, it is evident the gradual shift of NGOs missions from local community issues towards social care concerns. Missions can interestingly inform about the main fields of action that have been more likely proposed. In 2011, most NGOs proposing initiatives generally had missions related to local community development, including all those activities that are developed at local or micro-local life in different fields. In 2012 and 2013 a great number of NGOs has worked for local community, and included care and social solidarity activities, such as charity, volunteering and mutual support, between their fields of activity. Between 2012 and 2013, educational and religious bodies have decreased as members of Local Partnerships, while Platforms and Projects have been increasingly included towards the implementation of participatory initiatives. Finally, the growth of activities concerning training and employment looks like the adoption of a social 'measure' against the crisis. In this sense, the BZ has been used in some cases as a micro-incubator for education and employment improvement in critical environments.

As finally regards the major issues that local partnerships have considered as priority throughout the three editions in the four typologies of priority areas (Municipal; Historical; AUGI; Other/Mix), some features are remarkable. With regard to the Municipal areas, the issues that more frequently have been spotted by citizens during the Public Consultation in 2010 concerned public transportation, security, neighborhood conflicts; healthiness. An overview on the leading questions retrieved by Local Partnerships' proposals complement a general concern with threatens of psychosocial nature for community and family life. Public Consultation outcomes for Historical areas pinpointed issues like public transportation; proximity trade; empty dwelling; security; marginality; urban facilities. From applications' there emerges a specific concern with preservation and promotion of the urban environment. The structural dimension is intertwined to social dimension and echoes problems of disintegration. Regarding Illegal origin areas, dwelling preservation, urban facilities, green areas, and healthiness represent the most reported issues by citizens in the Public Consultation of 2010. The proposals concerning

these areas in the 2011, 2012, and 2013 editions highlight a great concern with dwelling and social isolation indeed. Last, the Other/Mix areas' most important issues according to citizens participating to the Public Consultation were education failure, empty dwelling, youngsters' unemployment and unemployment in general, marginality, elderly isolation, neighborhood conflicts, and a complex set of worries with society. From analysis of 2011, 2012, and 2013 editions' proposals a great concern is advanced in terms of illegal drug trade and young generations. As a result of the overview on this type of areas, a light is spotted on drugs addiction and social risks for young generations.

3.3 Talking as the devil's advocate: towards co-governance or just good intentions?

The brief description of the outcomes of the BZ Programme throughout the 2011, 2012, and 2013 will frame the discussion concerning the 'walkability' of co-governance in Lisbon, as declared by the political representative of the Programme²⁰. As clearly stated by the political representative responsible for the BZ Programme, the next step of the Programme will be the promotion of more stable connections between the Municipality and the citizens, aimed at involving them in the management of the public good.

Such intention assumes the participation of civil society in policymaking as a 'flagship' of co-governance. What about participation in Lisbon so far? And, more concretely, what about participation promoted by the BZ Programme? Does the institutional design of the Programme provide 'enough' participation when considering the BZ Programme purposes? Can the participation promoted by the BZ Programme be an adequate basis for co-governance mechanisms? Though acknowledging the international award as best participatory practice, can the BZ Programme look like filtering 'too much' direct participation through local partnerships? Local partnerships combine their interests in order to make members collaborate towards common goals, and guarantee adequate degrees of local communities' involvement. The intermediation of organized citizens (the NGOs) and political bodies (the Parish Governments) talking on behalf of citizens can end up reproducing mechanisms of the representative kind. Is the BZ Programme encouraging participation or is it 'just' providing the creation of (new) networks and partnerships leading publicly-funded initiatives? Associated to this, we should also question to what extent the BZ outcomes depend on some specific characteristics of the Portuguese NGOs or if they rather depend on the effects driven by the BZ institutional design.

²⁰ The interview was published by the national newspaper 'Público' on the 18th of November, 2014. The article is retrievable on: <http://www.publico.pt/local/noticia/vereadora-da-habitacao-da-camara-de-lisboa-quer-fazer-da-cogovernacao-uma-realidade-1676335>

The purpose of the BZ Programme of the Municipality of Lisbon has been that of involving local partnerships in the regeneration of the priority areas. The pot of money provided for local interventions is relatively small and it is unlikely to support neither massive interventions nor long-term public measures (cf.: Ferrão, 2011). As a result the question is: how does the Municipality of Lisbon fund massive interventions and long-term public measures in these areas? Does this make part of the political programme? Will this make part of the co-governance? Are we rather supposed to understand these local initiatives as some kind of evolution of the Welfare State?

The progressive transformation of the local partnerships in nature and purposes along the BZ editions provides interesting elements of reflection associated to this question. While in some cases the publicly-funded initiatives turn into a sort of 'incubator' for training activities and employment against the endemic crisis lived in priority areas, this 're-use' of the BZ seems to suggest something more. Is this a 'secondary effect' concerning the re-invention of public funds to boost literacy and employment or is it rather the claim for deeper and wider public actions? Can we frame this claim within the declared goals of development and social cohesion or is it rather the need for something different from what the BZ Programme is entitled to do? What social demand stands behind local partnerships' applications?

Looking at the outcomes we should finally wonder whether the BZ Programme has enabled sustainable public measures hitherto and what is the future of participation in Lisbon. By taking into consideration the position of the political representative and the willingness to further the involvement of civil society through new forms of co-governance, it is extremely necessary to continue discussing such topic. The micro-local initiatives funded by the BZ Programme have generated interesting effects and unexpected situations in the priority areas. While so, they are not designed as long-term public policies, so the intention to initiate co-governance needs to respond to a wider view on public action. Is this intention really 'walkable'?

In order to think on the 'walkability' of co-governance in Lisbon we should look beyond the effects of the BZ Programme and question their sustainability on its grounds. Have the local partnerships been able to exist after the public funding? Does the Municipality have cultural and operative instruments to go ahead with co-governance? On the one hand sustainability at the territorial level and on the other hand institutional sustainability (cf. Falanga, 2013b; 2014). And who will be the interlocutor of the Municipality, i.e. what conception of civil society is the Municipality going to adopt? Is co-governance sustainable at the institutional level and, therefore, can this new type of participation be supported by Municipality public services?

4 CONCLUSIVE REFLECTIONS

The BZ Programme has been run in Lisbon from 2011 and has taken the long debate over social inclusion back to participation in a context of crisis. The overall mission of BZ is to connect NGOs, Parish Governments and civil society so as to implement actions of urban regeneration in priority areas of the city.

The article has focused on the outcomes of the three editions 2011, 2012, and 2013 and deepened the characteristics of both local partnerships and emerging issues from their applications to the Programme. The gradual shift from local community towards social care fields highlights the progressive concern for 'wider' social issues. The increase of Platforms and Projects as civil society organizations in local partnerships is interestingly intertwined with increasing actions for training and employment. The use of the Programme as public incubator for education and employment is of extreme importance to reflect upon effects and sustainability. As more concretely concerns the issues spotted by Local Partnerships throughout the three editions, great concern has been made with community and family life in Municipal areas; in Historical areas an increasing preoccupation with preservation and promotion of historical heritage has dominated the proposals; in AUGI areas the strict connection between dwellings problems and social fractures is stated; in Other/Mix areas the emergence of drug addiction among youngsters becomes the case in point.

Assuming the evolution of the nature of Local Partnerships and of the needs expressed through the BZ Programme, the BZ stimulates a wide range of questions. While so, the questions converge on a common point: is a shift towards co-governance sustainable by the Municipality of Lisbon? Can we understand politicians and public services as adequately 'equipped' to run a co-governance system in the city?

The BZ Programme is dealing with highly sensitive issues that need to be framed within a long-term urban governance action. Participation needs effective governance synergy in order to prevent the risk of being isolated at the political and administrative as well as promote good projects potentially isolated within the city. Considering the two levels of sustainability, the risk at stake is that of reciprocal isolation: on the one hand the isolation of social groups living in priority areas possibly taking advantage of good circumscribed initiatives and on the other the isolation of good – or even best – practices within an "unprepared" governance system. The enactment of institutional reforms aimed at supporting participatory initiatives as a whole and therefore co-governance represents an overall challenge for new urban governance rationales. Maybe it is time for participation to become a crossing cut instrument of local governments for daily commitment with inclusive policies. In other words, maybe it is time to generate new orchestras supporting best practices.

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