

HOW DO CITIZENS INFLUENCE URBAN PLANNING?

A COMPARISON BETWEEN VIGO AND PORTO



Miguel Martínez López
Professor of Sociology
Universidad de La Rioja
Logroño. 26004 Spain
miguel.martinez@unirioja.es



abstract

- **Vigo** (Spain) & **Porto** (Portugal)
- 1974-75 > 2007
- **Interaction**: urban movements & urban planning (master plan of the municipality, MP)
- Governance trends (EU urban policies, strategic planning, etc.) did not increase / influence **citizen participation** substantially.
- **Local urban politics** (historical social, political, economic and urban processes) constrained that “interaction”.



introduction

Population:

- **Vigo**: 290,000
- Metropolitan Area of Vigo: 500,000 to 1,000,000
- **Porto**: 270,000
- Metropolitan Area of Porto: 700,000 to 1,200,000

Euro-region: economic and political links [Atlantic Axis], parallel history [transition to Democracy from mid 1970s and EU integration from mid 1980s]

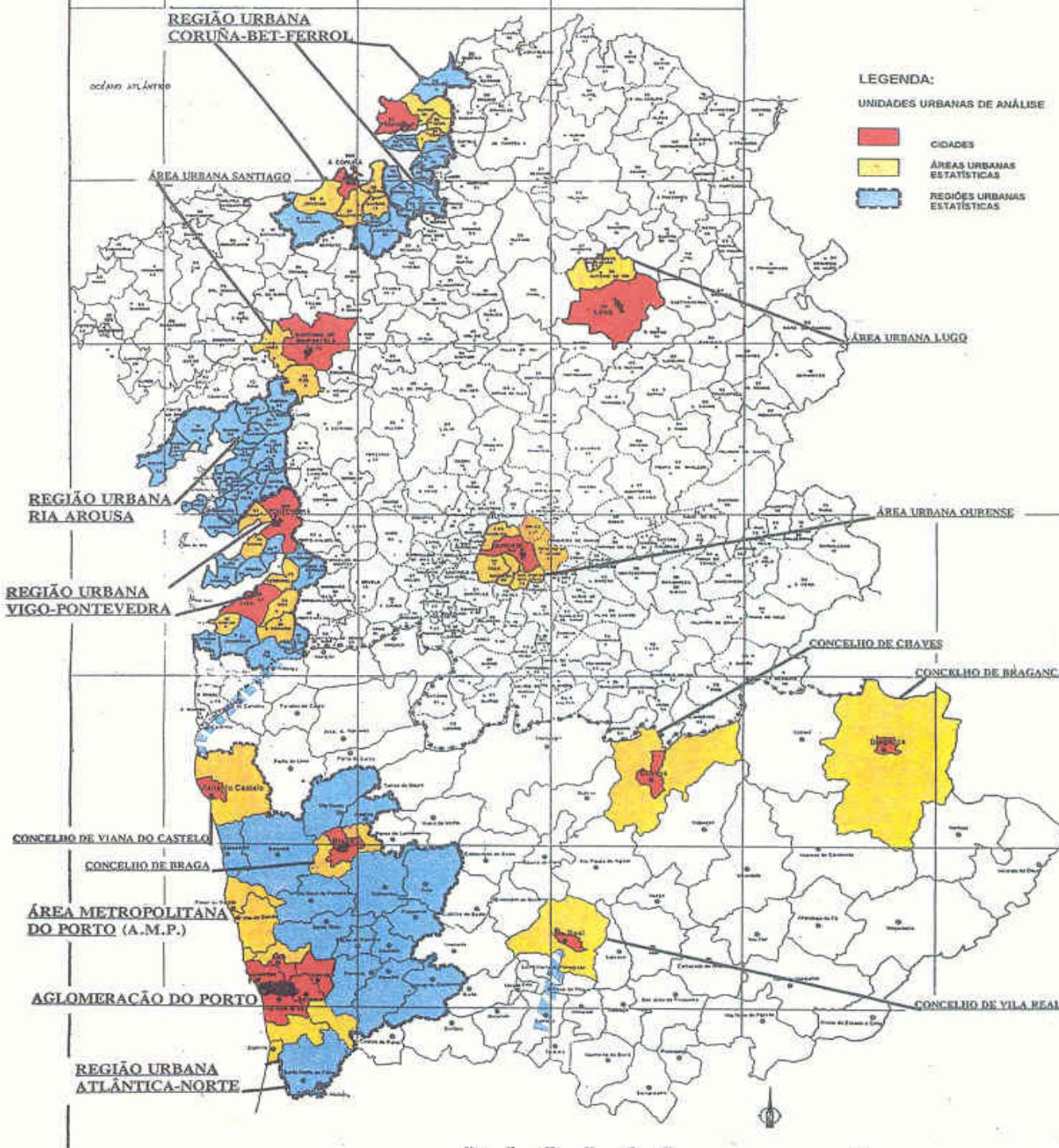
Master Plan of the city (MP): 2001-2006 (Vigo) and 1998-2005 (Porto)

introduction

Urban planning has a crucial role in regional development, but still remains quite closed to **citizen participation** (CP)

Vigo: MP was a very open political arena that provoked controversial forms of citizen participation because urban movements were still very active

Porto: MP was hidden from the public debate so declining urban movements focused on specific neighbourhoods and environmental and cultural issues



theoretical frame

Gaps in Euro-regional studies:

_how do **decision-making** processes shape MP?

_which are the **social influences** on MP?

_local and/or global orientation of citizen participation?

Citizen participation approaches:

_urban governance trends & public-private partnerships

_creative, dialogic, empowerment... in urban matters

_alter-global mov., part.-act. research, part. democracy...

Local politics & global context? Complexity, conflicts, actors...

theoretical frame

1/ CP, main activity of urban movements over urban matters:

_it can be “inner” or “outer” oriented

_it is submitted to historical cycles and *social* networks

_it is a **potential basis for participatory democracy**

_it can be progressive, conservative or contradictory

_it is inside “theoretical” battles for conceiving it

2/ Urban movements (UM) exert their “**right to change the city**”

_with specific effects on social structures

_**within particular contexts and durable processes**

_with organizational resources and social interactions



Vigo

- ▶ Euro-regional centrality
- ▶ Strong economic and demographic development from 1960s
- ▶ Restructuring from 1980s and turn into services provider
- ▶ Industrial harbour and city centre connected, working-class neighbourhoods and self-construction in surroundings
- ▶ MP: 1971 (under Dictatorship), 1993 and 2001-06 (under still active CP and UM)
- ▶ UM linked to other social movements and to specific plans
- ▶ Novelties: social composition and urban policies

Vigo

- ▶ New MP: problem-solution and liberal approach
- ▶ Great media attention, many meetings with neighbourhood associations and elites (economic, professional, political)
- ▶ Transparency plus controversy: 3,500 suggestions and 60,000 amendments
- ▶ Oppositional actors: social-democrat party, some “semi-rural” associations and one newspaper, mainly last years
- ▶ Context: strategic planning of metropolitan area (1991 and 2001), environmental Local 21 Agenda, EU urban programs, right-wing party ruling the Council...
- ▶ *Urban* division among neighbourhood associations



Porto

- ▶ Dense urbanization, demographic declining in the centre and strong metropolitan growth
- ▶ Also economic restructuring from the 1980s, but more services-driven
- ▶ UNESCO's declaration of World Cultural Heritage (1996) and EU's declaration of European Capital of Culture (2001)
- ▶ Metro lines connecting some metropolitan municipalities
- ▶ Urban segregation: "isles", public housing and co-operative housing promoted by UM
- ▶ MP: 1954 and 1962 (under Dictatorship), 1978-1993 and 1998-2005 (under economic crisis and weak UM)

Porto

- ▶ MP controlled by technical, political and economic elites
- ▶ UM concentrated on housing more than in planning, but did not followed coordinated among them
- ▶ Context: depopulation, gentrification, EU urban programs, UM dedicated to services provision...
- ▶ New UM: environmental org. and users of Metro, protests focused on urban speculation in a big park
- ▶ Planners did not encouraged CP: 300 suggestions
- ▶ Conflicts among technical and political elites



comparison

1/ **Solid cohesion of elites** around MP, especially transparent and evident with economic ones in Vigo, but conflicts:

_among technicians and politicians in Porto

_among political parties in Vigo

2/ **Vigo**: the more open MP is, the more controversial becomes (for some elites and some parts of UM)

3/ **Porto**: the more closed MP is, the more technical the controversies (among elites) are

4/ **Long time** for elaborating MP and for organising new UM

comparison

5/ **Local context** constrained both processes in different ways:

_UM preserved **strength** through federation and links to other social movements in Vigo, but they were **divided** between those from the centre and those from periphery

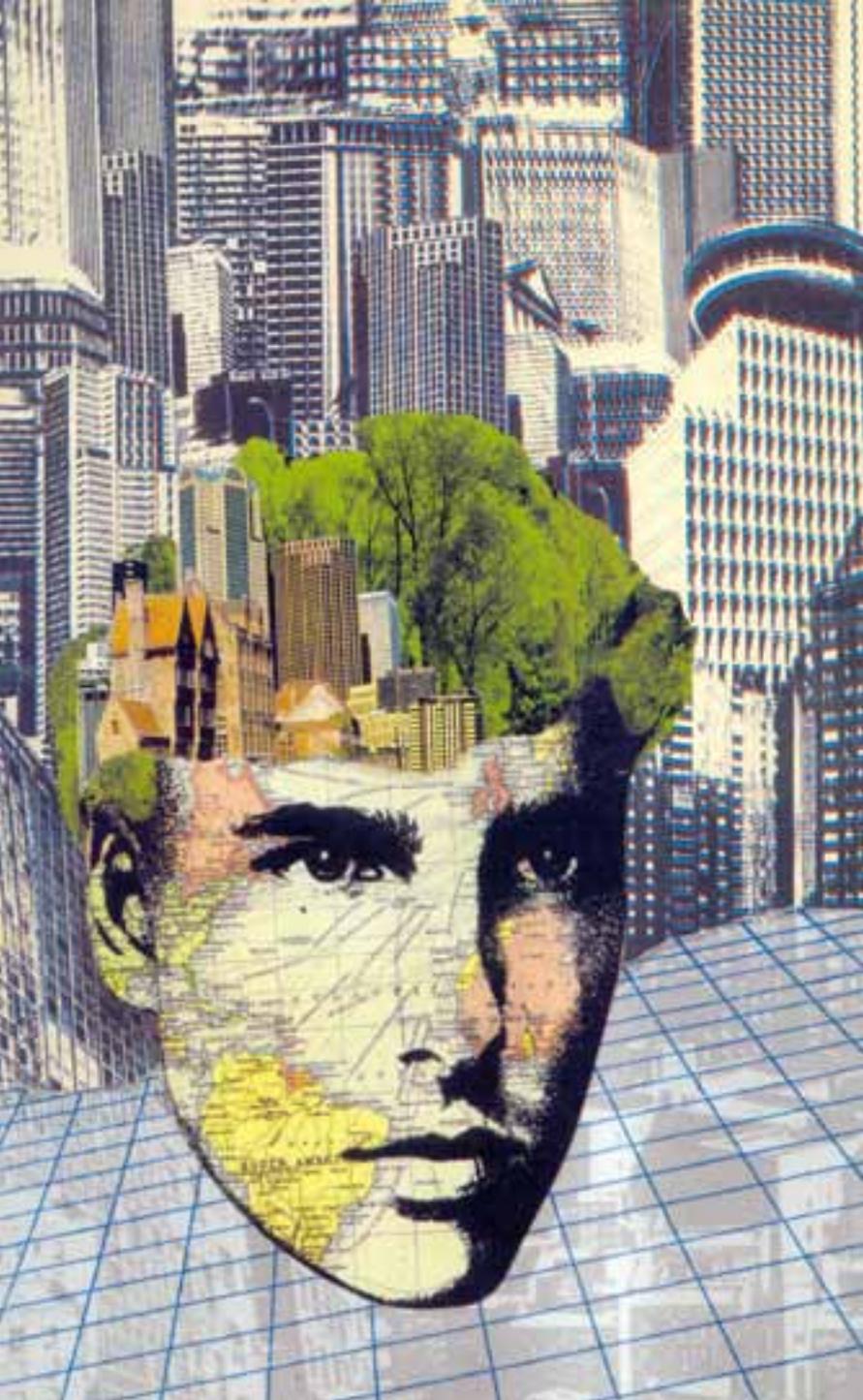
_Claims restricted to **municipal limits**, at the end, in Vigo

_ **New** decentralization and CP schemes in urban planning legislation in Portugal, and relative success of EU programs

_ Critics of the MP claimed for **metropolitan** view, without success, but still active co-operative housing associations

comparison

- 6/ Municipal boundaries and **formal ways** (audience, collaboration and amendment) of CP imposed by local elites
- 7/ UM are listened to when they can exhibit a “**history**” of participatory democracy at many urban matters, and when they belong to a *liquid magma* of social networks / movem.
- 8/ **Structural outcomes** of UM’s involvement in MP:
 - _ Self-legitimation and learning from their CP
 - _ Influence on particular rules, areas and rationality of MP
 - _ Political and cultural structures, rather than economic ones
 - _ MP as a crucial opportunity for deepening democracy and social control over distribution of public goods and services



Comune
di Fano
Assessorato
al traffico

Laboratorio
Fano
la città dei
bambini



A SCUOLA CI ANDIAMO DA SOLI

ATTENZIONE
zona sperimentale
**PASSAGGIO
BAMBINI**

