GOVERNANCE IN TWO LOCAL AGENDAS 21
AS A WAY OF URBAN GOVERNABILITY:
THE KEY ROLE OF METHODS AND CONTEXTS

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Abstract:

Environmental planning such as the Local Agenda 21 launched by United Nations in the Summit of Rio de Janeiro in 1992, has been increasingly used as a *new* strategy of urban governance without challenging the mainstream patterns of economic growth and representative, whilst continuously deligitimazed, democracy. This kind of planning focuses on sustainable issues of both cities and global spaces by means of public debate, citizen involvement and consensual agreements. Along the last decade, the European Union has supported and funded many of these planning processes based on the assumption that they will improve urban sustainability and citizen participation. Nevertheless, we think that the supposed new styles of urban governance implied by LA21 processes do not change substantially the pluralist and elitist ways of urban governability, and become instruments of local governments' legitimization. What we have discovered due to the comparative analysis of two cases of *successful* LA21, one in Portugal and one in Spain, is that citizen participation was not so plural as expected, and had little consequences for the improvement of participatory democracy and urban sustainability. Based on in-depth interviews and documents, our assessment of these two LA21 processes also shows that local politics -such as the cycles of mobilization and the social networks around public services- and supra-local contexts -such as the ways of management EU funds by one euroregional lobby- are relevant for explaining the apparent success of citizen participation in these two cities. Finally, we indicate several social conflicts which were disrupting the whole processes. Thus, we conclude by pointing out the methods and contexts of the actual implementation of urban governance in order to explain why, in practice, citizen participation in LA21 has been used by municipal authorities and *managers* for their own sake -the reproduction of urban governability.

6.1 Introduction: A new pluralist political arena?

In the 1990's, two of the meetings promoted by the United Nations concluded by calling for local municipal action with ends to constitute a multiple front in the battlefield of global problems. The

Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the Habitat Summit in Istanbul in 1996, crudely marked the stinging social inequalities that accompanied the urbanization and the environmental destruction in all the regions of the planet. At the same time, as if assuming the post-1978 instruction to "think globally, act locally", they deposited a good dose of their confidence in the palliative remedies that could be implemented by local government. The apparently post-ideological key of this neo-municipalist call resided in the formation of novel participatory coalitions that involved all citizens and social sectors: association, sindicates, business, political parties and specific collectives (women, handicapped, ethnic minorities, etc.) The documents originated in such meetings clearly aligned themselves with a theoretic current that described and suggested new forms of goverrnment in networks, which deserved alternative designations such as governance, although in essence, in our judgement, it only addresses the use of citizen participation to supply more governability to local entities, thus softening social conflict (Peters 2000, Rojo 2005).

The report elaborated by Borja and Castells (1997) for *Habitat* (*United Nations for Human Settlements*) supported, with eloquence and an abundance of arguments, the thesis of promoting the protagonism of "the cities as political actors" (Borja y Castells 1997: 139-165). In actuality, by "cities" it was understood to be not only the municipal governments, but also a wide public-private coalition that would be finalized in the *strategic city plans* (or entire urban-metroplolitan region) plans. In this new localism, in any case, the municipal governments would adquire the new commercial functions of *innovation* and *promotion,* beyond those merely redistributative, and the leadership of the mayors would be a key element in that new style of government. The symbolic and economic promotion of the city towards the exterior would be complemented by an internal promotion of *civic patriotism* and by the mechanisms of social cooperation and citizen participation. In the same report (Borja y Castells 1997: 283-303) they acknowledge.the financial difficulties and the conflicts of competition with supralocal administrations that share this type of local governance and , above all, with large cities or metropolitan regions

Both the Hábitat Program (point 12 of the Declaration of Istanbul of 1996), and the Program 21 (in its chapter 28; which was approved in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, although in independent form from the general Declaration that involves, fundamentally, the States) convoke the municipal governments to give their principles a strong push and to do so via the cooperation with all the social organization, public and private, with specific social collectives (young people, women, indigenous people, etc.) and with individual citizens. In particular, Program 21 (article 28.3) establishes that: *"Each local authority should initiate a dialogue with its citizens, local*

*organizations and private businesses and approve a "local Program 21". Through carrying out consultations and promoting consensus, the local authorities would receive input from citizens and local civic, business, and industrial organizations and would obtain the information necessary to formulate the best strategies. The process of consultations will increase the conscience **at home in respect to** the questions relevant to sustainable development. The programs, policies, legislation, and bylaws of the local authorities to achieve the objectives of Program 21 would be evaluated and modified around the base of the local programs approved in the framework of Program 21."* (UN 2007) The Local Programs/Agendas 21 (LA21 from now on), therefore, would occur in this generic, consensual, and procedural format**,** under the direction of the municipal authorities.

In 1990 the ICLEI (*International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives*) was establihed in the "World Congress of Local Governments for a Sustainable Future" arranged by the United Nations. That entity has been the principal promoter of ther LA21 since 1992. It also supported, along with the European Union, the "European Conference of Sustainable Cities and Towns" that created the Declaration of Aalborg in 1994, relating to the obligation of the European cities to *sustainability.* The text, to which already more than 1,000 European cities have adhered, presses for the same public-private coalition already mentioned (*we will base our work in the cooperation between all the players involved",* article I.13, ICLEI 2007) and for the municipal governments to provide public access to the information "*to all the interested citizens and groups"* so that they can have the opportuniy to participate *"in the decision-making process".* The town governments also engage themselves to "*seek opportunities for the education and development of sustainability, not only for the general population, but also for the elceted representatives and the municipal civil servants"* (ibid.).

To the effects of the present study we would also like to point out the methodological model of implementation of the LA21 proposed in the Declaration of Aalborg (Part III), following the guide elaborated by the ICLEI, and that has oriented the large majority of local initiatives (the literal terminology is written between inverted commas): 1) Recognition of the existent plans and funding resources, 2) Identification of the problems and their causes, through 'public hearings'**,** 3) Priorization of tasks to confront the identified problems, 4) Creation of a common 'vision' for the future sustainability of the community, via a 'participatory process' that involves 'all the sectors of the community'; 5) Analysis and evaluation of the 'alternative stategioc options; 6) Establish a longterm 'local plan of action' towards sustainability that includes measurable objectives, 7) Establish specific programs for the implementation of the plan, including a calendar and an

assignation   of responsibilities to each of the principal players; 8) Describe the systems and procedures to follow and evaluate the implementation of the plan (ICLEI 2007, Hewitt 2000).

The European Union has endorsed this model in its Environmental Programs of Action and has elaborated a long list of indicators to carry out comparable hearings about urban sustainability (something already foreseen and suggested by Program 21, chapter 40), in such a way that a progressive institutionalization of the participative processes in the LA21s inside that frame of organization and financing has been worked out. In other words, it passed from a "guide of basic recommendations" to a "common model of reference" to which the economic contributions of the European institutions are suboirdinate. Nevertheless, the municipal autonomy and the local private interests have populated the panorma of the LA21's with many variations and modalities of development, so that it makes sense to   look at the achievements, methods, and specific consequences of these processes.

We set out here from the premise that the model of governance in which the inscription and development of the LA21's were put forth is in all lights problematic in itself given the institutional and market place restrictions in which are framed the interactions between all the social actors invoked Our investigation is directed, precisely, to demonstrate how conflictive these interactions are during the elaboration process of two LA21's (one in a Spanish city and the other Portugese that we have evaluated via documentation, interviews, and participant observation) and which are the explicit/ explanatory factors in those conflicts. We maintain, in this sense, that this model of governance based explicitly in the "conference" and the "consensus", according to the hegemonic discourses of the same, hardy removes itself from the pluralist perspectives of analysis and social intervention (Alford y Friedland 1985: 35ss.) however, in the same way as other modalities of city planning, it is based in a strong bureaucratic, elitisit, and neocorporative dimension. (Stoker 1995, Martínez 1999). In this sense, we question the limits of pluralism via the "methods" of citizen participation adopted in the two cities and thier concrete practices. On the other hand, we end the analysis with the most relevant influences and contextual conflicts that have taken place thoughout the process. Finally, we consider that our case studies highlight the fact that the LA21's are a clear example of strategies of governability that don't manage to alter the principal urban guidelines of unsustainable economic growth (Logan y Molotch 1987: 50ss.; Fainstein 1994) nor those of a representative democracy with significant lack of legitimacy (Santos y Avritzer 2003). As a result of this, despite proposing a greater amount of citizen participation, we find that the LA21's we examined contribute, paradoxically, to weaken the potential of the citizenship to reinforce the democracy, to control publicly the markets and to substantially reduce the environmental impact of

human actions.

6.2 Participation, governance and governability

The paradigm of 'consultation and consensus' that emerges centrally from the discourses in favor of a new protagonism of the municipal governments and of forms of city planning of urban spaces, like the LA21, constitute a new actualization of the pluralist foci of analysis and social action. In these foci, social and political life are simplified, subjugating them to fluctuations of citizen demands (stimuli) and governmental reactions (responses) in democratic regimes, The social organizations simply collect the preferences and values of the individuals to represent them in public spaces and before politcal institutions. *"The multiple relations between groups and organizations normaly generates a societal consensus via the communication of preferences and values, the formation of public opinion and the reactions of the leaders."* (Alford y Friedland 1985: 35) Thusly, the participation of these groups can affect in greater or lesser measure the decisions of the governments and the whole of the norms of the democratic system, giving them greater or lesser stability. The implicit assumption of many of these foci is that a greater citizen participation of this nature (above all, via the vote and lobbies),yields greater reinforcement of the liberal democracies. Nevertheless, so that this occurs, truly strange conditions must be given: *"The pluralist perspective assumes that the decsion-making processes in the State take place under circumstances of individual political liberty and iguality."* (Alford y Friedland 1985: 36) In addition, the excess of participation or forms of participation that cannot be contained inside of the established paths of the democratic institutions, woul be pathological symptoms of a lack of pre-political integration, cohesion and social *prepolitical* consensus (Alford y Friedland 1985: 4, 9).

Definitely, in the pluralist perspective the analysis of controlled forms of citizen participation and of the consentual political culture that permits the governability of the State takes precedence. This form of theorizing provides arguments to act and to rationalize the actions. From there we consider it necessary to discern the theoretic focus that fills concrete politcal discussion, just like those of the decalrations and programs in favor of environmental sustainability. In the LA21's, the "consultation" of all of the social actors requires the necessity of knowing all their preferences and collective values so that, subsequently, the government can adopt the adequate decsions.. The "consensus" that is intended to be reached with respect to the environmental policy creates the cultural and political frame of integration of these *citizen demands* without changing the basic rules of interaction between the actors, nor the funtioning of the democratic institutions. The principal

problem of this conception of citizen participation is that it removes the inequalities in terms of liberty and material conditions of existence of the distinct citizens and social collectives. Without intervening in these previous conditions, the processes of participation will accept the systematic exclusion of a good part of the society. Many citizens and collectives won't have the same guarantees of access to the institutions nor the expression of their preferences. On the other hand, the moderation of the participatory processes that this frame of sense demands does not permit that the environmental policies be shaped by the actions and proposals of groups at the edge of the paths instituted for the participation, that alter or dissent with the general consensus. Consequently, Alford and Friedland indicate the necessity, at least, of examining complementarily the bureaucratic and classist dimensions of any public policy.

Our critique of the pluralist perspective due to its simplification of the social processes doesn't imply, in any case, that we close our eyes to all the phenomena that can fall under its field of observation. In representative democracies occur distinct fomrs of particpation and both their development as well as their consequences need to be analyzed in a specific manner. As we will see further on in the empiric cases examined, its apparent success is actually revealing of its weaknesses and of the type of neoliberal regime of governance and of local governability that ditinct *global* institutions try to spread. The LA21's, in our view, clearly show that pluralist participation advances relatively little towards regimes of greater participatory democracy characterized by more creative, varied, conflictive, and radical participative expressions (Santos et al. 2003, Villasante 1995, 2006). Other focuses, such as the so-called institutionalist and constructivist foci, also have been critical of pluralist analyses of participation; they acknowledge the inevitability of conflicts in any process of spatial planning and the fragmentation of the distinct actors (Healey 1997: 29-33). Nevertheless, they trust in the capacity of the social networks of governance, and not only in the capacities of the government and of the elected authorities and the bureaucratic bodies, to mediate in conflicts and "build consensus". The same author warns of a neoliberal derivation from the focus of the governance because of its implications in the reduction of the State, the scarce transparency, the dissolution of responsiblities and the exclusive benefits of the businesses (Healey 1997: 208-9). They think, as an alternative, that an *alternative* paradigm of the governance from an institutionalist focus can be adopted

"The systems of governance of a society or communinty refer to processes through which public affairs are managed. Governance implies the articulation of rules of behaviour with respect to the collective affairs of a political community, and the principles to distribute resources amongst the members of the community. (…) the styles of governance are learned in businesses, at home and in

other social arenas such as syndicates, ecclesiastic organizations, sports clubs or special interst groups. In this way, the activity of governance is spread via the multiplicity of the social realtions that we have, and can adopt many forms. (…) Governance is not an area exclusive to governments. All of us are involved in some way and we have experience in managing collective affairs." (Healey 1997: 206, 208, 210)

With a similar conceit, the LA21's have been characterized as *integral* and *transversal* local policies in respect to the themes of sustainability and the participatory methods for taking part in it (with planning and action) will overcome the rigid traditional divisons between administrative requests (Blanco y Gomà 2002: 24). In other words, as representatives of strong styles of governance, of government in network. In this outline, the leadership of the local governments in the *"conformation and leadership of networks"* and in the *"regulation of social conflict"* will be promoted (Blanco y Gomà 2002: 28). The neoliberal versions that left these problems in the hands of the market place and the neostatists that simply continued trusting in the hierarchic action of the governments (with their supporting beams of elections and legitimizing political parties) are also rejected. In exchange, they postulate that the networks of governance will be stable and formalized, generating new social instituions; horizontal in their power dynamics, and integrators of "diversity, pluralism, dynamism, and flexibility" (Blanco y Gomà 2002: 31).

The evaluation of distinct cases of local governance that these last authors make includes the LA21 explicitly inside the problems of "limited transversality" when the actors most directly linked to the environmental questions involve themselves in these processes, and of "neotechnocratism" when *"rigid political and methodological control on the part of the governments"* occurs (Blanco y Gomà 2002: 35-36). We also see appear other indicated problems, such as the lack of plurality in the processes of participation and the lack of concrete obligations of the actors in the documents agreed upon, including in our two apparently successful cases of LA21. Therefore, we can maintain that the LA21s in practice, create soft forms of governance, with a low profile and close to the neoliberal derivation (Jessop 2003, Santos 2005). In essence, there persists a model of pluralist governability that continues in what is referred to as its consensual finality and the non-existent intervention in the initial conditions of the actos before the participative processes. The risks of neoliberal derivations and the reproduction of the hegemony of the local governments join together, furthermore, with the derived awkwardness of political and technical control of the particpative processes (lack of plurality in the *selection* of the actors, of compromises, of resources, of a calendar adjusted to the circumstances of all the actors, etc.) (Geddes 2006, Mayer 2003). In other words, that the initial pluralism, theoretic, ideologic, and apparent, leads easily, in practice, to

distinct forms of elitist neocorporativism and public-private coalitions (Stoker 1995, Martínez 1999), without these observations exhausting a more wholistic and classist perspective of analysis of the determinant contexts (Pickvance 1984).   The European Union itself has played an extraordinarily active role in extending this paradigm of governance (Michel 2007) and the LA 21's have been one of the areas where it has been most proliticly possible to experiment with. Owing to the inadequacy of this paradigm of neopluralist governance with the recurrent problems that we have identified, we refer here, preferably, to a regime of *governability* in which our object of observation is directly the conflicts between the capacities of the local governments and those of the distinct actors to influence and manage public affairs. These conflicts, furthermore, occur before, during, and after the participative processes that can be habilitated**.**

The two case studies that we comparatively evaluate below offer us empiric evidence of the limits that this type of governability assumes for the advancement of *strong* participative practices and institutions. Our principal hypothesis is that the paradigm of "conference and consensus" of the LA21's provokes weak processes of particpation, hardly plural, hiding and reproducing social inequalities, and favoring that local governments or specialized technical bodies *participate* more – that is to say, control the processes of participation. This type of participatory processes incorporate themselves in wider social dynamics of conflictive interaction between distinct actors and social classes.   In particular, we maintain that the explicative factors of these effects that weaken the citizenry and its autonomous dynamics of particpation are found in specific social contexts and in concrete practices generated throughout the participatory processes. In the case of the two LA21's analyzed**,** two determinant contexts can be distinguished, in theory: the global diffusion of the model of LA21, on one hand, and its local adaptation by individual intereceding petitions, on the other (in our case, an intermunicipal and eurroregional lobby). We could add the discourses concerning environmental sustainability that the distinct actors involved in each LA21 manage, but the analysis of this *context* would overflow in these moments our intentions.   Another relevant context to which we refer is that of local political relations, since both the municipal governments as well as the associative dynamics and citizens of each locality generate opportunities and constrictions on the participation in a LA21; and, especially in these two cases, they show how political legitimization of theses processes is produced.   In respect to the practices that the methodological options create concerning the planning and implementation of the participatory processes, we evaluate them as consequences of the decisions of the planners responsable for these processes.   We see, in this senses, how not even the positive aspects of each focus, in pluralist terms, manage to substantially strengthen the dynamics of citizen implication in the LA21, with the help of in depth deliberations and consensual decisions.

6.3 Contexts and methods

As we have mentioned before, one important novelty that the processes of LA21 have launched is that they have shown the materialization in the municipal plan of some international consensus until now un-edited in relation to the environmental and urban problems with an evident global dimension, as much in its causes as in its consequences. The rhythm of implementation of the LA21's differs much from was announced for the end of 1996, in an excessively optimistic way (500.000, more than half of the municipalities of all the countries), by the Program 21 in 1992. One and a half decades later it can be seen that the experiences of LA21 have spread to only 6,416 municipalities in 113 countires (Bárcena 2006: 26), that in 65% of the cases are concentrated in European countires (Fundación DEYNA 2005) and in 90% in developed countries (Font et al. 2002: 96). In any case, with the diffusion of the LA21's we can appreciate a phenomenon of *globalization* of the styles of local political governability in relation to the environment, which allows us to distinguish a first context of influences over any local experience of LA21.

In England, the LA21's were assumed by the LGMB (*Local Government Management Board,* an entity which groups togther the five associations of municipalites) with a production, between 1994 and 1996, of 194 municpal 'strategic documents' far from the potentail total of 475 municipalities (Blowers and Young 2000: 100). Despite the pessimistic evaluation of the experiences that they were "*so limited and weak that they didn't stimulate the horizon* of a *reflexive modernization*" (Blowers and Young 2000: 105), some municipalities, like Leicester and Reading, tried to take advantage of the opportunity of the LA21's to *"regenerate the local democracy"* and *"advance beyond the stategies of top-down consultations towards bottom-up strategies intended to strengthen the local communities"* (Blowers y Young 2000: 99). The experience in the United States was meager; only 22 municipalities had instituted LA21 or similar processes up to 1999 and just one, Burlington (Vermont) *"approached the integral, comprehensive and multi-faceted model proposed by the Agenda 21 and the Declaration of Rio"* (Lake 2000: 72, 81).

In a comparative analysis of 10 European countries it was verified that the existence of an environmental political tradtition at the state level, prior to 1992, inluenced positively in the development of LA21 (except the United Kingdom, where they lacked this tradtion that the LA21's began to elaborate**)**. Such is the case of Sweden, Holland, and Denmark, followed**,** in a second group, bby Norway, Finland, and Germany (Gomila 2000: 55). In addition to the indispensible state support, in countries with more developed experiences the activism of NGO's, the average or

low implication of businesses and a full autonomy of the municipal governments are emphasized. Nevertheless, based on the study of the ICLEI in 1997 (by means of an auto-administrated questionairre sent to the municipal and supra-municipal governments), it was conluded that the businesses incorporated themselves as much as the NGO's in the processes of LA21while the more significant absences were those of women, syndicates, and ethnic minorities (Font et al. 2002: 98). The same analysis emphasized that polls, deliberative forums and roundtables of sectorial work were the mechanisms most used for consultation and public debates.

A second study of the ICLEI obtained responses originating from 113 countries (633 sent by the local governments and 146 by associations) and among its more disquieting results it was mentioned that "*the local authorities in all regions and indepent from their economic situation, stated the lack of economic support and political compromise of the national government as the key obstacles to a greater success* [of the processes of the LA21]" (ICLEI 2002: 3). In this occasion, more than half of the responses of the local authorities that met the requirements of having carried out a participatory and strategic LA21 in accordance with Program 21, corresponded to the Asian-Pacific region, headed by Japan and Korea. Nevertheless, it is in Europe where the greatest number of LA21's continue to be recorded (5.292) and in the "developed countries" in general (those with a larger GDP according to the World Bank) where an interest for the LA21's three times greater than in the rest of the countries can be noted (ICLEI 2002: 8).

Although the self-administered questionnaire that the ICLEI furnished is susceptible to self-evaluations that are very gentle and self-pleasing on the part of the municipalities, its findings clearly show that the local governments take the initiative and the control of the process (and the budget) in almost 70% of the cases (ICLEI 2002: 14). On the other hand, only 27% of the cases didn't count with the participation of civic or comercial/ entities, althouigh in all the rest it gives the impression that businesses, NGO's, community organizations and individual citizens participated with equal weight, approximately in a range between 42% and 57% (ICLEI 2002: 15). Among the more notable obstacles experienced during the processes of LA21 and recognized by local authorities, the lack of economic resourses (in an average of 60% of the cases), the lack of community interest and the lack of support from the central government (in more than 40% of the cases in both indicators) were recorded (ICLEI 2002: 20).

In Spain, the stimulus and funding have come from, principally, the European institutions and from some municipal associations: the network put forth by the Diputation of Barcelona and its Declaration of Manresa in 1997, with 180 signing municipalities (Ocaña 2005); the 200 town

governments adherent to the Letter of the Earth since 2002 (Fundación DEYNA 2005); or the Code of Good Environmental Practices diffused by th Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP 2007). A study from 1999 of 72 town governments with more than 100,000 inhabitants (or provincial capitals) showed that only 32 of theses (31%) had taken some kind of measure in realtion to the LA21 and that no more than 3 had completed the process (Font y Subirats 2000: 102-105). The same work highlights that the participatory formulae adopted have been very varied and inequal, although the predominant trend is that they have been put forth and controlled by the local authorities, with strong institutionalization and limited repercussions (Font y Subirats 2000: 108).

The initiatives of the LA21's in Spain rank the country as a whole in front of other European countries such as Austria, Ireland, Italy, and Greece, and at an intermediate level similar to France, Germany and Norway (Font et al. 2002: 96). According to the study of the ICLEI, 359 LA21's have been initiated in Spanish municipalities as of December of 2001 (ICLEI 2002: 10). The methodological difficulties of these processes have propitiated that the smaller town governments have been the most prone to their dynamization, with emphasis on some pioneering and longlasting examples such as Calvia, in Mallorca (with less than 50,000 inhabitants and one of the highest *per capita* incomes in all the State).

A diagnosis of these difficulties in the municipal governments of the Community of Madrid that undertook LA21 processes shed the following significant conclusions, to our purposes (Garrido 2005: 62-71): 1) Predominance of an instrumental use of participation as "means of social control, of political legitimization and efficacy in the public management of the dominant interests" on the part of the local authorities, in such a way that these perceive the participation merely as "*consultation, support or complement for the government to exercise*"; 2) Distrust towards the participatory procedures on the part of the municipal or external technical experts by considering that these are not necessary in the diagnoses (these would only be "*an exclusive and objetive task of experts*") or that they should channel themselves in the most operative and manageable form possible; 3) Limited particpation of the businesses and citizens on the margin of social organizations with the added complication that these last tend to perceive "*that their participation and effort don't serve any use or that they have been manipulated", all of which "conveys frustration and a waste of the potential of co-responsability in the execution of the plans"*; 4) Habitual reduction of the processes in the elaboration of technical diagnoses without citizen particpation, to stagnate in the planning phase with the help of documents that ignore even the same local political representatives instead of building consensus on a strategy of local sustainable

development.

For its part, the development of LA21's in Portugal seems to be located far below the average rate of inititiatives in other European countries. According to data from the beginning of 2007, there are 79 Portugues municipalities that intitiated these processes (independently or as part of municipal associations), representing close to 25% of the total 308 municipalities (Pinto 2007). The same researcher (member of the GEA team of the Catholic University of Porto) indicates that a good number, although indeterminate, of these processes remained in the redaction of the Plan of Action, without greater consequences. Another researcher of the same team and also collaborator in several processes of LA21's has warned about the most recurrent problems in this country (Quental 2007): indefinition of the process of LA21, lack of coordination with other modalities of spatial planning in the municipality, scarce implication of the local government, barely transparent processes with "low ambition" with respect to citizen participation, very few visible activities during the process, indefinition of priorities of action, absence of support and legal bindings, etc.

The second context of influences over our cases of LA21's resides in an intermediate resort of *globalization:* the association of municipalities of Galicia and the North of Portugal, *Eixo Atlántico do Noroest Peninsular.* This entity was established in 1992 joining the 18 principal cities on both sides of the border and expandin to 34 municipalities of various sizes between 2007 and 2008 (Cárdenas et al. 2008: 14). Both regions of Spain and Portugal join more than 6 million inhabitants (2,700,000 in Galicia and 3,700,000 in the North of Portugal, according to data from 2001), with important metropolitan areas revolving around the cities of Oporto (almost 1,300,000 inhabitants), Braga (800,000 inhabitants), Vigo (700,000 inhabitants) and A Coruña (600,000 inhabitants) (Souto et al. 2005: 166). The *Eixo Atlântico* obtained a strong institutional support on the part of all levels of govenment and opened its own office in Brussels to receive economic resources from the European Union thanks to the category of Objective 1 (GDP per inhabitant below 75% the EU average) that were assigned to the territories of this *euroregion.* As much the *Eixo Atlântico* as the more general cross-border institution in which it fully integrated itself since 2000 (The Employment Community of Galicia-Northern Portugal established in 1991 between the two respective *regional* governments) began immediately to solicit, manage, and receive European transfers through distinct programs of regional development such as INTERREG, LEADER, RECITE, URBAN, EURES, RIS, SAVE, LIFE, etc. (López et al. 2004: 36-42, 56).

The *Eixo Atlântic* considers itself a "lobby" and an "agency of Euroregional development" (López et al. 2004: 55). Among its distinct activities as a special interest group is the dialogue with

regional, state, and European administrations for the promotion of cross-border infrastrucutres, as well as the elaboration of studies and the development of European programs in the cities which it comprises. In this framework, and taking recourse in the INTERREG III-B initiative, between 2003 and 2007 it put forth the ambitious EIXO21 project for which 16 LA21 were implemented simultaneously and in synchronicity. The diagnostic documents urged for the inclusion, furthermore, of a study of urban fiscalization of accounts in accordance with the indicators established by EUROSTAT, the statistic service of the European Union (EUROSTAT 2007). The phases of the LA21's would faithfully follow the guidelines laid by the ICLEI and the Epistle of Aalborg, although in the diagnostic stage the study of problems and neccesities were adjusted to the theoretic framework of "urban ecology" according to the proposal of the organization *Barcelona Ecología* revolving around four analytic dimensions: compactness (constructive, urbanizing and in questions of mobility), complexity-diversity (as much economic as biologic), efficiency (energetic and environmental of urban metabolism**)** and *stability* (in terms of social cohesion and *quality of life*) (Rueda 1999, Cárdenas et al. 2008). This interesting innovation in the contents**,** nevertheless, ended up resulting problematic given that the reports of the first company that took charge of the technical studies of analysis (*Sondaxe S.L.*) did not meet the expectations of *Barcelona Ecología* which asted as conultants of *Eixo Atlântico* nor with those of many municipal technicians that evaluated the first reports. This was one of the reasons that motivated the substitution of the first company for the second organization in the middle of the process (other alleged reasons were the disparity of interpretations of the contract written between *Sondaxe* and the Eixo Atlântico, the deadlines and the presentational formats of the reports .

Of the 16 cities involved in the EIXO21 program there were two (Santiago de Compostela and A Coruña) that decided to disassociate from the coordination and united technical management carried out by the *Eixo Atlântico* through the companies that it contracted, for which their diagnoses and methods of participation did not follow the same guidelines nor the same calendar as the other 14. This aspiration to united management of many LA21's at the same time provided a reduction in relative costs, above all owing to the concentration of the general management of the processes, and, *a priori*, would generate comparable diagnoses. For the local governments, furthermore**,** everything was easiness and benefits in terms of widespread positive publicity and avoiding the principal management, given that this fell upon the *Eixo Atlântico* and on *Sondaxe*. The intention of synchronizing so many processes in so many diverse municipalities resulted, finally, futile**,** giving place to an arduous and enormous task of management that produced numerous conflicts between the managers and the town governments, delays of the processes publicly inexplicable in all 14 municipalities, and the abandonment**,** destitution**,** or substitution of part of the technical teams

(those contracted by *Sondaxe* to carry out the diagnoses, clearly not equal in their capacity on each side of the border). The selection of Lugo and Guimarães as object of our case studies was founded in that they were the municipalities where these LA21's were developed in the most apparently succesful manner – in terms of positive citizen repercussion and of having fully advanced in the planning process- and which the outside and municipal technicians who were consulted qualified as "good practices" (together with the cases of Monforte, Bragança and Chaves; none of the LA21's in large cities such as Porto or Vigo were valued very positively). It concern**s** two cities of medium size and with strong tradtional ties with their respective rural spaces. Lugo and Guimarães 160.000 (figures from 2001), but both are cities close to or integrated with important metroploitan areas (that of A Coruña-Ferrol, in the first case, and those of Braga and Oporto, in the second). It is of notable interest that among their similarities is that of possessing two historic city centres declared by UNESCO as Patrimony of Humanity (in the case of Lugo, only the wall that surrounds the historic centre**)** and that constitute their principal tourist attraction.

The intentions to homogenize the development of the LA21's in the 14 municipalities involved clashed with another added obstacle when distinct businesses were entrusted with the management of the processes of participation in the Galician and Portugues cities (*Cidadania Soc. Coop.* In the former and the university group acting as "consultant" *Civitas* in the latter, this last one afterwards substituted by *GEA, Grupo de Estudos Ambientais*). According to the assessments of the technical experts, both businesses worked without connection and distanced themselves methodologically as they advanced the processes**.** Whereas *Cidadania* held the roundtables and forums of participation after multiple contacts with politicians and municipal planners, (following their proposals close to models of "participative democracy": Lorenzo et al. 2005), *Civitas* and *GEA* almost reduced their commission to lead the public events of participation (following their convergent proposals between engineers concerned with environmental questions and other technical experts specialized in making environmental diagnoses, citizen "workshops" and conflict resolution, as is succintly manifest in their respective webpages, although GEA also mentions its disposal to support processes of "participatatory budgets**"** and of "participatory strategic plans"). In any case, it was the *Eixo Atlântico,* in much greater measure than each one of the local governments, which directed and supervised the whole of the EIXO21 program at the same time that it sought to harmonize all the cases inside of a common methodology, taking away autonomy as much from the contracted companies as from the municipal governemnts and social collectives invited to participate. At the same time, it was the outside technical experts (from the companies and universities) and from the municipalites (these with a key mediator role between all the actors) who really protagonized the

processes, driving them, envigorizing them, and mediating between all the parties and engaging politicians and citizens in its advance. What we have been able to determine in our evaluation is that the supervision of *Eixo Atlântico* reduced its range of action as the project and its internal conflicts of planning advanced, and as many of the town governments decided to contract other companies to carry out the Plan of Action or directly paralyzed the LA21 process (the latter was the case of the two principal cities: Vigo and Porto).

The process of citizen participation inside this framework remained necessarily subordinate to the specific decisions adopted by the municipal authorities, the representatives of the supra-municipal entity (*Eixo Atlântico*) and the managing company of the EIXO21 program (*Sondaxe*), and the three levels of technical experts that took part (those from the participation of *Cidadania*, *Civitas* and *GEA*, on the one hand, the muncipal planners, on the other, and most crucially, as mediators between all the parties, the "auditor" technical experts subcontracted by *Sondaxe)*. Secondly, the convened citizens found themselves also at the chance of the discontinuities and delays in the process owing to the already mentioned conflicts of project management. Thirdly, this methodological framework did not have general guarantees to avoid the typical problems of instrumentalization of the participation by the political representatives (with more publicity for the few events carried out that transcended the conclusions adopted in them.), of its technification (as much in the sense of converting itself in just a body of rules and professionally managed procedures by the technical experts of participation, as in the sense of impeding citizens from intelligbly accessing the contents of the reports about the multiple dimensions of ecologic sustainability) and its normative detachment (in the way in which the Plans of Action are neither approved nor developed, or that they do not translate into specific regulations and programs of participation which constitutes a problem common to all urban planning).

Succintly, it is fitting to point out some observations relating to the other methods that were not subject of our study, but rather our own tools in developing it. In particular, we refer to the documentary sources and the interviews and observations carried out. On the one hand, the principal documents consulted come from international, regional and municipal petitions, many of which are electronically available through the Internet, and it its absence, solicited directly from the corresponding institutions (the municipal record of proceedings, for example) or recompiled in newspaper archives, libraries, or in the headquarters of distinct organizations (the records of proceedings and reports relative to the forums, for example). The participation of one of the authors as a "technical assseor" of the urban fiscalization on accounts of the LA21s during eight months in 2004, provided a valuable source of information from the point of view of the participating

observation of the examined processes and of the direct knowledge of the actors and institutions involved. The hypotheses born during this period sirved to guide the entirety of the subsequent evaluative and inductive investigation, as well as to justify the selection of the most relevant cases as objects of comparison. Throughout 2007 we stroke up diverse in-depth interviews with people relevant to the LA21 processes. This moment signified that almost three years had passed since the LA21 forums in Lugo and Guimarães, almost four years since the contracting and execution of the LA21 reports in the cities adherent to Eixo Atlântico had started, and that in both cities the Plans of Action were being developed. Consequently, our study was frequently welcomed as a kind of external evaluation of these processes and the collected evalutions incorporated a full reflection about the happenings.

In the first phase, eight municipal technical experts in each city were interviewed, in addtion to three other cities (Santiago de Compostela, Oporto and Maia) before deciding the selection of the cases for comparison. In Lugo, two of the technical experts were external – hired specifically for the LA21 project- and in Guimarães, three. In this phase, by means of the interviews, we attempted to establish the attribution of responsibility and authority, as well as the flows of formal and informal communication between the different participating agents. In the second phase of the investigation more than thirty interviews in the two chosen cities were carried out, with a greater representation of entities in the case of Lugo. In this case they were distributed among those who pertained to organizations and those who had participated as individuals in the events of the LA21s. Some cases of sources that had not particpated in the LA21s but whose knowledge of the local reality and evaluation of the LA21 were considered important were also included.

6.4 The technical control of the dynamics of citizen particpation

The comparative examination of the LA21s of Lugo and Guimarães requires us to specify how the contextual and methodological constricitions alluded to previously were shown. In reference to the context, it will be necessary to go down to to the local arena to evaluate how the interactions between the local actors and the political and urban conditions of each municipality facilitated, or impeded, the LA21 process. In reference to the methods of participation we will compare the two foci applied by each of the external technical experts teams. We will begin with this second aspect and leave the first for the following epigraph**.**

Civitas and *Cidadania* are not companies with the same profile. The fisr, based in Lisbon, is a consultant for envirnomental matters, whereas the second is a cooperative company dedicated principally to social investigation. *Cidadania* is an independent entity, self-run, that carried out projects of analysis, education, and dynamization of social networks in the Galician sphere. For its part, *Civitas* is a group of investigation started in the *Universidade Nova de Lisboa*,
specialized in policies and indicators of sustainability. In *Civitas* can be seen, at the start of EIXO21, a full understanding of the LA21s, and in *Cidadania* a wide work experience with associations and participatory tecniques.

In any case, these teams were not hired for the same job, although both were supposed to develop the participation of EIXO21. *A priori,* from a perspective external to the planning their functions were identical, but the field investigation revealed numerous differences, not only in their foci and methods, but in their responsibilities in the project as well. In Portugal the organization and management of the events of particpation were entrusted as workshops of education and dynamization. That is to say, the activity of *Civitas* was limited to the direction of a few sessions in each locality (three forums and an educational workshop). At the same time, *Cidadania* was in charge of the complete organization of the participation, including its technical design, the selection and invitation of participants, the creation of politcal and technical commisions of participation, and the following of its progress. *Cidadania* worked from 2004 until 2007, carrying out five general forums, and one forum dedicated specifically to the rural environment. *Civitas* only directed the first two forums: March of 2004 and June of 2005. The fact that it was working from Lisbon raised the study costs so much that this consultant rejected the rest of the project, being substituted by another "consultant" closer territorially to the area of the study, *GEA,* a team from the *Universidade Católica de Porto* with a simlar profile to *Civitas*. In spite of the discontinuity in the organization of the participation, we see that the change in consultants did not present a greater disturbance than a change of faces. *GEA* had the same limited role as *Civitas*. Thus, these similarities between the two consultants permits us to compare their activities *en masse* with respect to the Galician *Cidadania* (see table 1).

Tabla 1. Differences in the methodological focuses in the participation in Guimarães (*Civitas/GEA*) and Lugo (*Cidadania*).

	Guimarães (CIVITAS/GEA)	Lugo (CIDADANIA)
Autonomy of management	Less technical control of the process.	Exclusive control of the process.

Convocatory of the events	Not responsible for the selection of participants.	Selected and invited the attendees (letter, telephone, email).
Design of the timeline of participation	Does not set the calendar of forums. Institutionalizes the process subjecting the convocatories to the Chambers andSondaxe.	Set the calendar but subordinate to the parallel advances en of the Technical Fiscalization on Accounts.
Number of forums	Reduced numbero of meetings. Follows with formalism the model.	Greater number of meetings. Energizes and adapts to each locality in the process.
Process stability	More even. There is an annual meeting of the LA21.	Tried to support continuity. Uneven results. Anounces the next convocation at the close of the session.
Duration of the sessions	Long sessions, around 4 hours. Exhausting.	Two hour sessions. Rushed.
Concepción de la participación	Integrates the distincs actors (technicians, politicians y social representatives) in the same event.	Distingushes actors and creates three types of rmeetings: technical and political commisions, and citizen forums.
Resources and materials	Preeminence of the image over the word: postcards, maps, y pictures.	Discussion is more conceptual than iconographic. Privilege of the topic and discourse.
Kinds of discourse	The sessones also include conferences and roundtables. Educational spirit.	There are no conferences, only discussion of the study groups. Deliberative spirit.
Group size	Smaller and more numerous study groups.	Larger study groups.
Study of contents in groups	In the final forums they abandon the study in topical groups. The groups are operative, but all study the same documents.	Maintain the distribution of the particpants in topical study groups until the end of the process.
Evaluation	Continual evaluation of the procsso: at the end of each session.	Final evaluation of the process, a specific forum.
Managing role of the team in the process	Change of the technical participation team.	Did not change, even broadened its function sin the LA21.
Exposure of the documentation	Greater difusion. The reports of the participation can be consulted openly in internet. Publicity.	Less difusion of the results. There are no particpation documents on the internet.
Difusión of data	Publicity of the participation.	Privacy. Protection of persoanl data.

Source: Own elaboration from documents and interviews.

Given that one of the principal problems of the pluralist paradigm of "consultation and consensus" is the efficacy of the voice of the different actors, we will indicate some particular points of this problem in both cases. The selection of the participants in Lugo permitted *Cidadania* to balance the attendance, attracting the greatest degree of social diversity *possible* inside of the local associative context. The profile of the associations attending the participatory events was varied, covering a large part of its typology, except for the recreational groupos which did not take part in the conferences. According to local sources, the sports clubs of Lugo declared their intention to abstain from participating in "political questions". As for the rest, we noted the presence of private individuals that knew of the conferences, which were open, through the media. These individuals had a previous knowledge of and interest in the LA21s. The first three forums (June 2004, September 2004 and September 2005) had a large response, with 80, 43 and 45 people attending, respectively. Subsequently, this number fell noticably, to almost twenty. *Cidadania* also organized parallel meetings with the political representatives, "political commisions", and with the municipal technicians, "technical commisions". The objective was to undersand in depth their opinions of the LA21s, as well as to obtain information about the municipal administration. With this, *Cidadania* avoided having city planners and politicians monopolize the citizen forums with their speeches. In fact, very few of them attended these meetings. Despite the success of attendance in the first forum, it can be seen that citizen interest in attending this type of particpative events fell

immediately, added to the large intervals of time which separated each forum (see table 2).

Tabla 2. Attendance at the forums Lugo.

Participatory events in Lugo	Number of participants
1st Forum 21/06/04	83
2ndForum 28/09/04	43
"Rural" topical forum 28/02/05	20
3rd Forum 29/09/05	45
4th Forum 21/12/05	18
5th Forum 3/2007	26

Source: Own elaboration from the Plan of Action of the LA21 of Lugo and *Cidadania*.

In the data of the previous table it could be added that the total number of participants is 119 people. Of these, we estimate that 30, including in this category mayors, syndicate representatives and political parties, are linked to public administration. As we can see, the volume of this category contrasts notably with what fared in Guimarães. In Lugo the most frecuent profile of attendants in the forums is that of members of civic associations, with an average of 25 people in each forum. The figures of Table 2 contain, lastly, the possibility of an over-estimation of the actual attendance given that in the data examined we detect some duplicities of people representing various entities (the same applies to Table 3).

In the case of Guimarães it was the municipal department of the Environment that was responsible for publicizing the conference. Between 200 and 300 invitations were sent according to the edition, although the invitiations went increasing: associations, businesses, individuals, etc. The attendance in the different forums also grew (55, 76 and 84 people), but the profile of the participants tended to be homogenous (see Table 3). The greater part, around 90%, were city planners and technicians (an average of 14), politcal representatives of the parishes (22), from politcal parties and employees in semipublic companies. We understand, thusly, that there does not exist an optimal social representation. Nevertheless, those interviewed for this study argued that the people attending the forums occupied very central positions in distinct networks of informal communication. Therefore, their capacity for citizen representation would increase indirectly. In any case, their presence could also be explained by the absence of political roundtables or specific techniques in Guimarães that channel the opinions of that collective, as opposed to those available in Lugo.

Table 3. Asistencia a los foros of Guimarães.

Participatory events in Guimarães	# participants
1º Forum 03/03/04	55
2º Forum 29/06/05	76
Taller "educación para la sostenibilidad" 06/06/06	94
3º Forum 13/10/06	84

Source: Own elaboration from records of elaborated by *Civitas* and from the municipal webpage.

In second place, the social profile of the participation in each locality was guided by different funtions. In Lugo there stands out a representative and informative-consultative function in the three first forums, and deliberative and evaluative functions in the latter two. Given the decrease in participants, we consider that the deliberative and decision-making functions that could have increased the margin of citizen participation did not manage to implement themselves effectively, leaving the experience of the LA21, in general, at a merely consultative level. In Guimarães, despite the homogenity of its participants, only formative anf informative-consultative functions were worked in depth. The level of the consultation was high, as a technical profile predominated, approaching that of a *corporate negotiation.* In neither of the two cases, however, was an optimal participation reached. These forums limited themselves to ritualized forms of participation in which predominated the conference (a varied expression of information and opinions) and an implicit consensus with the conclusions of each forum, achieved more by omission than as a result of evaluating in depth distinct alternatives and adopting consequent decisions and compromises of importance beyond the events.

In third place, at the same time as the social reach of the convokation to the participative events (authentic social institutions with their spaces, times, and rules of relation), in the comparative table we have marked distinct aspects of the same method of materialization of these institutions (the *practices)* that illuminate even more their limitations. On the one hand, it seems like *Cidadania* took more care of some formal aspects of the events favorable to the dynamization of the participation: the restricted duracion of the sessions to two hours, the greater number of encounters, the work with larger groups and the continuity of the thematic groups. The time limitation tried to avoid tiring the participants, as much by the pernicious effects that group discussion provokes, as the possible dis-incentives in subsequent conferences. And the intention to carry out numeorus periodic encounters could maintain the interest of the particpants avoiding that the attendants "cool off" and creating a sense of continuity and progress. Sadly, this periodicity of the encounters could not be carried out due to coordination problems with the planning manager (*Sondaxe* y *Eixo Atlântico*), and the postponement *sine die* of the successive reunions discredited the initial good proposals.

The size of the groups in Lugo, between five and twelve people, also propitiated the in-depth deliberation of the expounded arguments . The smaller groups, such as those that were generated in the heart of the encounters of Guimarães, depend excessively on the individual personality and their capacity to influence one or two people. In small groups the positions reach a stalemate or are rescinded without discussion. The continuity of the topical groups of Lugo also achieved the in-

depth progress relating to each topic and the dynamization of the discussions. Lastly, *Cidadania* decided on a final evaluation of the process, but given the low representation of the last forum, this process could not be completed as it should have.

Civitas and *GEA* designed the sessions in distinct forms. The forums were carried out in long sessions of up to five hours in duration. A real marathon of collective discussion. The encounters were limited to three with an annual periodicity These fixed dates gave an image of stability to the process and reinforced the confidence of the particpants. But, again, we estimate that the long time intervals between each encounter cooled the process and obliged them, in a certain sense, to begin from zero in each forum. In addition, the small groups in which they were divided did not count with sufficient references so as to center the discussions, which reduced the intensity of the reflections. On the other hand, we found an asymmetric treatment of the topics. First they are discussed in sectorial rouundtables divided in small units; than, these small groups begin to discuss the totality of the pertinent topics; afterwards, a topical seminar of educational type was convened, in which conference had privilege over discussion; and, finally, it returned to the generalist discussion of the proposals. This does not favor an in-depth discussion of the questions that surrounded the topic, but, as counterbalance, gives the attendees an apreciable group vision. The most negative aspect of this panoramic work on topics of sustainability is that the participants leave with the impression of having discussed many questions, but with few people in each subgroup, and without reaching a shared criteria nor a consensus about many of them. Nevertheless, in the case of Guimarães we cannot forget the professional profile of the attendees, familiarized with this knowledge and with the political mechanisms which the municipality has to employ it. This feature generated a common substratum favorable to discussion and social positions favorable to the political implementation of the results of these discussions. Neverthelss, it converted the forums more into spaces of bureaucratic or corporate negotiation than in spaces of fully democratic participaiton.

In Lugo and Guimarães, definitely, two models of participative institutions not strictly antagonistic, but substantially different were developed. *Cidadania* got a headstart in the process. They intended to start a debate which, maintained in time and specialized in a series of topics, would manage to propose achievable actions. The objective was the Plan of Action and the introduction of a dynamic of work in the local social networks. Parallely, its technical experts organized meetings of neighborhood associations that used learning and communication as interactive forms of cooperation. The expectations were high, but these efforts did not yield the corresponding fruits. From the beginning, this was due to the directive problems of the planning of EIXO21 that affectd

the genral rhythm of the process. The participation also declined because the final phase of the LA21 coincided with a recessive cycle of social activism in Lugo. In Guimarães, however, the planning problems did not seriously affect the process of *participation.* The model of a more punctual and intensive participation in annual forums was better adapted to the necessities of planning of these dimensions. Thus, although it did not cause neither a deep nor an obliging deliberation, it could meet its expectations without generating discontent. In this case, furthermore, we have been able to verify that the particpation increased, but more as a reflection of a political strategy of corporate inclusion, owing to the professional and laboral interestes of the greater part of the attendees that joined themselves harmonically to the demands of participation in the LA21 on the part of the municipal government.

6.5 The local stucture of constraints on citizen participation

In the city of Lugo there exists a relatively high number of registered civic associations (311 according to data from 2004, with a rate of 3.4 per 1,000 inhabitants, below the average of 5 in Galicia:Veloso 2005: 244) but few are really active and few function in a democratic manner according to the municipal technician of participation. This last source, nevertheless, estimates that the number of registered associations is greater than 400; the register of the autonomus government, probably without rectifying the retirements, offers a figure of 729 assocaitions of all types, among which 61 are of a neighborhood character and only 7 of them have been established before 1990. The associations in Lugo are principally recreational in nature, followed by cultural and neighborhood. In particular, the expansion of asociationswas late in this city compared to other cities of the State: it began around the year 1995 and not in the late 1970's. The associative collective hardly includes publicly reclamative organizations; ludic, recreative and educational associations predominate, as well as an insitiutionalized dynamic of economic dependency on the subsidies that come from the Administrations. The catastrophies of the *Prestige* and the war in Iraq, nevertheless, spurred the citizenry to organize and publicly particpate, initiating a new activation of social networks. The affiliation with associations is very scarce and the predominant profile of the activists is directed commonly towards the management of the organization, although in punctual episodes they show their capacity for mobilization and social sensitization. Between the associations there are narrow informal relations and, therefore, much mutual understanding given that it is a relatively small city. However, the collaboratiuon is less in spite of various initiatives to concentrate forces which we were told of. In the present there exists an active forum of associations with few integrating entitities but counting among them the more dynamic in the public space.

As is frequent in other cities, the institutional relations between associations and with the local government tend to be dyed by "political prejudice". In many associations the others are characterized according to their closeness to one or other political parties. In any case, many associations are critical of the favorist political tradition of Lugo (Lamela 1998). In fact, the participation in the LA21 was well received because the process started off in an expansice cycle of social activism and not tied to the habitual favorist transactions. Nevertheless, the last particpatory meetings of the LA21 took place in a period of recession and decrease of the associative actvivites given that many collectives experienced a process of internal renewal during the years that the LA21 continued (some of the first particpants, for example, stopped living in the city months or years afterwards). The particpants, in any case, praised the tecniques and methods that they disposed of for the participation, and the work dynamic was positively valued by the practical totality of those interviewed. The criticisms of the attendees centered on the *idealsim* of the material. Few trusted in the execution of those proposals of environmental susainability. One part of the particpants also criticized the abandonments of the LA21 process. Normally, the most critical voices of these delays were those people who came to the last encounters. This means that for the most faithful or hopeful the ruptures of the process represented a deception. Lastly, the greater part of the consulted particpants assured that they would repeat the experience. In this respect, many people pointed out that the biggest problem is disposing of hours to particpate.

Consequently, the high participation in the LA21 of Lugo responds primarily to a joint explanation: between 2003 and 2004 there was a citizen excitement without precedent. It can also be indicated the existing interest in environmental problems and the curiosity about these particpatory events. However, the participation was weakened by planning problems that excessively expanded the conferences, and also by the internal renewal of the collectives. There are numerous cases of representatives that succeeded in the name of the same entity. The local associative networks of Lugo which were approached portray a city where everyone knows each other, where some get together to play sports or go on excursions, where others try to obtain subsidies, and where the reinvidicative force is concentrated in a few collectives. These last groups combine different sensibilities in a diffuse network of alternative social movements (ecologists, feminists, syndicalists, artists, galicians, sexual liberation, etc.) The neighborhood associations, for their part, continue showing a great capacity of influence, above all in the newly built neighborhoods and in the rural areas. In general, these two types of associations (alternative and neighborhood) are who most decry the political instrumentalization of their collectives in processes like the LA21.

On the other hand, the growing citizen participation in Lugo indicates the existence of a recent

cycle of ascending intensity in the interactions between associations and the local government. From the point of view of the demographic composition, since 2002 there can be seen a notable growth in the immigrant population and since 1995 there began to be seen the importance of the university campus in the city with an important increase in the number of students and new professionals that gather. The ascending local presence of the university adds a new local value with the scientific understanding and the professionals that it produces. From the socio-economic point of view, although the city continues exercising a strong influence on the rural spaces that surround it, in the last decade the activities of administration and service off all kinds have increased considerably. The declaration of the Roman Wall as "Patrimony of Humanity" by UNESCO (2000) also had repercussions that were social(an international recognition that makes proud its population, strengthening the local identity), economic (the affluence of visitors who demanded services and foster local commerce) and cultural (the tourist projection also motivates the programation of celebrations, expositions and other events that benefit the residents). The recent switches in the local and provincial governments (with the loss of thew hegemony of the Popular Party in 1999 and 2007, respectively) caused each time an alteration of the traditional and very iron-bound favoritist relations dominant in the city. In fact, the LA21 process was adopted by the mayor's office as a strong obligation inside of the new style of planning in the city and even hired another company to complete the Plan of Action when it considered insufficient that offered by *Eixo Atlântico*. Lastly, the develoment of the LA21 benefited from the temporal simultaneity of two parallel local planning processes, the Strategic Plan and the General Plan of Urban-Municipal Ordinance. This "planning explosion" initially provoked perplexion (the populace confused the convocations for the Strategic Plan and the LA21) but also spread socially new figures and formulae of organization and political participation that opened the path for the LA21.

As can be deduced in this rapid description of the local context of socio-political interactions, the particular cycle of associative expansion and social change in its different planes (demographic, political, economic, cultural, etc.) favored the positive progress of the LA21 in Lugo. All the limitations pointed out in the previous epigraph in respect to the information managed, the organization of the participaory events, the type of collectives attending or the political consequences of the process, were valued as secondary by the greater part of the participants. Instead, they appreciated the small advances in the new "participatory culture" as another symptom of the recent local political change and of the advances in matters of urban planning that the city needed, without waiting with them a radical change towards a new type of particpatory democracy.

In the case of Guimarães we can also distinguish the existence of an important number of

associations: 185 according to official data from 2004, although with the lowest rate – 1.2 per 1,000 inhabitants- of all the north of Portugal – with an average of 2.1-, in relation to the number of inhabitants: Veloso 2005: 242. In 2007 several qualified sources, however, estimated at more than 300 the cultural associatives, including some 110 recreational ones. In the 1990's there began a cycle of creation of cooperative businesses to manage municipal sevices in which part of the partipants in associations integrated themselves. The capital of these cooperatives, numbering around 10, belongs in its majority to the municipal government, but the sources declared that the cooperatives functioned in a very autonomous manner. The greater part of the associative entities are implied in the management of some kind of public service, such as, for example, social assistence and parents groups at schools. Sports groups are the most numerous, followed by cultural associations. The organization by *freguesias* or parrish-districts disperse the associative network throughout the whole municipality. In Portugal, furthermore, each *freguesia* has an elected authority distinct from the municipal governments. The associations possess a long tradition, some go back to the beginning of the 20th century, although a large part came about following the democratization of the country in 1974. In actuality they are immersed in a cycle of institutionalization of their activities, at the same time that the compromise and activism of the affiliates is decreasing. Their activities are fundamentally ludic, recreative and charitable. The reinvindicative associations are hardly existent and are restricted almost exclusively to the syndicates. The only reinvindicative experiences of the last two decades that we recover from the memory of those interviewed allude to small actions at the parrochial level that demanded a service (maintaining a train station) and some residual protests in support of the independence of East Timor. In general, many associations are linked to the Catholic Church. The typical profile of the activist that lived through the Revolution of the Carnations has given way today to a professionalized profile of administrative manager.

The relations between collectives, such as occurs in Lugo, are also strict, and belonging to several associations is frequent. The relations with the local institutions are familiar and continuous: the associations are implicated in municipal projects, and from this they derive a good part of their funding. That which most interests us to emphasize here is that only a very low percentage of the local associations participated in the LA21. Even if the participative events of the LA21 in this city counted with more attendees than in Lugo, these did not represent a unique collective nor the majority of activists or associative affiliates. The majority of the particpants in Guimarães, as we have already observed, were municipal experts or managers of semipublic cooperative businesses. This does not impede the recognition that their evaluations also were highly positive and affirmed that they were fully satisfied with the themes and the organization of the LA21. Furthermore, many

commented that they are practices ever more frequent in the municipality.

In Guimarães, therefore, the local associations are historically consolidated and institutionally implicated in thelocal life, after the 1980's when there was more confrontation with the previous planning team of the municipal government. The number of activists is low, but the activities that the associations manage and offer has an elevated number of users. With respect to particpation in the LA21 we can observe a more corporate and elitist model than that of Lugo, which can be characterized as more pluralist and deliberative. In the *participatory* events, then, the attendees unfurled broad understanding in local policy, public management and environmental questions. In this sense, the attendees broadened the contents of the LA21s via their informal loops of communication in such a way that the growing and enthusiastic attendance of the forums of particpation strengthened the open-door tendency of the local institutions already initiated in the 1990's with the creation of the "municipal cooperatives". According to what we were frequently told, this prototype of attendee "knows everone" and, because of this, becomes a crucial communicative link in the local social networks. The involvement of the municipal government with the LA21 also was very noteworhty throughout the process, even mobilizing all of its own Department of the Environment to redact the Plan of Action when the services of *Eixo Atlântico* resulted insufficient. The LA21 also coincided in time with the Plan of Social Development (PSD) that shared similar particpative foci, which generated good dispositions on the part of the actors towards meetings and coordinations with the proposals in the LA21. Compared with the PSD and the established formulae of semipublic management**,** the LA21 brought more methodological novelties in terms of debate and participation.

The Municipal of Guimarães, governed by the Socialist Party during more than 16 years with a high electoral support, has woven in its latest mandates very institutionalized networks of sociocommunitary action that, as a consideration**,** inspire confidence in the participation in municipal events. In fact, thanks to these institutionalized networks numerous equipments and semipublic management services have been generated **(**in these *cooperative* businesses the local administration forms part of the direct counsel with effective capacity to veto) that have considerably increased the local quality of life in the last decade and a particular politcial favoritism as the directors of these companies tend to share political affinity with the munincipal government. The *cooperatives* manage services such as sports installations, auditoriums and show halls, nursery schools and nursing homesloc of training and laboral insertion, etc. A good part of the more active associations and collectives of the municipality collaborate in some local programation, such as film festivals, local holidays, etc**.** Furthermore, we should note that the municipalities in Portugal had a

large relevance in political terms (in respect to competition and economic capacity) given that there does not exist any intermediary administration (*regional,* with legislative and executive character**)** between the State and the local sphere. In fact, a good part of the summit of this semipublic sector is a result of the economic recession in which the traditional productive sectors (principally the textile industry: Pereira 1999) have sunk and which have have redistributed part of its operating personnel towards the *cooperatives* and towards other terciary activities linked with the rehabilitation and touristic expoitation of the historic patrimony, and with its university campus, in similar form to that described in Lugo.

In summary, Guimarães is a municipality that enjoys a high social and political stability. At the economic level it has suffered a strong reconversion of the textile sector, historic motor of its strength as settlement of working and middle class. In local politics a strategy of creation of equipments and sevices with public funding has been followed, and which has incorporated numerous professional frames of the associations for its management. In this way, the members of these *cooperatives* of public service have been those who have taken effect as *particpants* in the LA21. We can deduce**,** consequently**,** that the protganonist role of the town planners in this case has been extended even to the very particpatory events, removing from these their pluralist openings while giving them a favorable public image.

6.6 Conclusions

The processes of LA21 consitute a clear example of strategic planning revolving around global environmental questions from local spaces. The international consensus that has driven them involves that the municipal govenments are the principal organizing perfomers of the LA21s. Independently of the scarce efficacy of these administrative instances and processes to intervene in the global ecology, it can be appreciated that the LA21s establish a new model of neopluralist governability that promotes citizen participation, but which is limited inside of the established institutional paths. As the two cases examined in our investigation have shown, the practices of participation actually developed in the LA21s reporduce serious problems of understanding, plurality, representation and citizen control of the processes that do not permit the substancial advancement neither in the particpative democracy nor in an ecologically sustainable social organization. Furthermore**,** the effects of political legitmization of the local authorities that this model of institutionalized particpation produces impede, in our judgement, the qualification, recognition and development of other forms more autonomous, decisive and with direct citizen

participation.

In spite of this general evaluation, we have seen that in the cities of Lugo and Guimarães the LA21s received very positive evaluations from their organizations and the attendees of the two particpatory events. As we have tried to show, we believe that the explicative factors of these evaluations are based in the methodological qualities of the management of the processes by the civil servants and politicians, and in the local politcial structures of each town. In both cases, the external and municipal planning experts, more so than the "political will" of the local authorities (although the resolute wager of the mayors in favor of the LA21s was also a *conditio sine qua non*), have played a crucial part in the mediation, communicaiton and control of the participatory processes. Despite these perceived differences, the apparent success of these two processes of LA21 resides in the confluence of the local context (with all the cyclical variations and circumstances and local conflicts already pointed out), the methods of participation (with all the singularities, differences of focus and limitations already indicated) and the intense "activism" of the planning experts throughout the process. In the case of Lugo, however, these factors combined together to give place to a certain pluralist opening of the participative events to the local associative networks in relative coherence with the international coordinates of the LA21s (although without the involvement of business interests). On the other hand, in Guimarães a certain elitism was reproduced, including in the participative events, more in agreement with other neocorporate processes of city planning. In both cases the general activism of the planning experts highlights therelevance of the bureaucrtatic and elitist dimension of the processes of LA21. The two process were influenced, in any case, by the paradigm of "consultation and consensus" that permits an elevated yielding to the municipal government in terms of "marketing", legitiimization, regulation and masking of the social conflicts, and, therefore, of urban governability, independently of the scarce social diversity that necessarily results included in them. Lastly, in both cities it was shown that these methods of participation were crossed with technical and political conflicts in distinct levels (here we have explicitly emphasized those which occurred in the supralocal level of the euroregional association of municipalities where the launching of the LA21s was managed) and that the search for "consensus" in environmental matters hides recurrent conflicts and inequalities in the whole of the local society.

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