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http://hdl.handle.net/11067/432

Metadados

Data de Publicação	2010
Resumo	Políticos, técnicos e cidadãos têm o mesmo "modelo" de cidade? Ã? possível, sem a participação pública, afirmar que as cidades contemplam as aspirações de todos e todas? A amostra utilizada abrangeu os políticos, técnicos e cidadãos que participaram no Programa Polis em Vila Nova de Gaia - Portugal. Foram usados inquéritos e entrevistas semi - estruturadas. Numa primeira parte focou-se a importância da participação pública e o envolvimento das populações no planeamento urbano em geral. A respost...
Palavras Chave	Planeamento urbano - Participação do cidadão
Tipo	article
Revisão de Pares	Não
Coleções	[ULL-FAA] RAL, n. 2 (1.º semestre 2011)

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ACHIEVE A REPRESENTATIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE DEBATE OF OUR CITIES?[1]

Cecília Delgado[2]

Resumo

Políticos, técnicos e cidadãos têm o mesmo "modelo" de cidade? É possível, sem a participação pública, afirmar que as cidades contemplam as aspirações de todos e todas?

A amostra utilizada abrangeu os políticos, técnicos e cidadãos que participaram no Programa Polis em Vila Nova de Gaia - Portugal. Foram usados inquéritos e entrevistas semi - estruturadas. Numa primeira parte focou-se a importância da participação pública e o envolvimento das populações no planeamento urbano em geral. A resposta à primeira questão foi quase unanimemente positiva, ou seja, é importante as pessoas participarem. Por outro lado, a nossa amostra, defende que os cidadão genericamente não participam.

Numa segunda fase inquiriu-se a amostra sobre a importância de um conjunto de indicadores para a qualidade de vida urbana (políticos e técnicos - análise quantitativa) e o conceito de cidade ideal (políticos, técnicos e cidadãos – análise qualitativa).

A visão obtida através da metodologia quantitativa tende a referir como parâmetros mais importantes para a qualidade de vida urbana os transportes públicos, a qualidade ambiental e os espaços verdes, em detrimento da proximidade entre funções ou da sociabilidade.

Quando se questionaram os políticos e os técnicos sobre a descrição da cidade ideal (analise qualitativa) foram sublinhadas os factores de proximidade, casa - trabalho, casa – equipamentos de apoio, ou casa - comércio, e inclusivamente, parâmetros como a sociabilidade e sentimento de vizinhança. Estes parâmetros foram igualmente destacados pela amostra de cidadãos.

Ou seja, políticos, técnicos e cidadãos discordam em relação à visão quantitativa aferida através do modelo de qualidade de vida urbana, mas partilham um mesmo "modelo" cognitivo de cidade ideal. Neste sentido, os resultados confirmam a pertinência do debate i.e., da participação de todos e todas na esfera pública.

Palavras-chave

Participação pública; planeamento urbano; qualidade de vida urbana; modelo de cidade.

Abstract

Do technicians, politicians and citizens have the same model of city? And if not, can we, without the public participation, be certain that our cities reflect the aspirations of all?

Using semi-structured interviews we cross-examined our target sample (politicians, citizens and technicians that participate in the urban rehabilitation of Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal). Questions focused on the importance of the public participation in urban planning and if people got involved in planning issues in general. The answer to the 1st question tended to be – 'yes' and to the 2nd question tended to be – "no".

In a second stage we asked about the importance of different indicators of urban life quality (both politicians' and technicians' point of view, from a quantitative approach) and the

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[1] Este artigo foi inicialmente publicado nas Actas da 2.º Annual Conference on Planning Research Evaluation in Planning - CITTA, Faculdade de Engenharia da Universidade do Porto (2010).

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concept of ideal city (politicians, technicians and citizens, from a qualitative approach).

In the quantitative methodology, politicians and technicians are inclined to answer within a theoretical model, stating that public transports, environmental quality, green spaces, or even security feelings are much more important than proximity or sociability.

However, when confronted with quantitative questions about urban life quality both technicians and politicians stress the importance of factors such as proximity (home – work, home - equipments of support, home – commercial places) or other components like sociability and sense of neighbourhood, i.e., parameters that assume great importance for our citizens' panel, which allow us to consider that this could be a more urban friendly model and to confirm why it is so important to improve the discussion within the public sphere.

Key-words

Public participation; urban planning; urban life quality; city model

1. Introduction

Cities are the result of endless complexity of appropriations: the people who live in cities (men, women, elder and youth, literate and illiterate, poor and wealthy, a mixture which has attracted people to urban areas. According to "The State of the World Population" report (2009) urban population represents 50% of the total world population and 75% of the total population from developed countries.

However urban planning is done by a small group of "citizens" (the ones that are technicians) who rarely matches the diversity of the people living in the cities, as well as by politicians, mostly elected through a representative democracy, which have by this way the right and duty to decide the policies that shape the urban planning of our cities, under the umbrella of an electoral program, seldom discussed and seldom assimilated by ordinary people.

These findings lead us to our hypothesis: do technicians, politicians and citizens have the same model of city? And if not, can we, without the public participation, be certain that our cities reflect the aspirations of all?

What led us to this hypothesis?

Cognitive sciences have demonstrated that the phenomenon of consciousness is individual, i.e., each individual obtaining a single picture of reality (Damásio, 2000) and that reality interpretation is influenced by cultural and social phenomena (Hall, 1986). Further, there have been studies showing that there is an acculturation taste during the education of architects (Hershberger, 1988). At the same time we know, from the study "Architect Profession" by Cabral & Borges (2006) that in Portugal the "endogamy" of the social recruitment of the architect's students is only being exceeded by the young medical students, but also that each group acts according to his professional culture, which makes the city - when without public participation – the ideological product of architects and politicians only i.e., the ones who plan and run cities.

Current urban theories point to the need to reshape the urban planning in order to attend people´s needs: Ascher (2007); the New Charter of Athens - European Council of Spatial Planners (2003); and the "New Vision for Planning" - Royal Town Planning Institute (2003).

The call for citizen participation in decision-making is one of the strategies of European Union policies since the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999): "decisions are taken in a manner as open as possible and as closer as possible to the citizens", to the recent Green Paper of Territorial Cohesion (2008) which states " the objective of territorial cohesion could probably be achieved only if the corresponding policies are defined and implemented in a more involved way".

In Portugal the right to participation is provided in the Portuguese Constitution (1976), in the Code of Administrative Procedure and in various instruments of spatial planning, but the percentage of people participating in the discussion of planning issues is scarce. One example is the citizens' participation in the National Plan of Territorial Planning Policies - PNPOT, according to the "PNPOT - Results Report" were 109 individuals suggestions registered (Portugal has 10,617,575 residents (INE[3]. 2007) and a total of 189 suggestions, including Local Authorities, Associations, Universities, Public Services, etc.. in Vila Nova de Gaia, our case study, during the period of initial suggestions to the Vila Nova de Gaia Master Plan - PDM only 1.317 citizens' gave any input out 310.086 inhabitants (INE 2007).

According to Oliveira (2004) public participation is important because: can cover Administration's lack of reality knowledge on which they have to decide, therefore can serve as a means of collecting additional information; fosters dialogue between the Government and individuals, which brings an improved acceptance of decisions of the Administration from its recipients (even if the solutions are unfavourable), can be seen as an instrument of social peace; serves also as a mechanism of Administration transparency; works as a way of control of Administrative decisions with the advantage, in relation to the mechanisms of judicial control, to operate *a priori* (i.e., before the decisions have been taken) and not, as those mechanisms, the post (after the decision); and finally is a way of promoting the democratic spirit.

The democracy concept, hallmark of modern societies, implies the obligation of listening to popular will. During last decade there has been an increase of people abstention in elections. For example in Portugal[4], with rare exceptions, the participation in elections has declined. Since the index record from 1979 (a democracy peak, Portugal had lived until 1974 in a dictatorship government), when was counted one abstention rate of 28.26% in local elections, and a national record in 1980 with an abstention rate of only 16% for the Assembly of the Republic elections, the current levels of abstention rate are running about 40%. Regarding European Parliament elections the results are even more constraining: it comes from one abstention rate of 27.58% in 1987 and moved to an abstention rate of 61.40% in 2004.

Although there are no statistics showing the citizens alienation in relation to the administrative problems it is common sense that people have no interest and moved away from this thematic, which consequently reduces the possibility of their needs and aspirations being addressed in political discourse.

The debate on public participation is extremely important, among other reasons because we know now that planning is not neutral (Greed, 2003) and (Madariaga, 2006). Therefore it is urgent to think about: "Who does the planning?; Who is the team policy?; Which groups are taken into account into the act of planning?; How are the statistics made, which groups are included?; What are the key values, priorities and objectives of the plan?; Who is consulted and who is involved in the process participation?; How are evaluated plans' proposals? And by whom?; How are urban policies implemented, monitored and managed?; and last, if the issues of gender mainstreaming are being fully integrated into all policy areas?"[5].

On the other hand we know from demographic trends that there is a marked increase of population age. According to the Eurostat report: "Population and social conditions" (Giannakouris, 2008), over 40% of the population will be 65 years old or over by 2060. Furthermore, we know that elderly people are one of the groups most dependent from the care support traditionally provided by women and meanwhile as it is shown in the report "The

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[3] National Institute of Statistics - Portugal.

[4] Data collected from the National Commission of Elections – Portugal.

[5] Our own adaptation from Gender Equality and Plan Making: Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit. London: Royal Town Planning Institute. Greed, Clara and others (2003).

life of women and men in Europe: a statistical portrait" (2008) women are each day more present in the labour market, an achievement with serious social implications, such as the decline in birth rate and reduction of family support (children and elderly).

3. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

In order to determine the most appropriate city's models for the population's needs, several studies have been conducted mainly under the theme of urban life quality. One of the main problems of these studies, from our point of view, is the fact that comparisons between the different groups are rarely established, i.e., those who live in the cities (citizens), the ones who decide the spatial planning (technicians), and the ones who have the power to make the urban policy (politicians). Furthermore, quantitative approaches are predominantly used.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1. Citizens, technicians and politicians (the sample)

Our sample is composed by citizens, politicians and technicians which were part of one urban intervention called "Program Polis" accomplished between 2000 and 2008, in Vila Nova de Gaia. The "Program Polis" is a territorial intervention launched by the Portuguese government, with financial support from the European Community, the central government and the local authorities. The main aims were: creation of new urban centralities within the metropolitan areas; reconstruction and upgrading urban and environmental qualification of urban spaces and creation of factors leading to new identities; strengthening and consolidation of a balanced urban system in national terms, based on the network of medium-sized cities, which ensure quality of life and environmental conditions.

The city of Vila Nova de Gaia is located on the south bank of Douro River, with the city of Oporto on the north. It was one of the 18 Portuguese cities that joined the government initiative in 2000. In the specific case of Vila Nova de Gaia, the intervention involved the preparation of 4 detailed urban plans which covered one area of 210 hectares with very different territorial situations: clandestine areas, densely populated areas and expectant areas, and also several projects such as the improvement of accessibility to the riverside, including the creation of a bicycle path and the construction of small local facilities to support fishing and typical outdoors community laundry.

In the selection of our sample we chose to inquire a group of 100 students belonging to the 12th grade (the year preceding university in Portugal) from Inês de Castro High School, which is the only school of this educational level in the area. A significant portion of students (62%) has 17 years. There is a predominance of girls (60%), versus (40%) of boys. The ages of 16 and 17 years represent the core of the sample with 50 girls (83.4%) and 34 boys (85%).

Taking into account the politicians and technicians group we chose to inquiry all the technicians and politicians involved in the program. The total sample population was 81 individuals. Of these, 26 were classified as politicians, due to their political profile and role in "Program Polis". It included all the elements of the GaiaPolis Management Board (the local company that managed "Program Polis") i.e., the representatives of the Regional Development Coordination Committee-North – CCDR-N (the department from the government that runs the territorial policies in the north of Portugal), the one representing Parque Expo (the company that was appointed by the government to do the "Strategy Plans" of the 18 cities, and was chosen to manage 10 local interventions), and a representative of the chairman of the Vila Nova de Gaia City Council. It also includes the Presidents of the 4 local Parishes cover by the

area of "Program Polis", the 3 National Coordinators of the "Program Polis, the 3 chairmen of the Parque Expo and some experts from the Vila Nova de Gaia City Council.

In the group of technicians (N=55) we included the authors and collaborators of the 4 detailed urban plans, the architects (some from the GaiaPolis projects and others contracted by the owners of the main lots), junior architects contracted by GaiaPolis to do technical support, some technicians of CCDR-N and the City Council, and also the GaiaPolis technicians team.

The ages of these two groups ranged between 28 and 70 years. There are no women in the group of politicians and 38.3% women representation in the technicians group.

The education level of these two groups is equal or greater than the university degree; however in the group of politicians there are three cases lower than that the university degree.

The academic field predominant in the technical group is architecture (80, 9%), and in the political group is civil engineering (47.6%).

Almost half of our sample lives in Oporto city (42.6%), one-quarter lives in Vila Nova de Gaia (29.4%) city, 14.7% live in Lisbon and 13.2% in other locations.

The sample was collected in 2 periods, the first covering the 100 students surveys in the High School Inês de Castro, held in the months of October and November 2007. In the second period we interviewed politicians and technicians, started in November 2007 and finished in June 2008.

4.2. Methods:

Given our hypotheses there are three approach possibilities to select the universe's population: (1) examine the entire population, (2) study a representative sample of the population, (3) study a not necessarily representative group of population, but a group that can have the characteristics of our population. Each of these approaches has its advantages and disadvantages. We chose to study groups, not necessarily representative, but whose characteristics are relevant to our hypotheses. According to Quivy (2005) this is undoubtedly the most common formula. If the researcher diversify the profiles of the respondents will inevitably get through the moment of saturation, where for more interviews he does it will be difficult to achieve additional relevant information.

When formulating our survey we took into account comments from the pre-test we had previously made in the neighbourhood. In this phase had been detected some problems with style language, which can not be attributed to lack of education degree of respondents, but may be related to the socio-professional and age differences.

Given the above we choose to make our surveys with a less academic language to be certainly that all range of people will understand questions. At the same time, to safeguard any deviations in the interpretation of responses from students and once we had at our disposal rooms with terminal Internet access, we asked students to illustrate their answers through images collected in Internet.

For the set up of the questionnaire script for the technical and political group we also made a pre-test, which has been shown to be too large and general content. Given this, we chose to build a directed interview, consisting of an equal proportion of open and semi-closed questions. It was also possible, since the time of administration of the survey to the technical and political group took place at a later stage, to carry out and use some preliminary results from the citizens' surveys.

Both questionnaires intended to obtain the perception of respondents on 3 topics: Urban Life Quality, Public Participation and City Models preferences, but the formatting of each survey was quite different.

We also used in both surveys filter questions, taking as reference the dialectic between the city and our case study. For example, in relation to the survey given to students of the High School we used the city of Vila Nova de Gaia and for the survey applied to political and technical group we used questions concerning the "Program Polis" in Vila Nova de Gaia.

5. Results

The percentage of individuals who answered our survey was 80% (politicians) and 85% f (technicians). Given our total sample population of 81 individuals we can ensure that the number of responses received is extremely significant.

5.1. City Model - urban life quality and the ideal city

In order to check the existence of different city's models, we used and crossed two complementary methodologies, qualitative (analysis of speech content) and quantitative (statistical frame), for example, we used in our first approach 27 parameters of urban life quality which allowed us to identify which are the less and more important parameters to the technical and political group which give us a statistical frame about the concept of urban quality. To complement it we used a different approach (qualitative) asking for the description of the ideal city, what can be seen as a utopian vision.

Preliminary results show that people describe (qualitative approach) as being a good quality residential area when: it is quiet and peaceful, including the lack of cars' noise, is a secondary street, etc ... and with proximity to support equipments, shops and services but also good road access and proximity to public transportation, green spaces for enjoyment in terms of leisure but also as a landscape view; less important but also worth to mention is the importance of "socialization and sense of neighbourhood." On the opposite a residential area is classified with bad urban life quality if the requirements above are not meet i.e., it is very noisy, has no green spaces and do not meet criterion of proximity.

Through another question (quantitative approach) we ask our panel of politicians and technicians about the importance of 27 parameters of urban life quality. Given the mean and standard deviation we obtained the parameters that tend to be considered "more important" and inversely the ones that tend to be considered "less important" (Table 1 and 2).

Table 1 – More important parameter

Techinicians		Políticians	
1.	Infrastructures	1.	Public Transports
2.	Public Transports	2.	Infrastructures
3.	Green spaces	3.	Urban security
4.	Mobility	4.	Environmental quality
5.	Environmental quality		
6.	Urban planning		
7.	Urban waste collection		
8.	School equipments		

For both technicians and politicians the two most important factors converge: infrastructures and public transports. Taking in account that we are dealing with the same reference score we also can see that technicians tend to have a more spread vision about urban life quality than the politicians. We also can note that environmental quality is referred as being "more important" for both groups even thought it is hierarchically more important to politicians than to technicians.

Table 2 – Less important parameters

Technicians	Politicians
1. Sociabilization and sense of neighbourhood	1. Proximity "home-equipments-services"
2. Parking	2. Sport equipments
3. Proximity "home-work"	3. Citizens support services
4. Industry	4. Sociabilization and sense of neighbourhood
	5. Proximity "home-work"
	6. Industry

On table 2 we see that politicians tend to think that there are more "less important" parameters than technicians. On the other hand there is a convergence of: proximity "home-work" and industry. There is also a convergence of "sociabilizacion and sense of neighbourhood" anyway being less important to politicians than to technicians.

In the second stage we placed the issue of the "ideal city" asking to describe it through a specific example situation or a utopian idealization. For reasons of pragmatism we chose to submit the question from the classical functions defined by Athens Charter: the space to live, to work, to shop, for leisure, etc.

To start with, 52% of students (citizens) referred to their preferred house types. For the ones living in multifamily housing, more than half (52.5%) talk about an ideal single house type and only 10% expressed themselves in favour of multifamily housing i.e. where they live. On the other hand, half of residents in single houses reported favourable statements to this kind of housing. In contrast, our technical and politicians group rarely indicated preference about housing types.

Furthermore the technical and political group makes, in the qualitative approach, a clear statement to the need of mixing functions (proximity criterion), which contradicts the results of the quantity approach of this group, but coincides with the description of a good urban life quality residential area for our citizens panel.

Despite the presence of shops (commercial places), which is defined as one important factor for the urban life quality in the residential area (proximity criterion), citizens' preferences for commercial places indicate clearly the search for large commercial areas, like malls (70%).

With regard to leisure the most curious results are the clear preferences for green spaces such as gardens or river paths, sometimes associated with sports. The proximity is again, enhanced by our technical and political group, regarding leisure time, but above all, leisure places should be disseminated in order to be closer to residential and workplace areas.

5.2. Public Participation:

The issue of public participation was introduced in our initial hypothesis given its relevance in the current discussion of cities. In fact how can we be sure that our cities reflect the needs and aspirations of all citizens if they are not present in public sphere debate?

In this sense it was important to analyze whether those groups shared the same view in relation to: (1) the importance of public participation, (2) if they had the same perception about the fact that public participation is enough or not; (3) the reasons that lead to low citizens' participation and finally (4), what to do to increase participation (question only posed to technical and political group).

(1) Regarding the importance of public participation we found that this is considered to be relatively more important for the political and technical group than to the citizens. Approximately 92% of citizens consider this important, against 98.5% to technicians and politicians that feel the same way.

The justifications (qualitative analysis) by the citizens are: the assumption that, as users, they have more knowledge about their needs and preferences, and in some situations, a different vision from who decides. On the other hand because participation is one right and one duty in a democratic society, and as it is repeatedly said, "Cities are for all". Furthermore it helps to stimulate a sense of belonging and place identity. Finally citizens consider public participation as a mean of increasing their city's information.

For people that consider public participation indifferent the main reason is related with dissatisfaction, the presumption that their participation is not going to have practical consequences, but also the assumption that the urban decisions are issues that only concern the elected politicians.

Politicians and technicians consider that public participation is important because: the city is a collective phenomenon, where citizens as users can have a privileged knowledge of their needs and aspirations; because it can act as mediator between the desires/needs of the population and the political and technicians point of view; can also be assumed as a way to stop any decisions that reflect distorted perceptions from reality, and / or also can play an important role by avoiding some citizens disagreement from politicians or technicians decisions, later on;

On the other hand politicians and technicians stress the principle that public participation can not be understood as a linear phenomenon so should be subject to a kind of filter between the desires / aspirations of citizens and the urban plans proposals.

(2) About the fact if there is enough participation or not, the answers differ. Politicians and technicians believe that people in general do not participate (94%). 50% of citizens answered that participation is not enough, 40% don't know and 10% consider that it is enough. There is a high percentage of citizens which answer is "don't know." The reasons given are clearly representative of the lack of knowledge on the subject, never heard of, never talked about, etc.; half of our citizens sample states that participation is not enough. Through speech analysis content we can give 3 main reasons: They are discontent, because participation is not encouraged and, moreover, be inconsecutive; The self-indulgence and indifference of the population; But curiously, a part of our sample representing 30% of those who said that citizen participation is not enough, answer this because they think people knowledge is not enough to decide about urban planning issues so according to them the decisions must be supported by experts.

What are the reasons that lead people not to participate, according to our citizens sample are essentially: who decides do not want to know the views of citizens and that people are not interested in those issues, which together represent almost half of the answers. But also that: people do not have sufficient information to be able to participate; people are selfish and conformed; people find that their participation has no practical consequences; people do not have time to participate; people are not encouraged to participate; people think that they do not have enough knowledge to do so, people do not know that they may participate, but also, that people think that planning issues are for political and technical decision.

(3) The reasons that lead people not to participate, according to our panel of politicians and technicians are: main reason, the competent authorities are not interested in encouraging citizens participation in that sense they do not inform citizens about the opportunity to participate, they omit and limited crucial information, at most, they meet the required periods of public participation just because they have to do that due to legislation. On the other side but with a lower weight, politicians and technicians consider that the population has no civic consciousness, they move away from this kind of issues, they don't see the city as a collective phenomenon (when they participating, they do so in order to assert only their individual needs).

(4) What to do to increase participation: First disseminate information by any means, beginning by informing citizens that they have the right to participate but also with a wider dissemination of technical proposals and political decisions. And also clarify when and how citizens can participate. On the other hand, perhaps the time established in legislation to public participation is not the most appropriate.

Decentralizing the debate, approaching to the public, either through the organizations of the discussions by neighbourhood, by city block, parish, etc., or stimulate a debate in steps (thus avoiding that public will question the central government about their individual problem, which could be important for their neighbourhood but certainly not appropriate in a larger scale), last but not least, the need to bring the technical language closer to citizens talking. Also, increasing the civic culture of the citizens, something that should begin in the basic education, and whose fruit probably will be found only in next generations, but also giving citizens some training activities that allow them to: understand the technical language; understand the city as a collective phenomenon, etc. Although the lack of civic culture and citizenship is basically pointing as people's problem it is also a question that we should think about do to some politician attitudes.

Other factors are mentioned, in particular, the necessity to be consistent with the citizens proposals, or that people participation absent is also determined by the lack of feedback, and last, the necessity to consider the principle of "user-payer", which imply that the costs of bad policy decisions were allocated to beneficiaries of such action, situation which is not required by actual urban legislation since such cost is diluted among all taxpayers.

Given the attributed importance of public participation measure by our politicians and technicians group, we questioned our panel if, sometime he/she had participated on urban planning discussions, as an anonymous citizen or as a technician/politician.

In fact as anonymous citizens only 47.1% answer that had already participated. As technicians or politicians, 75% answered that they already did it. Furthermore most politicians (95.2%), against only 66% of technicians state that they already participated.

The reasons that can justify that 52.9% of our panel of technicians and politicians don't participate are: the self-indulgence, indifference, and some inhibition motivation. Not being able to distinguish themselves between technicians, politicians and anonymous citizen, i.e. they always state one opinion they are doing it being a technical / political actor. In opposite direction, we have some answers saying that they do not consider that their position as technicians (majority from people with technical jobs in local government offices) is compatible with the assumption of a public position contrary to their public positions; but also, never felt directly injured or feeling directly touch for some situation; feel it is inconsistent to participate, but also afraid to participate because he/she can "suffer" the consequences of such participation; or even consider that "as anonymous citizen" would be not relevant i.e., not consider their participation; and finally not knowing what to do or where to go.

At the same time we asked our group of politicians and technicians if they had any time participate as a technician or politician and request examples of such participation, the most

cited examples are: doing their professional tasks, related to take decision on urban planning (different from doing it as an individual initiative); through public meetings, debates and conferences, which does not imply its own initiative because the invitations for speaker are mostly related to the position of "decision" held under the professional charge (although not all conform this pattern); Through the press, public events and petitions, but also a curiously answer from someone (a politician man) that says, "as decision maker rather than participate I had to decide"; finally when participating on SAAL (Local Support Service Clinic for social housing) and social housing cooperatives, a exclusively Portuguese phenomenon that occurred in 1975 at the begging of democracy in Portugal.

6. Analysis and discussion

It is very difficult to consider politicians and technicians as a separate group. Some of our politicians don't classify themselves as being that, when they are appointed by the central government (example the chairman of DGOTDU or the vice-presidents of CCDR-n). This could be related with a non-friendly image that people tend to have about politicians but also from certain confusion between roles. Politicians tend to think that they have skills to decide technically. This can raise problems for comparative process. However we must stress that there is a clear difference of ages and gender between those groups.

Taking into account our preliminary results we can advance some hypotheses: For example, when talking about urban life quality, mobility seems to be more important to women than to men which lead to our technician preferences, as this group include 38,3% women. On the other hand the importance due to "urban security" by the group of politician could be related with the fact that mainly they live in Lisbon city (42.9%).

Another interesting result is the importance that our politicians and technicians group give to public transports. Meanwhile if you asked them about the quality of public transportation they tend to answer that they don't know because they don't use it. In contrast women have much higher rates of public transport knowledge. In fact the statistics show that the rate of use of public transport for women is higher than men and that the routes of travel are different for both sexes. Again these results suggest that the results obtained in the question "urban life quality" (quantitative approach) represent a theoretical model (or a professional common sense model), which is far from the local needs and real life conditions.

Regarding the convergence of industry as the less important parameters of urban life quality we can justify it taking into account technicians and politician description of the ideal city, where industry is the only non-mix function and which should be far from the city. Concerning the classification of proximity "home-work" as being less important we should mention women's justification "we don't need to work near home if we have good mobility and other support commodities", but we also should mention a comment for one of our respondent who qualified proximity "home-work" as not being such important even so he lives, just five minutes by foot from his work. At some point looks coherent to see industry as less important due to the fact that it is a working place. On the other side, in the utopian vision living and working close seem important but industry is something that politicians and technicians tend to want far from the city. Do they consider industry a working place?

Other unexpected results were the lack of importance (quantitative approach) that parameters such as proximity "home - equipments and services", equipment for elderly people, socialization and sense of neighbourhood, place identity or even parking.

Proximity to home-work, home- equipment of support, commercial places, services, etc. is one of the shortcomings identified by current planners trying to incorporate the issue of gender in city planning (Madden, 1981) (Greed, 2003) (Madariaga, 2006).

The constant increase of elderly people is seen as one of the biggest "problems" for the future of our societies. Given the meaning of planning, by definition something that should be done for the future, how can we explain that technicians and politicians group considers this parameter as not being such important?

The socialization and sense of neighbourhood can be a mean of encouraging public participation and is also a way to use public spaces. So how to explain this low valuation which is central to the place identity, another parameter surprisingly devalued by our technicians and politicians group? Are we condemned to the neutral city suburbs?

It looks to be a connection between de importance of public transports and the "less important" of parking. In a theoretical frame politician and technician believe that is important to improve public transport and a way of doing that is to build less parking. Anyway technician and politicians, more the last group, ignore public transports quality and also as the national statistics show (INE-2001) the use of private transportation is improving.

On the other side it seems that the ideal city as described for our technical and political sample would clearly fit the concept of "neighbourhood, heavily based on proximity criteria's including, in some cases, the mix of light industry as a way to reduce travel-home work, i.e., this describe a city built against a functionalist vision and fair from the results of our quantitative approach. Meanwhile we must highlight that commercial places seem to have a double feature for citizens, They want shops near home but they like to go to malls because of the variety and comfort and above all due to the assumption of those spaces as places for recreation and leisure. On the other hand, politicians and technicians assume, in some situations, one "intellectual opposition" against what they consider to be the citizens` taste, expressing their total disregard for those 'consumption cathedrals', nevertheless which they occasionally refer to be users of.

When talking about public participation, our respondents believe that a significant part of their participation is made as technician or politician and not as anonymous citizens. We think that this could be due to 2 reasons: the "confusion" among the role of anonymous citizen and as someone who has a professional statement whether as technician or politician. Indeed it appears that a significant share of participation under the professional role is considered as public participation: The second reason is related with the confusion between being a "public person", and the belief that as being that any statement could be understood as a public participation. In our sample 95% of politician's states that they participated in the context of their professional role, but only 65.9% of the technicians answered in the same direction. That is, being a politician means greater opportunity to participate when performing such charge (sig = 0,008).

The statistical results allow us to realize that the percentage of men who claims to have already participated as anonymous citizen is 50% against 38.9% of women. On the other side men politicians and technicians who have participated are 84% against only 50% of women. Again to be woman means less possibility of participation in their professional job as a technician (sig = 0,013). Furthermore, we know that the technicians group as got a wider range of ages and also female elements, which are not present in the politicians group. So to be woman means less chance of being in a political positions (sig = 0,001).

In terms of age groups the anonymous participation increases with age, 5.9% up to 35 years old, 55.6% up to 47 years old, 61.1% up to 58 years old, and 66.7% from more than 59 years old. The results allow us to conclude that being young and less than 35 years means less chance of ever having participated as a anonymous citizen. (sig = 0.001). There is also a relationship between being a young person (<35 years) and gender (being a woman) and the deficit of public participation. On the opposite side, the presence of men in leadership positions (as politician or technician) is perceived by themselves as a form of public participation and as part of their professional duties.

But only "in theory public participation is important"; expression that appears *verbatim* in some of the speeches of our respondents, indeed "public participation" appears as something neutral (not very important and not unimportant in our quantitative analyse). A superficial reading of the various justifications confronts us immediately with the difficulty in establishing parallels between the speeches.

Technicians and politicians unlike the citizens don't talk about public participation as being one right in democratic countries an also don't mention the sense of belonging and place identity, which could arise from that. On the other hand, the awareness that people may not have enough technical information to participate or to be stimulated in this direction is rarely mentioned, and the same happens with the people's feeling of uselessness of their participation, i.e., technicians and politicians could not be sensible to the necessity to give people training to participate in order to stimulate debate because there is a false perspective that all (citizens, technicians, politicians) have the same background about the issues debate.

Other unexpected result was the statement of some of our technicians saying that they don't participate because they not know what to do or where to go. Why is participation so eclectic that even some technicians ignore how to procedure?

At last, we should not forget the questions raised by some politicians, "do citizens have the duty and right to participate when they elect democratically their representatives? On the other hand "do politicians have to hear the citizens' suggestions outside the periods specified in current urban legislation?". Those questions pointed by who has got the power to decide can define our actual democratic frame.

Anyway, the reasons pointed for citizens, politicians and technicians are not so different and are focused primarily on the fact that competent authorities are not interested in fostering participation. It's easy to feel that way as the 3 respondents who believe that there is enough citizens' participation justifies their response by the fact that authorities respect the public participation periods as defined by law, so people have full freedom for participation if they want to do so.

We should not forget that the concept of public participation might have been differently understood by each of our respondents, so it is possible that this affected our results. Paradoxically this may also be reported as one of our conclusions: the concept of public participation is not well defined, being still relatively new and not enough widespread.

At last we should mention that we are working with a general scenario using citizens` perception and analysing mainly the technicians and politicians as a whole group. Further studies will include gender perception, professional background, living places, age ranges and cross results between the different questions.

7. What are the implications and utility of these findings? Some conclusions

The results show the different parameterizations or the different linguistic discourses of our 3 groups about the "ideal" city. But also that technicians and politicians admit different positions when faced with the same question from a professional perspective or from a utopian point of view. Why is there a gap between these two realities? A superficial observation of Portugal urban planning leads us to say that our urban plans reflect the professional vision of our politicians and technician group: what reasons lead to this occurrence?; is it a matter of "professional culture"? Or could be the result of legislative straitjacket that determines the development of town plans?

Our results seems to confirm one of the criticisms outlined by our panel of technicians and politicians concerning the lack of awareness of "the city as collective phenomenon" as a

reason for low participation by citizens, for example, people tend to speak mainly about the kind of home they prefer without taking into account their surrounding, in clear contrast with technicians and politicians speech, and secondly, the need for decentralization of the debate, as we know that people participation is highest when the situation is directly concerning people needs. This confirms the logic of the highest rates of abstention in elections to the European Parliament than in local elections, or the smallest participation in a national level urban issues, like PNPOT, when compared to a local participation in urban planning issues like the PDM of Vila Nova de Gaia.

We believe that one of the greatest utility of this study stems from the premise of the architect social role (Portas, 1982) (Brandão, 2005), which implies, among others, the obligations to listening to the needs and aspirations of the city´s users.

On this point we should underline two situations: firstly the different discourses and different city's models, mainly in relation to theoretical assumptions made by the politicians and technicians group; in a second stage the absence of public participation, that could be the cause and consequence of the first situation (different groups don't talk because they have different speeches which can deliver to different city's models because the absence of talking).

Although our preliminary results cannot allow us to draw final conclusions yet, we can confirm that the daily routines vary in terms of gender, which imply different needs in organizational structure of urban space. We also know, and our study confirms it, that women are absent from the public sphere, through the practice of citizenship, such as public participation, either because they are not in decision places positions, so it will be difficult to them to impose models and attitudes. In this regard it is urgent to find mechanisms to offset this unbalance since this group represents half of our "clients" and a means to "hear" the voice of the youth and the elderly, whose care, education and monitoring are traditionally made by the female sex. Meanwhile, as we know that women don't participate, is important to ensure that our cities reflect women needs, hearing their voices and supporting urban planning in theoretical studies about gender issues.

Finally ours results show that different actors have different perceptions about the level of citizens` participation, why people don't participate and why is important to participate. This is a clear statement about the lack of discussion around those concepts, which could be connected with the absence in "public participation". There for we can assume that the city is not discussed, which suggest that our cities do not reflect the aspirations of all citizens, so the city is not for all. How can we achieve a territorial cohesion if we don't have a social cohesion?

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