

# Urban Maestro

New governance strategies  
for Urban Design

## BIP/ZIP program

Intervention in the neighborhoods  
and priority areas in Lisbon (PT)

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The participation in urban planning and management has taken place through formal processes within the conventional channels provided by Portuguese legislation, as well as through informal processes complementary to the planning and governance system, as is the case of this paper's subject of analysis: the BIP/ZIP Program (*Programa dos Bairros e Zonas de Intervenção Prioritária*).

For Garcia (2008), participation is crucial to maintaining social bonds and relating individuals to the decision-making power and to their citizenship. Governance implies a citizenship of mobilization at the scale of the city or conurbation, wherein the various problems of planning, transport, and safety arise, and which is not limited to a citizenship of proximity. This governance should respond to a true participation of citizens in all the stages of a project (Crespo, 2015). As such, Hall (2011) created a typological matrix – hierarchy, market, networks, community – within the scope of governance that ranges from a situation of absolute control (hierarchies) to a situation of self-regulation (communities) or “non-government.” These four elements, strictly speaking, represent the actors in the participative processes (public, private, and economic agents, communities and their relations).

In the governance of an urban project – alongside its intersection with resources and processes – it is important to intervene in regard to the interested parties and, consequently, the decision-making (be it public or private), so that the decisions are locally based, and made with and for the people, thus aiming at managing the built environment, shaping the processes, the actors, and the outcomes for the public good.

As an example, in Portugal, there is the BIP/ZIP Program: Neighborhoods and Priority Areas for Intervention, first conceived in the Municipality of Lisbon in 2009, which has been launched since 2011 in the 67 priority intervention neighborhoods or areas (according to the map approved in 2010). Therefore, it is a scale of municipal/local governance, since one of the partners – regardless of whether or not they are a sponsor – will necessarily be the parish council (local governance structure), given that the third sector (associativism) and the local community are essential to the processes of urban planning and management.

The tools of governance and urban management used in this practice are based on “quality delivery,” that is, intervention in the territory through concrete local action. These tools are both of a formal nature – given they are created and regulated by the municipality – and of an informal nature, since they are the result of experimentation by new associations and/or “collectives” who act directly with the local communities.

## 2. CONTEXT FOR THE BIP/ZIP PROGRAM

The Lisbon BIP/ZIP Program, as an example of good participatory practices, has similarities to what was proposed in the initiative “Operações de Qualificação e Reinserção Urbana de Bairros Críticos” (operations for urban qualification and reintegration of critical neighborhoods) [IBC]<sup>1</sup>. This program has been influenced by the Portuguese participatory trajectory, as is the case of the “Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local” (local ambulatory support service) [SAAL]<sup>2</sup> and the “Participatory Budget” [OP]<sup>3</sup>.

The BIP/ZIP Program was first laid down in the scope of the objectives of the Local Housing Program (*Programa Local de Habitação*) [PLH], approved by the municipal bodies at the end of 2009, and was conceived as a municipal public policy instrument for the Local Housing Program.

Since 2011, the Program has aimed to promote and execute small local interventions that encourage the creation and development of activities and projects in the Neighborhoods and priority areas for intervention which are able to “enable a response to social and urban emergencies” that are a “challenge to the well-being of the whole community.” The Program is highly open, both in terms of partnerships and themes, of which notable examples include: the promotion of citizenship, competencies and entrepreneurship, prevention and inclusion, the rehabilitation and requalification of spaces, and the improvement of life in the neighborhoods. The philosophy of the Program is based on establishing local partnerships with parish councils and local associations, societies and non-governmental organizations, thereby contributing to the strengthening of socio-territorial cohesion in the municipality.

The primary goal of the program is to instigate an active citizenship that strengthens the integration of these territories in the city. In this way, the self-organizing ability of the residents and the different actors present in the territories is promoted so that

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<sup>1</sup>The IBC was a housing program established by Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 143/2005, in order to rehabilitate, based on a methodology of processes managed by multidisciplinary teams, taking place in a horizontal governance-style: e.g. the Interministerial Work Group and technical support groups, related to the Universities alongside the local partner groups for each territory and the financing partners.

<sup>2</sup> SAAL operations first appeared at the same time as the revolutionary process taking place in Portugal surrounding the Carnation Revolution of April 25, 1974. Its main goal was to

solve the housing problem. It was institutionally created via the Order of August 6 1974, with the SAAL emerging as a pilot-project whose goals were: i) participation of the residents in the construction of their homes; ii) a decentralization of administration, given that the SAAL was based on local power/authority (the residents were organized in “Residents Commissions” or “Housing Co-operatives”), and City Councils, with the financing for the construction of houses given directly to the Associations; and iii) the inclusion of the resources from the residents themselves.

<sup>3</sup> In Portugal, the first phase (until 2004) included consultative and face-to-face processes, while the second phase (after 2005) comprised deliberative processes with the possibility of a “multichannel” participation. Additionally, in this last phase, the parish councils developed processes autonomous from the municipalities. Out of the whole country, this instrument was most effective in the Lisbon region (Crespo, 2013).

they can improve their living conditions and the quality of their built environment through dialogue.

The BIP/ZIP Program focuses on less bureaucratic-styled organization and participation, of a bottom-up nature, and on the swiftness of the response, in doing so stressing the goal of fighting and mitigating the increase in socio-territorial fracture through proximity policies that are well articulated with the area, and oriented towards the response to social, health, or urban emergencies.

On a practical level, a public tender is opened annually, with a maximum amount of 50,000 euros per project, to applications for projects to be executed in the priority neighborhoods whose applicants must be civil society associations.

Following the submission of the applications, they are evaluated by an independent jury who decides who will be the beneficiaries of the program, based on the predetermined criteria.

Afterwards, the program contracts are signed by the winning associations so that the proposed projects are implemented, with mutual conditions, execution deadlines and stages of payment established by the local authority.

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOLS USED FOR THE BIP/ZIP PROGRAM**

The main tool used by the Municipality is the incentive-based promotion, which is regulated and interventionist. With this tool, the administration (municipality) delivers the public resources directly to the local agents so that they can develop the projects, focus on specific results, or be process-oriented.

In the BIP/ZIP initiative, analysis and persuasion tools are also used. The analysis tools allow for an understanding of how the built environment is shaped by the processes, as well as their consequences on the territory and the people situated there. The norm for this initiative has been the use of protocols between the Lisbon City Council and universities in order to monitor and evaluate the results of the BIP/ZIP Program, so as to uphold the policy and evaluate changes in the state of the built environment in a broader fashion.

The persuasion tools that are also used defend proactive action, that is, instead of waiting for organizations and individuals to find and identify the knowledge they seek, these tools bring the methodologies and knowledge to them, either in-person or digitally. For example, this can take place through awareness-raising initiatives with awards for good practices, or structured campaigns that focus on participation and on altering perceptions and practices in key areas.

## **4. RELATIONSHIP WITH FORMAL (REGULATORY) TOOLS**

The BIP/ZIP Program follows a protocol based on municipal stances. It begins with the approval and consequential deliberation, in a City Council meeting, of the cycle and rules that are to be followed in the public tender for each calendar year. The territorial management tool supporting the program is the BIP/ZIP charter, which was designed by combining socio-spatial variables. The map establishes 67 priority intervention neighborhoods—a neighborhood is considered a priority when, by analyzing the socio-economical, urban and environmental variables, a “socio-territorial fracture” is identified (Oliveira, 2013, p.74). In this manner, four areas/neighborhoods were typified: Urban Areas of Illegal Genesis [AUGIs],<sup>4</sup> historical neighborhoods, municipal social housing neighborhoods, and others/mixed neighborhoods.

It is relevant to mention that the BIP/ZIP charter is included in Lisbon’s Municipal Master Plan and that it represents the municipality’s commitment, in the 10 years subsequent to its approval, to develop programs and measures that allow the BIP/ZIP to cease being deprived neighborhoods.

As well, there is a workshop (that can be either in-person and/or online) and some time later, the presentation of applications.

The preliminary list of approved proposals is announced, and a deadline is set for responding to the notification of compliance, as well as the notification of complaint about the preliminary list.

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<sup>4</sup> Defined and regulated by Law No 91/95 of September 2, as amended by Law No 70/2015, of July 16.

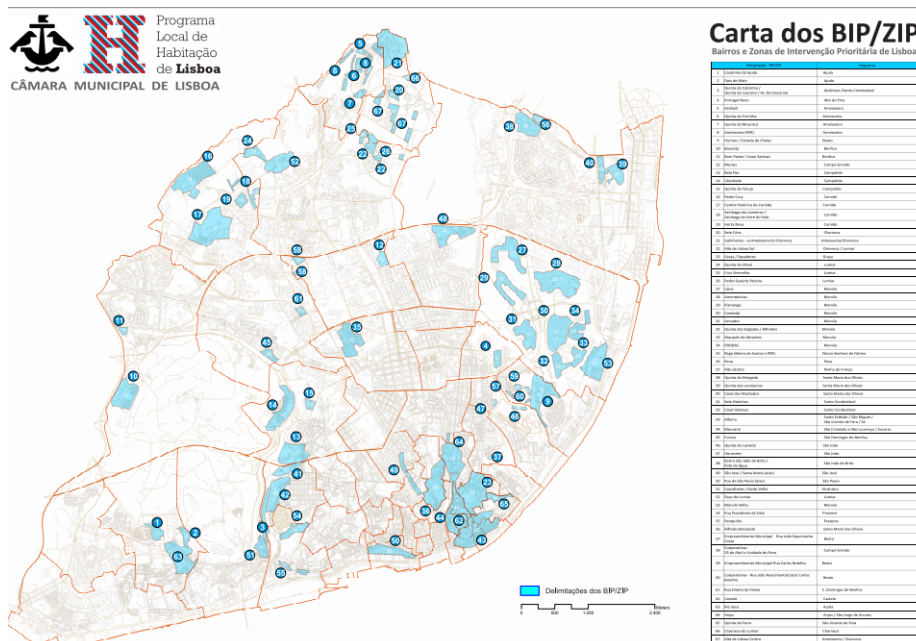


FIGURE 1 – CHARTER OF THE BIP/ZIP NEIGHBORHOODS, Source: Lisbon Municipality's website<sup>5</sup>

Following the abovementioned period, the proposal of applications to be approved is discussed in a Council meeting. Following any approvals, the public ceremonies for the launch of the program are scheduled.<sup>6</sup>

## 5. CHALLENGES, PROBLEMS, AND MAIN INNOVATIONS AND IMPACTS

The projects developed under the BIP/ZIP Program have an annual cycle. This short duration has certain virtues, since it grants the Program its agile and un-bureaucratic character, thus proving a contrast to the typical bureaucratic-administrative burden that characterizes long-term plans. However, this short duration can also generate inconveniences, such as when there is delay in the transfer of funds by the managing entity, which thus hinders the implementation of actions; it is also recurrent that there is an underestimation of the time allocated to the actions, thus denoting limitations on the follow-up by the Lisbon City Council (CML); among the partners, the lack of

<sup>5</sup> In <http://habitacao-cm-lisboa.pt/documentos/1289927720M5bEX9ym2Lp76UW4.pdf>. Retrieved January 20, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> In <http://bipzip.cm-lisboa.pt/>. Retrieved January 20, 2021.

more systematic channels and strategies for sharing opinions stands out, as well as certain difficulties when it comes to the implementation of project monitoring mechanisms.

Another virtue of this program is its openness regarding the entities that can be sponsors and/or formal partners of the applications, comprising not only public organisms and institutions, but also civil society organizations, a quality which can have multiplying effects. Additionally, following approval, the projects can incorporate the collaboration of other organizations, be they formal or informal, public, private, or of civil society, so long as they apply for the proposed objectives, thus demonstrating the agility and institutional comprehensiveness of the Program.

Among the evaluation criteria for the applications, there are: the participation of the population in the creation, development and evaluation of the projects (30 points); the relevance and complementarity of the foreseen actions of the projects as an adequate response to the problems identified in each BIP/ZIP, throughout the elaborative process of the BIP/ZIP charter (20 points); any contribution to local development and strengthening of social and territorial cohesion (20 points); sustainability (20 points), that is, the commitment by the sponsoring or partner entities to ensuring the continuity of the intervention beyond the cessation of the program funding; innovative interventions (10 points): i) the autonomy of the individuals when faced with a vulnerable situation: ii) an active role of the receivers in the development and evaluation of the projects; and iii) the creative use of existing resources inside and outside the BIP/ZIP.

Among the innovative factors of the program, it is worth noting the fact that the sponsors and partners are responsible for the creation and execution of the project, as well as for its evaluation and accountability; for example, there is the fact that the sponsoring and partner entities are obligated to ensure in their projects the continuity of the actions developed during the period, as an instrument in the context of a proximity policy. For Helena Roseta, it is “the transforming potential of what we call “BIP/ZIP energy,” that constitutes a sort of “emerging urban planning,” or “grassroots planning,” which we consider to be innovative and increasingly necessary” (Roseta, 2013, p.14).

The fact that the BIP/ZIP charter is included in Lisbon’s Municipal Master Plan and represents the commitment of the municipality to transform the BIP/ZIP neighborhoods determines that the residents of those locations will have the same rights as the rest of the population: decent housing, access to transport, public sanitation, public spaces, schools, health services, cultural facilities, safety, and, in short, to a better quality of life.



## 6. SCOPE, PERMANENCE AND EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION

Out of the 391 approved and potentially executed<sup>7</sup> projects in the 10 years of the BIP/ZIP program's operation – 2011 to 2020 – there are several that must be mentioned, such as the “Edifício Manifesto” project, championed by the association *Renovar a Mouraria*<sup>8</sup> (restore Mouraria), which aims to revitalize the historical neighborhood of Mouraria, in Lisbon, on a social, cultural, economic, and tourist level via several integrated actions; or the work carried out by the *Associação Nacional de Futebol de Rua*<sup>9</sup> (the Portuguese national association of street soccer) with the project “Grupo de Jovens Bola para a Frente” (youth group ball onwards), in the neighborhood of Padre Cruz.

In order to analyze the development of civil society's momentum, the following graph illustrates the number of applications over the program's time span. For example, the year with the lowest number of applications was the program's first year, with 77 applications, while the year with the highest number of applications was 2014, with 146 applications, meaning an average of 110 applications in a total of 67 BIP/ZIP neighborhoods, thus demonstrating the importance of this initiative.

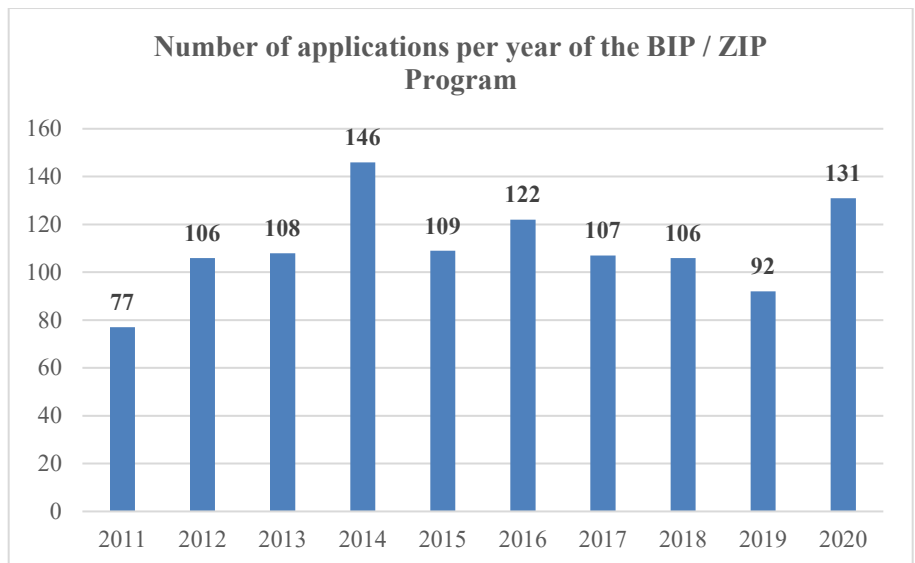


FIGURE 2 – GRAPH DISPLAYING ADHERENCE TO BIP/ZIP PROGRAM, Source: created by the authors using data collected from the Municipality's website

<sup>7</sup> This research has not analyzed the execution of all approved projects.

<sup>8</sup> In <https://www.facebook.com/renovar.a.mouraria>. Retrieved January 20, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> In <https://www.facebook.com/Futrua/>. Retrieved January 20, 2021.

One component that is important for evaluating the performance is the reliability of the criteria, as well as impartiality when evaluating the applications. Considering the data from figure 3, on average 36% of the submitted projects are approved, with the lowest percentage – 26% – taking place in 2012 and the highest – 48% – in 2013 and 2019.

One of the evaluation criteria is the establishment of partnerships, and the BIP/ZIP network involves more than 1,300 entities throughout the city who are focused, during the times of this pandemic, on supporting and strengthening employability and the local economic fabric; on supporting the educational and formative process; and on supporting vulnerable communities and groups.

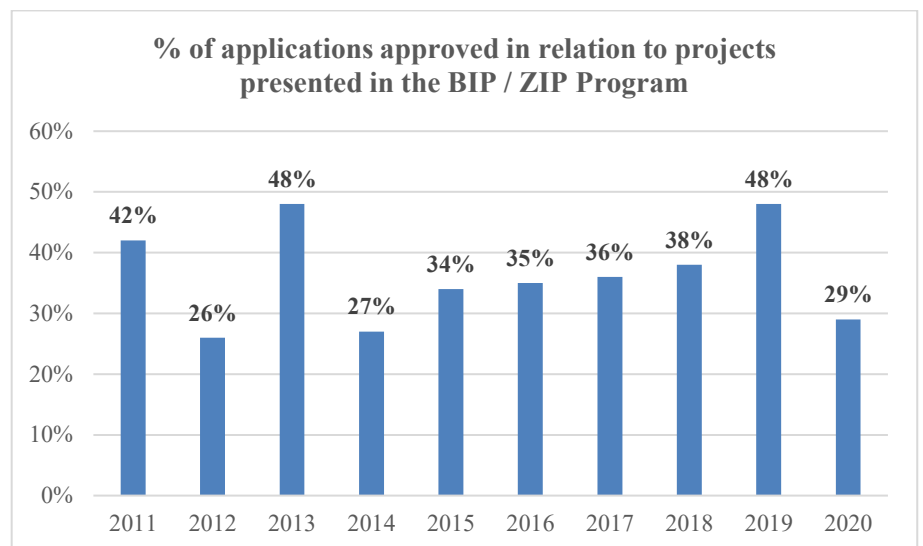


FIGURE 3 – GRAPH DISPLAYING THE PERCENTAGE OF APPROVAL IN RELATION TO THE APPLICATIONS TO THE BIP/ZIP PROGRAM, Source: created by the authors using data collected from the Municipality's website

The municipal investment up to 2020 was 14 million euros, to which funds or services raised directly by the partners were added, amounting to 4 million euros. In total, the 67 BIP/ZIP territories throughout the entire city have already been covered by submitted projects, which deal with more than 1/5<sup>th</sup> of Lisbon's population. As well, the 2020 edition of the program had a budget of 1.6 million euros,<sup>10</sup> as has been the case since 2014.

<sup>10</sup> In <http://habitacao.cm-lisboa.pt/index.htm?no=27310001>. Retrieved January 20, 2021.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

According to De Carlo (2005), the participation emerges in the context of urbanism and public management, in order to counter the excessive presence of architects and technicians in decision making, and so as to put citizens or associations that represent them in a strong and operative position. This stems from the notion that, in order to transform a given territory, the technical and artistic knowledge of architects and other technicians is not enough; the knowledge of the population to whom a set of territorial changes is being proposed is also necessary. This is because the notion behind the population's participation in the urban planning and management process is that they have firsthand knowledge of the area deriving from their daily activities, which can prove highly useful in the creation and development of urban planning and management proposals.

The participatory initiative presented here (BIP/ZIP) represents a set of capabilities for territorial management: i) allowing for commitments with the citizens in defining investment priorities; ii) promoting conflict mitigation among the several social actors; iii) incorporating the creation of a space for direct communication and cooperation between elected officials and voters; and iv) allowing the population to identify with the future and the projects of their municipality and neighborhood.

One of the incidences and influences of the BIP/ZIP Program occurred in 2010, when it was first transposed to the national setting through the creation of the *Bairros Saudáveis* Program<sup>11</sup> (healthy neighborhoods), given that the proposed territory is considered vulnerable upon confirmation by a parish council or a health authority. The budget per project can be €5,000€, €25,000, or €50,000, depending on the projected actions. As well, the applications for the *Bairros Saudáveis* program took place in 596 parishes (representing 21% of mainland Portugal), with the tender registering 774 project applications, accounting for 30.4 million euros, which is triple the available allocation (10 million) and thus greatly exceeded the initial expectations.

In fact, the participatory processes in Portugal have been gaining prominence in the political, social and urban management agenda, which can be due in part to their success and to the maturity of the democratic process (Crespo, 2013), as well as the need for better decision-making regarding the daily life of the citizens. By assuming a high level of civic participation and individual education, the participatory

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<sup>11</sup> In <https://www.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/>. Retrieved January 20, 2021.

processes instill in the citizens a sense of belonging to the spaces they inhabit, something, which has been demonstrated and has served as an example of the BIP/ZIP Program.

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## URBAN MAESTRO

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