

LUMEs - Places of Metropolitan Urbanity: social processes for shared planning information, institutional democratization and strengthening, and construction of metropolitan citizenship in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte - RMBH

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In 2009, the Federal University of Minas Gerais – UFMG was hired by the Minas Gerais State Government to develop the Integrated Development Plan for the Belo Horizonte Metropolitan Region – PDDI-RMBH, ending in 2011. In 2013, UFMG was once more hired to develop the Metropolitan Macro zoning Project – MZ-RMBH, one of the various action programs contained within the twenty-eight major metropolitan policies designed by the PDDI. It ended in 2015.

In that context, the UFMG team also began to implement another action program – the LUMEs – Places of Metropolitan Urbanity, a program conceived within the PDDI as a way to "organize and disseminate information and knowledge produced within the Metropolitan Plan, as well as access to the discussion of metropolitan priorities in order to guarantee participation and integration of different metropolitan agents in the metropolitan planning system."

The LUMEs Program relies on the perspective that planning must consider "in an unquestionable way the centrality of the subject in the *civitas*, absolute and local, but also and mostly, in the expanded urban space – the "metropolitan *civitas*" – implying the construction of a sense of identity and the strengthening of citizenship, now in an urban-regional scale." (CEDEPLAR 2011: 33). The proposal of considering planning as 'social learning' process (FRIEDMANN, 1991) gives an horizontal meaning to the relationship between technical and scientific knowledge and that knowledge that

stems from everyday experience and common sense, implying the necessary exchange between those different knowledges, which tend to converge.

The primary reference for an integrated metropolitan planning is the development of a sense of metropolitan citizenship to contribute in a process of sociospatial integration and greater cohesion between the various agents operating within the region (municipalities, civil society and state government). In order to achieve this sense of expanded citizenship it is necessary to transcend the municipal boundaries, to articulate the various scales of power and to strengthen the mechanisms and processes of participation, integration, regional cooperation and articulation, expanding the support and the inclusion of the metropolitan population in all of its diversity.

From this perspective, the LUMEs Program intends to contribute to the strengthening of metropolitan planning in the RMBH through information democratization, institutional strengthening, and the extension of citizen participation in territorial management and consolidation of research and extension programs within the University.

Its specific objectives include: a) to contribute to the design and dissemination of a sense of identity, of citizenship and of belonging in the context of RMBH, thus overcoming a purely municipalist vision of everyday life; b) to promote the dialogue and the exchange of information, the production of content and of collaborative cooperation between metropolitan agents in order to develop a strong governance in RMBH, strengthening collaboration spaces between governments, private sector and the civil society; c) to create a two-way information network collecting data and local information as well as disseminating the knowledge produced at UFMG and at other universities along with RMBH's Metropolitan Governance System; d) to encourage citizen participation through information and communication technologies, expanding communication channels and access of metropolitan citizens to decision-making; e) to contribute to the institutional strengthening of public and private organizations and to promote the construction of autonomy and social emancipation of local groups, combined with the understanding of metropolitan issues; f) to provide support to municipalities through the articulation of civil society, government and universities to

monitor metropolitan planning and deepen participatory processes; g) to train and qualify local populations and managers for metropolitan planning and contribute to public management practices in RMBH's municipalities; h) to teach UFMG students interdisciplinary metropolitan planning and practices; i) to articulate technical and scientific knowledge and those locally produced by the population, for the construction and dissemination of a collective vision of planning and metropolitan citizenship.

To achieve the proposed objectives three parallel projects were developed, which are already running in a pilot phase, namely: a) Virtual LUMEs: Metropolitan Digital System of Information – involving research and dissemination of information for metropolitan planning through the digital portal <http://www.rmbh.org.br/>; b) Territorial LUMEs – implying direct interaction with the community (local residents, civil society organizations, municipal technicians and managers) through the provision of training courses and institutional strengthening, in addition to the deployment of physical spaces in the municipalities; c) Metropolitan Internship – implying the structuring and implementation of a integrated university teaching, reseraching and extension academic program involving various UFMG units in offering courses, internships and research in topics linked to the metropolitan citizenship, participative urban planning, governance and integrated regional development.

In the end, we hope to contribute to promote and qualify citizen action in the planning process, gathering and disseminating information and building a permanent participatory process that aims to transform the metropolitan population in subjects of their own planning, and not just objects as in traditional planning.

Moreover, there is the intention to consolidate the sense of solidarity and metropolitan identity, the feeling of belonging, the (re)involvement of the populations with their territories, their communities, beliefs, practices and values, and the strengthening of metropolitan governance and public, private and social institutions that operate in the territory. In short, the program intends to contribute actively and intensively to build the sense of metropolitan citizenship.

References

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