



Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST)

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Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments

Municipal Master Plan of Sintra

Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA)

1. Overview

Sintra is a coastal municipality in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) with 377,835 inhabitants, representing about 13% of the LMA population. It is the second most populous county of Portugal (just behind Lisbon).



Figure 1. Sintra's geographical context in Portugal and LMA

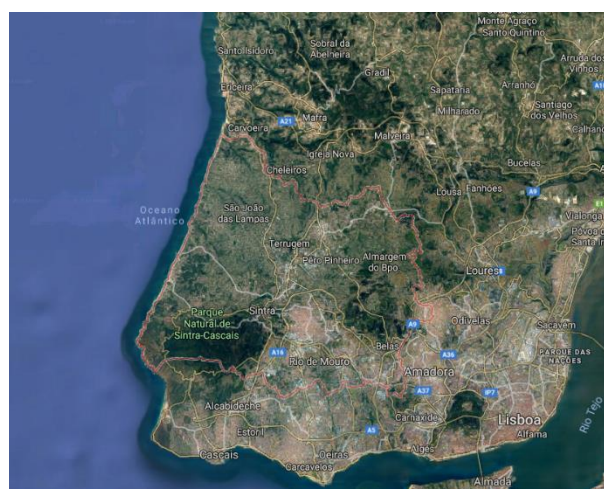


Figure 2. Sintra's geographical context in LMA (Source: Google Maps)

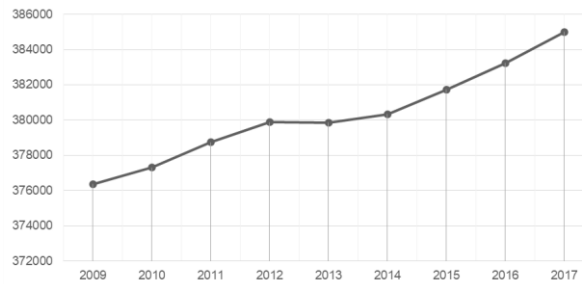


Figure 3. Evolution of the population in Sintra municipality (Source: INE)

The Municipal Master Plan of Sintra is a strategic territorial management instrument (included zoning plan) that first dates from 1999. In July 2012, its 2025 vision for Sintra was revised to encompass “promotion of economic, social and environmental development, fundamental to provide our citizens a future with more and better quality of life in the municipal territory”. Also, it was constructed around four strategic axes of development:

- > Heritage and identity preservation and valuation;
- > Valuation of local resources and ecosystem;
- > Enhancement of urban land, and its networks, to support the quality of life;
- > Support for a dynamic, innovative and competitive economy.

The revision promoted an innovative approach to land use planning by integrating Ecosystem Services (ESS) in land management for pricing the value of the ecosystems and available resources (as an UNESCO heritage site, biodiversity and natural values conservation, promotion of local food systems, valuation of coastal zone, etc.).

It is an example of applying an innovative legislative measure (foreseen in the Territorial Planning Law of 2014) that allows the municipal plans to define that the building value in a land lot can be transferred to another land lot (inspired by transfer of development rights¹ but applied to the entire municipality and without a credit bank, it is also context specific to Sintra territory). This measure was considered a planning exercise to safeguard territorial diversity in the promotion of its balance (quality, resources) and cohesion (social, economic, natural). It was proposed to discourage the consumptive profile in the uses of municipal resources, and simultaneously promote an active and positive maintenance of the natural resources.

The revision promoted an increase of 5% of its rural area, as can be seen in Figure 4 (the light blue represented the municipal plan from 1999 and the red represents what was proposed in the revision).

¹ https://www.dos.ny.gov/lg/publications/Transfer_of_Development_Rights.pdf

https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/clue/Documents/PlanImplementation/Transfer_of_Development_Rights.pdf

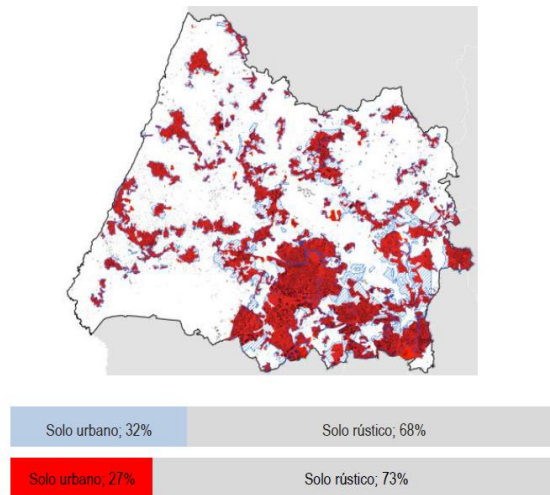


Figure 4. Evolution of rural and urban soil in Sintra's master plan (Source: Municipal Council)

The municipality of Sintra is in itself an example of promoting urban-rural synergies since it acknowledges, explores and stimulates complementarities between the two areas, even though severe public tensions exist, particularly among private rural land owners and development expectations (through land speculation). The interesting aspect is to explore the extent this instrument, currently in public discussion, can have in attempting to reverse the existing tension between urban-rural areas. This synergy can also be visually expressed through the municipal plan territorial model (as show in Figure 5).

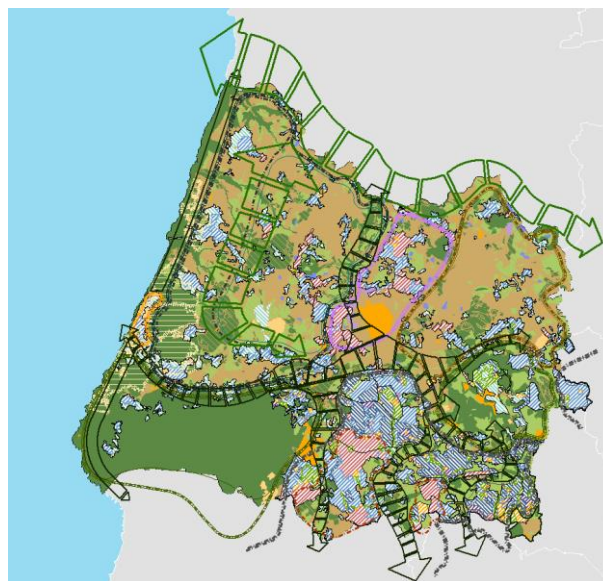


Figure 5. Municipal territorial model for development (Source: Municipal Council)

Financially, the major investment area of the municipal master plan is in heritage and identity action area (around 56% of the municipal plan for financial execution – e.g., promote rural tourism, urban logistics for local products), 28% in the economic action area (e.g., development of several business parks with focus on the valuation of the municipal resources, soil platform for agriculture, wine production exploration), 12% to environmental actions (e.g., strategy for the valuation of ESS, program to enhance agriculture production) and 4% in governance actions (e.g., monitoring indicators plan, territorial equity and cohesion).

The Municipal Master Plan concluded its public consultation stage at the end of the first semester of 2018 and it is now in the final stage of approval.

2. Main Challenges

On urban-rural relations, the Municipal Master Plan addresses the following challenges:

- > Urban pressure by development initiatives on natural resources (Natural parks and Natura 2000 site) and agricultural systems;
- > Loss of population in rural parishes against population increases in urban parishes;
- > New national land use classifications of rural and urban territory, and territorial management instruments, like the National Ecological Reserve and National Agricultural Reserve. The new classifications of rural and urban territory changed mainly because urban-land type classification was eliminated, stopping the speculative potential between rural and urban and opening the opportunity to respect the identity of each land use area. This change led to a 5% decrease of urban classified territory (also since in the last 18 years 23% of the urban land was not developed as urban space);
- > Land consolidation of rural territories to improve land consolidation and agriculture productivity;
- > Continuity of the natural system in the municipality ensuring the connection between the municipal ecological structure and the metropolitan ecological network, defining as first priorities uses that promote the protection and valorisation of areas of biophysical and natural value;
- > Identification and development of compatible uses – tourism, agricultural and forestry activities – with the recovery and valorisation of endogenous resources (the coastal area, water, biodiversity or soil);
- > Prioritize uses that invest in the recovery of degraded endogenous resources and stimulate their recovery.

3. Main Insights

3.1. Insights related to the broad area of “network governance”

This strategic territorial management instrument (plan for regulation and action with financing and monitoring action plans), establishes synergies between governance actors, such as local authorities (municipal and parish councils), public administration (national and central as, for example, the Portuguese Environmental Agency, Institute for Nature Conservation and Forest, and Agricultural Regional Direction), neighbouring municipalities, public and private services, economic agents, associations and citizens.

The process of elaborating the plan used the following methods of interaction: a) through municipal initiative with public presentations and participation (e.g., open workshop sessions, open public consultation sessions, ICT channels), and b) through the Commission for Coordination and Regional Development of Lisbon and Tagus Valley engaging a collaborative group of selected authorities to cooperate in the discussion, analysis and follow up of the plan with the municipal planning team. Both approaches enabled actors from urban and rural settings to participate in the decision-making process. This was particularly important in the Portuguese context, where low density territorial actors are not often fully acknowledged in development processes.

3.2. Insights related to mechanisms of cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation

The mechanisms that integrated approaches in fostering beneficial relations between rural, peri-urban and urban areas, were:

- > The municipal plan regulation included all relevant references from sectoral and special plans for the territory of Sintra, reducing the need to go back to those plans and consulting them (reduction of time / financial resources);
- > Shared governance of some cross-municipal natural resources, such as rivers, mountains and natural parks and Natura 2000 sites;
- > Improved inter-municipality connection with Mafra (neighbouring municipality);
- > Public consultation between neighbouring municipalities;
- > Public transparency - exceeded what is required by law and promoted decentralised sessions in rural areas.

It is of the responsibility of the municipality to manage the implementation of the Plan that stipulates binding guidelines for the public and private sectors, as well as for citizens. For the implementation of the Plan, a number of entities are identified by the municipality (source: Municipal Council):

- > ADENE: Energy Agency
- > ANMP: National Municipalities Association
- > APA: Portuguese Environmental Agency
- > AT: Fiscal Agency
- > CCDRLVT: Coordination and Territorial Development Commission of Lisbon and Tagus Valley
- > CMCascais: Municipality of Cascais
- > CMOeiras: Municipality of Oeiras
- > CMAmadora: Municipality of Amadora
- > CMMafra: Municipality of Mafra
- > DGADR: General Directory of Agriculture and Regional Development

- > DEGE: General Directory of Energy and Geology
- > DGPC: General Directory of Cultural Heritage
- > DGS: General Directory of Health
- > GNR (SEPNA): National Guard, services of environmental and nature protection
- > ICNF: National Institute of Nature Conservation and Forests
- > IMT: Mobility and Transportation Institute
- > INE: National Institute of Statistics
- > IHRU: Urban and Housing Rehabilitation Institute
- > JP: Parishes
- > PSML: Parks of Sintra Monte da Lua
- > SS: Social Security
- > TP: Tourism of Portugal
- > Local businesses
- > Universities
- > Citizens

The Plan also identified the need to develop a monitoring and assessment program that is composed of a municipal system of indicators at two levels: context indicators and performance indicators (still not available for consultation).

3.3. Insights related to the role of (actual, potential) social, organizational, institutional innovations

The most innovative mechanism that promotes beneficial relations between rural and urban areas, and as an attempt to balance the value of both territories, is the building credits proposal.

This proposal lies on the "theoretical" right of rural owners to build on their lands, where building actions are prohibited by law, and works as a mechanism for rural land owners and urban land owners to sell or buy credits to increase their development capacity. This process of distribution sharing of wealth generated between urban new constructions and rural owners was seen as a way of valuing the rural lands through negotiation of the value of urban land, this way promoting nature and biodiversity conservation, as well as safeguarding natural heritage and ecosystems. This was an innovative and creative way to apply transfer building credits foreseen in the national planning law. However, the fear of failure by the municipal council, influenced by the public/political unpopularity of this scheme proposal, cut back the applicability of this scheme to the whole municipality to become dependent on a future test / viability study.

4. Effectiveness Indicators

As previously mentioned, this instrument is in its final phase of elaboration (public consultation). At this time, according to what is promoted by the plan, indications of effectiveness can be expressed as:

- > Articulation and social dialogue of common interests between urban and rural actors;
- > Promotion of natural values and potentialities for valuation of ESS through adaptive management;
- > Proximity policy between urban and rural territories;
- > Enhanced capacity to the implementation of leisure and touristic activities, as well as production activities;
- > Protection and safeguard of the ecological connectivity of natural systems (increasing the multifunctionality of ecological systems);
- > Reinforcement of local value chains;
- > Renovation (or enhancement) of municipal identity through the support of local resources and collective heritage of rural landscapes;
- > Development of social entrepreneurship programmes.

Examples of indicators can be:

- > Number of projects in municipal / parish participatory budgets initiatives that promote urban-rural synergies;
- > Municipal Transparency Index (at municipal and parish levels);
- > Number of partnerships between local actors to promote territorial development and the valorisation of local products / local promotional activities;
- > Demographic rate in urban and rural territories;
- > Coverage of public transportation network in the municipal territory;
- > Coverage of local food systems (productive area)

5. Illustration and further information

<http://www.cm-sintra.pt/plano-diretor-municipal>

<https://cloud.cm-sintra.pt/index.php/s/sgkh8V3wU4pJNmF>

<https://www.dn.pt/lusa/interior/sintra-debate-revisao-do-plano-diretor-municipal-com-reducao-de-solo-urbano-9165246.html> (National news: Sintra debate revisão do Plano Diretor Municipal com redução de solo urbano “Sintra’s debates the revision of its Municipal Master Plan with urban land reduction”)

Mapping of governance institutions and actors: Local Authorities, Public Administration (National and Central), Neighbour Municipalities, Public and Private Services, Economic Agents, Associations, and Citizens

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