



Laura Sobral

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ID: 32702683 **Date of birth**: 17/09/1985 **Place of birth**: São Paulo, Brazil **Nationality**: Portuguese, Brazilian

ABOUT ME

I am an urban professional and researcher working at the intersection of participatory urban governance, spatial justice, and translocal knowledge exchange. My expertise lies in co-governance and collaborative public infrastructure—exploring how policies, tools, and actors co-produce spatial justice from the ground up and across institutional layers.

Graduated in Architecture and Urbanism from the University of São Paulo (USP), I hold a Master's degree in Social Foundations of Contemporary Urbanism (USP, 2018), and am currently completing a PhD in Urban Studies at ISCTE – Lisbon and TU Wien, supported by a merit scholarship and an FCT grant. I have been recognised with a German Chancellor Fellowship by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and a Studentship from the IJURR Foundation, among other distinctions.

I co-founded The City Needs You Institute (Brazil), a reference in civic engagement and public space co-governance, and A GRUPA (Portugal), a European collective of female urban professionals applying feminist methodologies to urban practice. I authored the book *Doing it Together – Cooperation Tools for City Co-Governance*, published in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, and widely referenced in urban planning and participation contexts.

My methodological strengths include participatory action research, embedded ethnography, translocal peer learning facilitation, and the development of civic frameworks and democratic assessment tools. I have contributed to EU-funded initiatives such as URBiNAT, NBRACER, and SEALabHaus, and was deeply involved in URBACT's Com.Unity.Lab Transfer Network, both as researcher and practitioner.

I am particularly motivated to contribute through hybrid roles that bridge research, policy design, and civic practice—whether in EU cooperation programmes (URBACT, UIA, Horizon), international organisations (UN-Habitat, foundations), or postgraduate education. Recognised internationally as a speaker and facilitator, I have shared my work at events such as the Creative Bureaucracy Festival, WeMakeTheCity, and UN SDG launch at the UN Headquarters in New York, representing Brazilian civil society.

I thrive in collaborative, intellectually stimulating, and practice-oriented environments—committed to building possible and more just urban futures.

WORK EXPERIENCE

[2021 – Current]

Selected Teaching Activities – Higher Education

Various Institutions (Remote / Global)

– External Expert and contributor to Research Saturdays in the Master Performing Public Space, Fontys University of Applied Sciences (Tilburg, Netherlands); also served as external assessor for final student evaluations

– Lecturer in the Postgraduate Programme in Sustainable Architecture at Escola Superior Artística do Porto (Portugal), delivering an annual online course titled Insurgent Urbanism: From Activism to Public Policies, focused on participatory governance and civic practices

A GRUPA

Country: Portugal

[2020 – Current] **Co-founder and Core Member**

- Coordinated participatory and co-governance components in EU projects such as URBINAT and NBRACER (Porto)
- Designed and facilitated stakeholder engagement in nature-based and inclusive urban interventions
- Developed civic engagement tools and workshops with municipal teams and local communities

[2019 – Current] **Urban Innovation and Governance Advisor | Consultant**

Consultant and Tech Assessor – Envisioning Cities (2022)

- Advised the Urban Transformation Capacities project within the Envisioning Sustainable Cities research cluster
- Featured as an expert contributor in the *Future Cities* webcast series (interview-based episode)

Urban Governance Advisor – URBACT Com.Unity.Lab Transfer Network (2020-2021)

Lisbon, Portugal

- Participated in ULG; contributed to evaluation and self-assessment methodology
- Collaborated with Lead Expert and municipal team for peer learning events and final festival outputs
- Developed critical analysis for the PhD (main case study)

Urban Innovation Consultant – MDI / KLASH Challenge "Our Joensuu" (2019)

Helsinki, Finland

- Co-designed finalist proposal in international co-creation challenge

Selected workshops and public talks for civil servants and civic actors on co-governance, placemaking, participatory design

- invited by the Goethe-Institut, project Cities Ahead, Logroño, Spain (2023)
- invited by Sciences Po and in partnership with CITTA | Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal (2023)
- invited by FADU, Montevideo, Uruguay (2022)
- invited by Actors of Urban Change | MitOst, Berlin, Germany (2021)
- invited by WeMakeThe.City to The Just City Index Workshop, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2020)
- invited by the City of Nuremberg | Department of Cultural Affairs (N2025), Nuremberg, Germany, (2019)
- invited by Aveiro University to a PDM Ações Experimentais Session, Maia, Portugal (2019)
- invited by Bernard van Leer to the CGLU Congress, Bogotá, Colombia (2016)
- invited by Instituto Clima e Sociedade (iCS) to the Habitat III Conference, Quito, Ecuador;

guest speaker in Habitat III preparatory events, Stockholm, Recife, São Paulo (2016)

A Cidade Precisa de Você [The City Needs You]

City: São Paulo | **Country:** Brazil

[2016 – Current] **Co-founder and Strategic Director**

- Led award-winning initiatives on co-governance, circular food systems, urban commons and collaborative public space design, such as the ECOCIDADE project (São Paulo)
- Delivered workshops, consultancies and research in collaboration with city governments, cultural institutions and international networks, such as O Futuro da Minha Cidade, among others
- Author of Fazer Juntos book (2022), distributed across Brazil and Latin America + the game-version

[2016 – 2024] **Mentor / Facilitator / Team member**

Local Democracy Labs

Mentored municipal teams in the Local Democracy Labs as an expert researcher on community trust. Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (2021)

The Food Circles Hack

Mentored teams from Egypt, Tunisia, Spain, and Portugal in developing innovative and participatory solutions to challenges in the food chain (2021).

Citizen Innovation Labs

Mentored, supported and evaluated civic projects in Brazil, Mexico, Spain and Colombia (2016-2024)

ZK/U Berlin - Center for Art and Urbanistics and Udk Berlin University of the Arts

City: Berlin | **Country:** Germany

[2017 – 2018] **German Chancellor Fellowship for tomorrow's leaders – Alexander von Humboldt Foundation**

- Authored Doing it Together book (ZKU Press, 2019)
- Co-organized events with Sharing Cities Erasmus+ Project and Portuguese partners
- Contributed to the final Sharing Cities report

MUDA práticas urbanas e culturais

City: São Paulo | **Country:** Brazil

[2012 – 2016] **'Culture in Public Spaces' coordinator**

- Coordinated, designed and developed urban interventions and other cultural events in Public Spaces
- Mobilisation and territorial articulation

Erê Lab projetos de brincar

City: São Paulo | **Country:** Brazil

[2015] **Designer and placemaker**

- Street furniture and playground designer
- Public Spaces and Urban Life local analysis

– Community development

Pandoala Estúdio

[2011] **Architect and designer**

– Exhibition designer and space strategist

T+T Projetos

[2010] **Intern**

– Internship in exhibition design

Questttonó Innovation and Design Consultancy

City: São Paulo | **Country:** Brazil

[2009] **Intern**

– Internship in design thinking projects

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

[2019 – Current] **PhD in Urban Studies**

ISCTE – Instituto Universitario de Lisboa and Technische Universität Wien (cotutelle) <https://skuor.tuwien.ac.at>

City: Lisbon and Vienna | | **Thesis:** How to know if the best practice for some is a good practice for somewhere else? – The case of the first move of the BIP/ZIP policy

Link: <https://www.dinamiacet.iscte-iul.pt/>

[2016 – 2018] **Master's in Social Foundations of Contemporary Urbanism**

Universidade de São Paulo <https://www.fau.usp.br/>

City: São Paulo | **Country:** Brazil |

[2004 – 2010] **Bachelor in Architecture and Urbanism**

Universidade de São Paulo <https://www.fau.usp.br/>

City: São Paulo | **Country:** Brazil |

[2007 – 2008] **Exchange Programme in Architecture and Urbanism**

Universidad Politecnica de Madrid <https://etsamadrid.aq.upm.es/>

City: Madrid | **Country:** Spain |

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Mother tongue(s): Portuguese

Other language(s):

English

LISTENING C2 READING C2 WRITING C2

SPOKEN PRODUCTION C1 SPOKEN INTERACTION C1

Spanish

LISTENING C2 READING C2 WRITING C1

SPOKEN PRODUCTION C1 SPOKEN INTERACTION C1

French

LISTENING B1 READING B2 WRITING A2

SPOKEN PRODUCTION A2 SPOKEN INTERACTION A2

German

LISTENING B1 READING B1 WRITING A2

SPOKEN PRODUCTION A2 SPOKEN INTERACTION A2

Levels: A1 and A2: Basic user; B1 and B2: Independent user; C1 and C2: Proficient user

SKILLS

Microsoft Word | Microsoft Powerpoint | Social Media | Google Drive | Zoom | Adobe Illustrator | Adobe Photoshop | Adobe InDesign | Participatory mapping & civic tech tools | Online collaboration tools (Miro, Trello, Asana, Zoom, Teams etc.) | Visual storytelling, collaborative platforms

HONOURS AND AWARDS

- [2023] **Doctoral Scholarship Awarding institution:** FCT: Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
- [2022] **Studentship Awarding institution:** IJUUR Foundation
- [2019] **Merit Scholarship Awarding institution:** ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa
- [2010] **Berlin : Re-act Lab São Paulo Architecture Experiment Scholarship Awarding institution:** São Paulo Municipality

NETWORKS AND MEMBERSHIPS

- [2020 – 2024] **COST Action CA19129 – Decolonising Development**

PUBLICATIONS

- [2025] [Temporal Dynamics of Power Distribution in Mobile Urban Co-Policies](#)

This peer-reviewed article proposes a Southern analytical framework to assess how participatory policies travel across cities through EU Transfer Networks like URBACT. Drawing on case studies from Lisbon, Lublin, and Ostrava, it explores how power distribution, proximity politics, and intermediary actors shape co-policy mobilities and their temporal dynamics.

Authors: Sobral, L., Milić, P., & Ateş, B. | **Journal Name:** Urban Planning Journal
- [2024] [Is Creative Bureaucracy Getting Anywhere?](#)
Publisher: A Cidade Press
- [2023] [Plural stories, plural actions: Collaborating for possible futures](#)
Journal Name: The Past, The Present, and The Future of Urban Change | **Publisher:** ACT Magazine
- [2022] [Fazer Juntos – Instrumentos de Cooperação para Cidades Cocriadas | Haciendo Juntos Instrumentos de Cooperación para Ciudades Co-creadas](#)
Publisher: A Cidade Press
- [2021] [The Art and Practice of Participatory Research at the Science and Policy Interface](#)

Reference: Wingfield, T., Sobral, L., Montuori, B. (2021). The Art and Practice of Participatory Research at the Science and Policy Interface, RGS-IBG / University of Liverpool.
- [2019] [Doing it Together – Cooperation Tools for City Co-Governance](#)

JURY & ADVISORY ROLES

- [2022 – 2024] **Committee Member – Concurso Inovação no Setor Público (ENAP- Escola Nacional de Administração Pública, Brazil), 26^a, 27^a, 28^a ed.**
- [2024] **Co-facilitator – Actors of Urban Change Network Sprint Workshop on Advocacy – Europe**
- [2023] **Mentor – Ayni's "Inspiration Tables" – Programa de Inovadores Locales | Red de Innovación Local (RIL), Latin America**
- [2019 – 2022] **Council Board Member – City Space Architecture**

INITIATIVES & (CO)FOUNDING ROLES

- [2020] **A-GRUPA Urban Collective – Portugal**
- [2017] **Rede Brasileira de Urbanismo Colaborativo – Brazil**
- [2016] **Instituto A Cidade Precisa de Você – Brazil**
- [2014] **A Batata Precisa de Você – Brazil**

SELECTED TALKS, REPRESENTATION & SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- [2019] **Dutch Visitors Programme**
Selected by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the international programme; conducted lectures and workshops at WeMakeTheCity Festival (Amsterdam & Rotterdam)
- [2016] **German Visitors Programme**
Invited by the German Federal Government to join a select group of Brazilian urban professionals for a study visit on urbanization strategies (Berlin & Hamburg)
- [2016] **TEDx Speaker at TEDxSãoPaulo**
- [2015] **UN SDG Summit: Represented Brazilian civil society at the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Launch, invited by the Presidency of Brazil (New York)**