



From the municipality of Lisbon to the crown: discourse and practices in the correspondence about the administration of municipal expenditure (1707-1750)

Del concejo de Lisboa a la corona: discursos y prácticas en la correspondencia sobre la administración de los gastos municipales (1707-1750)

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Abstract


This article falls within the study of power relations in the context of municipal finances during the early modern period. Historiography has demonstrated that decisions and negotiations between different spheres of power are an important part of financial administration. Thus, this article proposes an analysis of those relations/interactions through the discourse and practices in the correspondence between the municipal administration of Lisbon (the capital of Portugal) and the King D. João V about the management of the city's expenditure, from 1707 to 1750. The first part of this study refers to a documental selection to analyse the processing of the *consultas* (petitions) submitted by the city council of Lisbon to the King. This analysis puts forward an explanation of how these documents are structured and assesses the crown's response time (or the lack of response at all). The second

Resumen

Este artículo se encuadra en los estudios sobre las relaciones de poder en el contexto de las finanzas municipales en la época moderna. La historiografía ha demostrado que las decisiones y negociaciones entre diferentes esferas de poder son una parte importante de la administración financiera. Por consiguiente, el presente artículo propone un análisis de esas relaciones/interacciones a través de los discursos y prácticas apreciables en la correspondencia intercambiada entre el concejo de Lisboa, capital de Portugal, y el rey D. João V, en torno a la gestión de los gastos de la ciudad (1707-1750). En la primera parte, se analiza, a través de una selección de documentos, la tramitación de las consultas enviadas por el Ayuntamiento de Lisboa al rey, explicando la estructura de estos documentos, y se evalúan los tiempos de respuesta (o la falta de ella) por parte de la corona portuguesa. En la segunda parte,

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part looks into specific examples of municipal administrative discourses in the context of Lisbon's city council *consultas* (petitions). At the same time, decisions/responses of the central administration regarding financial needs from the Portuguese crown and/or the municipality of Lisbon will be discussed. The study of these decision-making circuits highlights bureaucratic and negotiation processes unfolding in constant communication and proximity between the municipality of Lisbon and the Portuguese central administration, especially when it came to the resolution of conflicts arising from insufficient municipal funds. The records also reveal the discourses of different officers in the Lisbon municipal administration as they advance arguments, interpretations, and solutions in the context of the local management of expenditure.

Keywords: 18th century; Lisbon-Portugal; Power Relations; Municipal Financial Administration; Central Administration; Discourse.

se examinan ejemplos concretos del discurso administrativo municipal en el contexto de esas consultas. Al mismo tiempo, se evalúan las decisiones/respuestas de la administración central, dadas las necesidades financieras de la corona portuguesa y/o del municipio. El análisis de estos circuitos de decisión revela procesos burocráticos y de negociación, en constante comunicación y proximidad entre el Ayuntamiento de Lisboa y la administración central, especialmente en la resolución de conflictos generados por la insuficiencia de fondos municipales. La documentación también revela los discursos de diferentes funcionarios de la administración municipal de Lisboa, que avanzan argumentos, interpretaciones y soluciones en el contexto de la gestión de los gastos.

Palabras clave: Siglo XVIII; Lisboa-Portugal; Relaciones de poder; Administración financiera municipal; Administración central; Discursos.

Introduction

Today, like in the past, the administration of local financial resources depends on specific needs and contexts, as well as on the articulation between cities and the States they are a part of. Financial administration requires decisions and negotiations between different spheres of power –as historiography has demonstrated–, namely in the early modern period, which this article focuses on¹.

In this sense, Dubet and Ferri propose an approach to «*the history of treasury that is increasingly political*» and moves beyond «*institutional description*» and «*quantitative analysis*» in order to assess the «*processes of negotiation between the actors, considering their motives, commitments, and strategies*»².

In a study about Italy during the early modern period, Pezzolo addresses the legitimacy of levying new taxes, arguing that situations of financial urgency «provided valid reasons for taxation». The same study advances that the designations given to new taxes («subsidy, aid, grant») reveal a negotiation that is inherent to levying them³.

Considering these historiographic perspectives, this article proposes an analysis of practices and discourses resulting from the articulation between local and central power regarding the administration of Lisbon's municipal expenditure in the first half of the 1700s. This paper will not address fiscal matters *per se*, but rather analyse

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1. V.g. ANDRÉS UCENDO and LIMBERGER, 2012: 1-11. BLOCKMANS, 18/5 (1989): 733-755. FRANCH BENAVENT, 46/1 (2016): 109-116. HESPAÑA, VIII/2 (2013): 1-41. SAUPIN, 2012: 111-130. TILLY, 18/5 (1989): 563-584.
 2. DUBET and SOLBES FERRI, 46/1 (2016): 9-19. Also consider FOUCAULT, 1979: 179-193 on power relations and related negotiation dynamics. The quotations in this paper are translated into English.
 3. PEZZOLO, 2012: 269.

bureaucratic procedures and the rhetoric employed in the decision-making process about the allocation of municipal funds to specific expenses (which might lead to increased taxation).

Therefore, this article highlights decision-making circuits and bureaucratic dynamics, the arguments exchanged between different levels of power in order to claim and manage funds towards the resolution of financial needs, whether these were local or in response to royal requests. This raises specific questions. What was the process of bureaucratic communication between the municipality of Lisbon and the crown like? Was the communication efficient and swift, considering the proximity between local and central administration (the seat of government of the Kingdom operated from Lisbon)? The discourses of the municipal administration in the correspondence with the central administration were homogenous or diverse? On what specific matters or contexts did the crown and the municipal administration agree?

During the reign of D. João V, the city of Lisbon underwent important changes that reflected its status as the Portuguese Court and its representation of royal power. Large urban planning expenses were partly paid for by municipal revenue and were a response to concerns with public water supply, circulation and access to the city, and street cleaning⁴. On the other hand, in the first half of the 18th century, Lisbon's municipal expenses were basically allocated to four categories: payment of interests (39%), public works (31%), administrative expenses (15%), and public ceremonies (10%)⁵. Thus, we might presume that the demand for high municipal expenditure, which required decisions regarding financial management, must have been reflected in the administrative discourse. This study will demonstrate this hypothesis.

The choice of the Lisbon municipality as the object of observation has to do as well with the expectation of a large output of records that reflect the «official» debates between the municipality and the crown –a fact that is seemingly justified by the geographical and administrative proximity between the bodies of local and central administration–, along with Lisbon's status as the capital city. In fact, during the reign of King D. João V, the Lisbon city council would usually have an appointment with the King on Wednesdays, during which it gave account of its administration of the city⁶. Consequently, we return to the question aforementioned: what impact did the proximity between the two administrative bodies have on the crown's response time to the *consultas* (petitions) submitted by the municipality? Because: «*In the context of Portuguese municipalities, the organisation that ruled municipal life in Lisbon was significantly different from what happened in other parts of the kingdom. The city's body of government enjoyed a special legal and administrative status since the Middle Ages until the definitive proclamation of the liberal regime*»⁷.

4. V.g.: SILVA, 2006: 184-188. CARREIRA, 2012: 141-173; 2/1 (2014): 19-31; SERAFIM, 1/10 (2009/2010): 93-111.

5. COSTA, 52 (2021): 165-168.

6. FERRO, 1996: 40.

7. Besides, Lisbon abided by its own legislation, and its president and aldermen were directly appointed by the King since the late 16th century (FERNANDES, 1996: 103-104).

Furthermore, Lisbon was perceived as a model, a standard to copy from, as the 1671 *Regimento da Câmara* mentioned: «[the] City of Lisbon» must be «well ruled, and governed, so that it comes across as a commendable example to all the other Cities, Towns, and Hamlets in these Kingdoms and Domains, of which it is the head»⁸.

This study agrees with Tilly in acknowledging the importance of the documentation produced in the context of the «interaction» between State, population, and institutions⁹. Similarly, Subtil highlights the «role of bureaucracy in shaping the exercise of power»¹⁰. Therefore, the starting point of this paper is a selection of *consultas* (petitions) the municipality of Lisbon submitted to D. João V, which this paper crosses with the records that originated them or resulted from them.

The first part addresses how *consultas* were processed, while it also assesses and retraces the crown's decision, or rather, response time to municipal petitioning. The second part (a longer section organised in four points) examines the decision-making circuits via administrative discourses, strategies, and dynamics of municipal expenditure management in Lisbon, referring to specific discussion of examples from the period in question.

Consultas: bureaucratic processes and response time

Section one features 205 *consultas* concerning the management of municipal expenditure submitted by the municipality of Lisbon to King D. João V. The first *consulta* is dated the 10th of March 1707 and the last one the 28th of July 1750¹¹.

According to António Manuel Hespanha:

«(...) the *consulta* materializes the point of view of the 'tribunal' or 'council' and emancipates it from the sovereign's will. In the *consulta*, the tribunal concretizes 'technical' points of view (or its own political points of view), which become autonomous from the sovereign's 'political' points of view; through the *consulta*, and its line of argument, the 'tribunal' pressures the sovereign into making a certain decision; finally, the *consulta* makes up a 'bureaucratic memory' that will be imposed upon the tribunal and the monarch himself»¹².

The aforementioned text speaks to the *consultas* written by the city council of Lisbon, which often appeared in the records as the *Tribunal do Senado de Lisboa* [Senate Tribunal of Lisbon]¹³. In part two, I will analyse concrete examples of bureaucratic

8. *Regimento da Câmara de Lisboa*, 5/09/1671, p. 192, in SILVA, 1856: 192-201.

9. TILLY, 1975: 8-9.

10. SUBTIL, 2005: 244.

11. The last document date coincides with the death of D. João V, at the end of July 1750. The first and last dates do not have into account royal resolutions or the dates of *consultas* that were submitted to the King more than once. This selection is based on the records published in OLIVEIRA, 1882: v. 10-15 (vide Table 1). Regarding the *consultas* analysed in this work, Oliveira refers to the documental series held at the Lisbon Municipal Archive—Historic Archive (onwards AML-AH): *Livros de consultas, decretos, avisos e provisões régias*; *Livros de registo de consultas, decretos, avisos e provisões régias*.

12. HESPANHA, 1982: 353.

13. According to FERNANDES, 1996: 104 (note 122): «The exact moment in which the capital's city council became the Senate Tribunal is not known. However, this designation was in place at the beginning of the 17th century».

memories which resulted from Lisbon's municipal *consultas* that supported either the arguments of the local administration or the decisions of the central administration by justifying requests and reinforcing positions. But, first, it is essential to understand how these positions were framed, by looking at the definition and analysis of the process and structure of *consultas* in the context of the Lisbon municipal administration.

In a typical *consulta*, the municipality would start by addressing the King («*Senhor*» [Sir]) and would then move on to expound the reasons that motivated the *consulta*, sometimes referring to previous and/or complementary documents (other *consultas*, royal decrees, requests, etc.). Sometimes, there is indication that the *consulta* resulted from a vote, therefore representing the majority of the municipal administrative body. Some *consultas* included, after the initial exposition, the opinions of one or more city council officers, usually ordered in compliance with the administrative hierarchy: president, aldermen, city attorneys, guild attorneys¹⁴.

Other municipal officers, institutions, and individuals that had a say in the matter that was addressed in the *consulta* could be mentioned or summoned to «participate», namely by presenting and including documental proof or provide additional information. The *consulta* would end with an appeal for the King's decision/response, which, once written, would normally be attached to the *consulta* itself¹⁵.

A *consulta* that made its way up to the King could have originated in a petition presented by an institution or an individual to the municipality of Lisbon. In these cases, the municipality served as an intermediary and forwarded the motives of the petitioner to the crown, expounding its position/opinion on the matter, to receive indications on how to proceed. *Consultas* could also be submitted by the municipality itself, motivated by the need to solve certain situations. Some of these *consultas* were a response and/or reaction to decisions from the central administration. These functioned as a kind of appeal, on the part of the municipality, against decisions from the central administration. Finally, there were «*reformed*» *consultas* that picked up from previous ones and were motivated by the lack of response from the crown (when it did not make its way down to the municipality).

14. In the early 18th century, the board of the Lisbon city council was made up of a noble president, six educated aldermen (*vereadores letrados*), two city attorneys (*procuradores da cidade*), four guild attorneys (*procuradores dos mesteres*) and a scrivener (*escrivão*) (FERRO, 1996: 41-42). After the Papal split of the Lisbon Archbishopric in two dioceses, the royal law of the 15th of January 1717 determined the split of the city council in two: East Lisbon and West Lisbon. From that moment onwards, each city council was made up of one president, three aldermen, one city attorney and two guild attorneys. The royal law of the 31st of August 1741 ordered the end of this administrative division and the return to the previous organisation (OLIVEIRA, 1882: v. 1: 22-23; v. 13: 617-623).

15. The transcriptions by OLIVEIRA, 1882 and the reading of original/manuscript records show that it was common practice to write down royal resolutions on the margins of the *consultas* (V.g. AML-AH, *Chancelaria Régia, Livro 1.º de consultas e decretos de D. João V do Senado Ocidental, 1596-1720*).

Table 1: The Crown's response time to the *consultas* from the municipality of Lisbon regarding the management of municipal expenditure (1707-1750)

The Crown's response time	Number of <i>consultas</i>	%
Unknown/no response	57	28%
Under 6 months	110	54%
From 6 months to 1 year	15	7%
From 1 to 5 years	16	8%
Over 5 years	7	3%
Total	205	100%

Sources: Documents published in OLIVEIRA, 1882, v.10: 350-352, 365-367, 450-451, 465-466, 483-488, 502-506, 532-533, 553-555, 558-562, 564-565, 573-577, 587-594; v.11: 1-7, 16-18, 31-33, 44-46, 62-65, 67-69, 111-113, 125-128, 139-140, 142-144, 188-189, 203-205, 208-211, 218-219, 249-256; 259-262, 283-286, 296-298, 305-308, 319-324, 326-327. 330-334, 344-345, 356-362, 366-369, 384-388, 393-397, 404-407, 425-427, 448. 455-456, 477-479, 484-488, 490, 512-516, 519-530, 554-559, 566-567, 580-583; v.12: 29-32, 40-42, 56-59, 70-72, 92-108, 114-117, 133-137, 159-177, 191-201, 227-242, 246-265, 279-280, 317-318, 324-331, 339-340, 347-350, 352-354, 376-380, 430-439, 444-445, 448-452, 465-466, 475-479, 487-489, 510-514, 531-537, 646-647; v.13: 20-22, 34-47, 50-59, 97-104, 142-150, 165-172, 177-181, 203-204, 219, 233-240, 245-247, 252-253, 261-262, 311-313, 334-349, 355-357, 363-365, 379-385, 395-398, 401-412, 414-415, 419-422, 424-426, 433-454, 462-465, 479-480, 504-507, 516-519, 545-547, 569-572, 585-586, 588-590, 595-596, 602-604, 608; v.14: 14-16, 18-29, 41-42, 58-63, 67-72, 83-99, 109-112, 160-164, 169, 172-178, 180-182, 193-196, 198-200, 234-236, 238-240, 265-267, 289-291, 297-299, 306-322, 330-346, 349-353, 358-359, 363. 368-386, 394-395, 412-416, 420-421, 430-446, 451-455, 472-475, 476-476, 494, 524-528, 556-558, 562-563, 570-571, 582-588. 601-612; v.15: 21-23, 69-74, 127-130, 141-142, 155-157, 159-160, 181-182.

Based on the analysed *consultas*, Table 1 summarizes how long it took the King to communicate his decision to the municipality. The majority received an answer from the King (72%), *i.e.*, these *consultas* have a recorded royal resolution attached or, at least, there is proof of a royal decree addressing them¹⁶.

The response time is considered fast if it takes less than one semester (54%). This indicator demonstrates that, for more than half of the *consultas*, the crown was invested in solving matters quickly and/or there were no significant doubts regarding the decision. This is because when there is a new submission (*reforma*) of the same *consulta* to the King, the standard waiting time mentioned in the records is usually around six months¹⁷.

61% of the *consultas* received a response in less than a year. Less representative is the 11% of *consultas* that had a substantially longer response period, revealing a slow

16. This paper considers the cases of three royal decrees that were responses to *consultas*: two were issued within less than six months, and one took between six months and one year (OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 12: 611-612; v. 13: 210-211, 384-385).

17. For example, the *consulta* dated from the 18th of February 1750 was resubmitted on the 23rd of September 1750 with the following justification: «*This consulta has been reformed because more than six months have passed since it was submitted to Your Majesty, but a resolution has not yet been returned*» (*Ibidem*, v. 15: 181-182).

process: 8% received a response within one to five years, while for 3% of *consultas* it took longer than five years¹⁸. It was not possible to find a direct response from the crown to more than a quarter of the *consultas* (28%).

Among the analysed *consultas*, 16 were resubmitted (8% of the total). From these, five were resubmitted more than once (three were resubmitted twice, and two were resubmitted thrice), which could point to how urgent the royal resolution was. From the resubmitted *consultas*, nine wound up receiving a royal decision, while seven seemed to have got no response.

The decades of 1730 and 1740 together hold most of the *consultas* (59%), demonstrating a greater need, during these years, to consult the King about the management of municipal financial matters. In fact, another article that focuses on these same decades, points to a reinforcement of «*administrative measures concerning municipal debt*»¹⁹, which was related to the municipality's incapacity to settle expenses.

The discursive content of royal resolutions is diverse. Nonetheless, the phrase «*como parece* [as it seems]» appears frequently, in 44% of the *consultas* that received a response. This phrase could be accompanied (or not) by more text. The King's assent, expressed in this specific phrase (or others) would sometimes come with conditions. His affirmative response might address the opinion presented by the city council at the beginning of the *consulta* –which usually reflected the majority's position– or the opinions presented by one or more municipal officers. Not all royal responses constituted a final decision; some are requests for more information/clarification via supporting documents, for example. There are also royal resolutions that refer to previous decisions, which suggests the municipality's insistence on a previously locked and legislated issue. In four *consultas*, the King considered the requests «*not granted*». I will analyse these later on.

The nature of the expenses mentioned in the selected documents reflects the concerns, needs, and reactions of the municipality. However, it is hard to frame and quantify these documents into rigid categories because different matters would frequently intersect, as next part will prove.

Discourse on management of municipal expenditure

This second section looks at examples of administrative and financial discourse in the above-mentioned *consultas*, taken from the decision-making circuits described in the first part. The typology of documents expands, as these *consultas* refer to other documents: prior documents, such as justifications or requests; and follow-ups, responses, addenda, or clarifications of local or central questions. *Consultas* featuring opinions from multiple municipal officers allow for a crossed analysis of different points of view/perspectives, therefore being a priority in this paper. Whenever possible, it will follow

18. Among the *consultas* under analysis, the longest period between a *consulta* and the respective resolution was thirteen and a half years. The *consulta* concerned the salary of the keeper of the warehouse for the *Corpus Christi* procession (*Ibidem*, v. 11: 425-427).

19. COSTA, 52 (2021): 168.

a chronological order as well as select records from different time periods which represent the main trends in Lisbon's municipal expenditure referred in the introduction.

Not granted, or when the King disapproves

As mentioned in the first part, the King responded to four *consultas*, that had to do mostly with expenses regarding city employees, with the phrase: *não há que deferir* [not granted].

A *consulta* from the 25th of September 1715 introduces the city aldermen's request for a pay rise, as they refer to the royal habit of rewarding those who proved to be good servants²⁰. The aldermen's arguments relied on a previous resolution, signed by the King in 1657²¹, which had increased their salaries to the same level as those of «*ministers*» working for the central administration²². By expounding the evolution of salaries and of the administrative organisation of the city council since 1657, the petitioners noted a decrease in their salaries, therefore requesting the restitution of previous amounts. However, these arguments did not convince the King, who on the 14th of December of that same year responded: «*Not granted*»²³.

The second instance (a *consulta* from the 19th of April 1717) is a request for royal financial aid on the construction work on *Douradores* Street. The municipality referred to two previous records (the royal decree from the 15th of January 1716 and the *consulta* from the 24th of April 1716) that addressed the reallocation to this specific work of revenue originally assigned to other public works – which indicates its importance. While highlighting the public utility of renovating the street in question, «*a busy road*», the municipality explained it would need to buy private land to widen the road, which required the payment of the *sis*a (sales tax)²⁴. So, this *consulta* requested the same decision made in 1681 for the work on *Ourives* Street: tax exemption. Nonetheless, the monarch did not give in and expressed his refusal in the resolution dated from the 4th of June 1717²⁵. This means that, in both cases, the line of argument based on the existence of certain precedents did not result in seeing the requests granted.

The *consulta* from the 6th of June 1730 originated in a petition by D. Teresa Eufrása de Macedo, the widow of the judge and alderman Manuel Pestana de Vasconcelos. The widow asked for a subsistence allowance, arguing that she lived in poverty because of debts she incurred due to her husband's prolonged disease and funeral. She also resorted to the argument that the municipality had granted subsistence allowance in similar cases²⁶.

The municipality considered the request valid and added that the 4,000 *réis* stipulated by law for these situations were insufficient, given the widow's extreme poverty.

20. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 11: 111-113.

21. *Ibidem*, v. 6: p.35-36.

22. *Ibidem*, v. 11: 111.

23. *Ibidem*: 111-113.

24. Vide HENRIQUES, 12/1 (2014): 49-66. HESPANHA, VIII/2 (2013): 21-22.

25. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 11: 188-189.

26. *Ibidem*, v. 12: 329-331.

It proposed, therefore, the payment of a much higher amount (100,000 réis). Since the law did not contemplate this possibility, the municipality had to consult the King. The arguments also highlighted the deceased alderman's good service²⁷. For these reasons, alderman António Pegado de Lima considered the allowance «*meritorious*». However, he did not vote in favour since the *Regimento* of the city «*explicitly*» forbade it and limited the allocation of municipal revenue to «*public utility*». He went on to explain his position: such payment could become a precedent for similar spendings and hurt public utility as well as the officers to whom the municipality was indebted due to low revenue. In the end, he referred to the debt the municipality ran into as a consequence of purchasing the necessary houses for the widening of the *Douradores Street*²⁸.

The King, who according to the city council was a «*merciful father to his subjects and rewarder of those who serve well*», responded: «*Not granted*» (7th of August 1730)²⁹.

The last dismissed *consulta* (20th of September 1743) started with the city bailiff's (*meirinho da cidade*) request for three *moios* of barley per year. In the *consulta*, the municipality agreed with this benefit, which in fact had been granted, by municipal decree, in the previous two years without the King's authorisation³⁰. As it was brought to the attention of the municipal Board that the King's authorisation was mandatory, the city council listed several arguments in favour of paying the bailiff by resorting to the revenue from *Alqueidão*³¹: the payment of food for the bailiff's mule on journeys «*at the service of the city*»; the disinterested and selfless way in which the bailiff carried out his «*public service*», which was, in fact, financially disadvantageous for him. The senate's *provedor dos contos* (ombudsman), also a city attorney, added his favourable opinion³². However, the King not only denied the *consulta* but also warned the municipality of Lisbon: even if the municipal revenue situation were not so precarious, the city council could not «*grant such benefits without a royal licence and approval*». The King went on to revoke all benefits granted without his authorisation³³. In conclusion, the King denied the request, reprimanded the city council, and revoked previous benefits granted without his permission, that ended up being confessed to justify the abovementioned request.

Together with good public service, all these *consultas* cite an argument in favour of what is habitual, customary, and based on precedent, although it never convinced the crown. The study of other municipalities, such as Porto and Viana do Castelo, shows that other municipal administrations also cited custom when arguing with the central administration for the approval of administrative expenses. These cities have apparently achieved better results for the local government³⁴.

27. *Ibidem*.

28. *Ibidem*.

29. *Ibidem*, v. 12: 331.

30. *Ibidem*, v. 14: 181-182.

31. Revenue from the «*estate called Alqueidão*» (*Ibidem*, v. 1: 197).

32. *Ibidem*, v. 14: 181-182.

33. *Ibidem*: 182.

34. CAPELA, 15 (1995): 82-83, 89-93. COSTA, 2014: 168-171.

Paying for the *Corpus Christi* procession in the capital

The *Corpus Christi* procession was regulated during the reign of King D. João V. Legislation sought to cut out any popular activities from a religious procession in which the King himself, or his representative, used to make an appearance. In 1717, the secretary of State Diogo de Mendonça Corte Real wrote a letter, on behalf of the King and addressed to the president of the senate of the West Lisbon municipality, ordering street sweeping on the day of the procession and the interdiction of popular activities such as «giants» or «dancing»³⁵. This organisational model, initially put into effect in Lisbon, was adopted by other municipalities across continental Portugal and overseas territories in America³⁶. This was the case of Porto, the second largest city in the kingdom, where in the 1730s there was an encouragement to imitate «*the Patriarchal Church of Lisbon, with no religious statues or dancing*», only with ornamented windows and awnings over the streets³⁷. The adoption of this model in Porto had financial reasons too: expenses with the procession would decrease, as the city covered just the awnings but not popular activities. However, old traditions returned in the 1750s, as the financial argument was again deployed and the Lisbon organisational model of the procession was deemed more expensive, after all³⁸.

In Lisbon, large sums are required to finance the *Corpus Christi* procession throughout the reign of D. João V³⁹. Since the end of the 1710s, its organisation was heavily influenced by what was being done in Rome, as the municipality paid for the transformation of the «*urban space*»⁴⁰, a fact that comes up in recorded discourse. In June 1719, faced with correspondence from the municipality about the lack of municipal resources to pay for the procession, the King authorised the issue of government bonds ensured by municipal rents⁴¹.

In the municipal *consulta* from the 10th of November 1719⁴², the senate of West Lisbon admitted that there was no money for the procession awnings and referred to a *consulta* from the 19th of May 1719 and the respective royal resolution (19th of June 1719). The May *consulta* proposed, after a voting, to allow the rise of taxes on wine and salt. This authorisation, which remained in force up until the municipality had settled the debt resulting from the procession, would function as a strategy to expedite new loans and provide a guarantee. The royal resolution requested the city council to prepare and present the bill for said expense and authorised the issue of a government bond⁴³. This means that the procession became a reason for tax rises which, even if temporary, were a mechanism to guarantee that the municipality could clear the interest on the debt incurred to pay for the procession.

35. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 11: 192-193.

36. SANTOS, 2005: 138-143.

37. COUTO, [1936]: 112.

38. COSTA, 2014: 208-209.

39. V.g.: SERAFIM, 8 (2005): 18-37. COSTA, 52 (2021): 167-168.

40. RAGGI, 2/1 (2014): 115-116.

41. V.g.: OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 11: 317-328. COSTA, 52 (2021): 167-168.

42. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 11: 366-367.

43. *Ibidem*: 319-324.

The abovementioned *consulta* from the 10th of November contained two other reports: one detailed how much the municipality owed «*the officers and merchants, as well as the [city] coffers*» for committed expenses, as a certain amount had been reallocated for the expenses with the procession. The other report proved that municipal rents were exclusively spent on indispensable expenses. Not paying these would be detrimental to «*either the common good or the creditors*»⁴⁴. According to the city council, interest payments would rise proportionally as the municipality settled its «*procession debt*». At the same time, the report points to the lack of lenders, as well as low credit and trust in the municipal finances, which hampered its capacity to meet its financial commitments. Nonetheless, the city council left the decision to the King, so that he could determine what was «*most convenient to his royal service and [the municipal] tribunal*»⁴⁵.

There is no royal resolution to the *consulta* from the 10th of November. However, in the following month, the *consulta* dated the 19th of December 1719 referred to a royal resolution from the 29th of November, which determined the procession debt be paid with municipal revenue and that any other payments, except municipal salaries, be suspended⁴⁶. Although the municipality intended to comply with the King's ruling, it submitted a balance sheet of annual revenue and expenses, requesting the crown to indicate which expenses should be suspended, so the municipality could release the necessary funds to settle the debt⁴⁷. The municipality is airing a «provocation» to the King, showing him the actual insufficiency of municipal funds, and holding him accountable for deciding which expenses will not be settled.

However, one of the aldermen considered the proposal from the municipality unnecessary, arguing there was no room for doubts regarding the royal dispatch. Yet, he subtly suggested the suspension of all usual municipal expenses, except for officers' salaries and interest payments: «*because, although said resolution does not decree the payment of this interest, this seems to be the [king's] mind*»⁴⁸. By considering interest-related expenses as exceptions, and suggesting that this was the King's will, the alderman made a veiled attempt to alter the royal decision.

At the same time, the city attorney of East Lisbon addressed, in a long text, the high levels of municipal debt, caused by public works and the procession, mostly executed by royal orders. The attorney seems to be holding the monarch accountable for the state of municipal finances. According to his view, the royal decision jeopardised essential city expenses and interest debt, while increasing municipal debt. Finally, he defended his exposition as an «*obligation of his office, the zeal for the common good*»,

44. *Ibidem*: 367.

45. *Ibidem*.

46. *Ibidem*, v. 11: 384. The prioritisation of expenses with salaries happened in other cities as well. For instance, the municipality of Coimbra, in contexts of financial deficit, prioritized payments, made hierarchically, to municipal officers and representatives of the central administration, which corresponded to their salaries, fees, allowances, and other administrative costs (SOARES, 2004, v. 3: 83-85).

47. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 11: 348-388.

48. *Ibidem*: 385.

and requested that the monarch considered the seriousness and the consequences of carrying out his previous order⁴⁹.

It appears that this *consulta* received no response. However, some time later, on the 9th of July 1720, a letter from the municipal scrivener, addressed to the secretary of State shows that the situation was yet to be solved. In the letter, the scrivener informed that some of those who lent money for the procession awnings were demanding the payment of their interest through the taxes of *reais de água* of wine and meat⁵⁰, as well as through residual sums that were handed over to the city treasurer. Although this measure was approved at the city council board, two aldermen and one city attorney remained on the fence. Therefore, in the letter, the secretary of State was asked to take the case to the King. On the 17th of July 1720, the secretary of State wrote back informing that the King agreed with the city council board⁵¹. Still in 1720 (13th of November), a new *consulta* from the municipality requested to borrow more money at interest (five percent interest rate) in order to pay for the amount still owed to «*the officers who worked on the awnings*». The royal resolution from the 23rd of December 1720 approved the request⁵².

It seems evident that the need to fund the *Corpus Christi* procession not only led to an ongoing exchange of arguments, but also made way for financial deterioration, caused by the recourse to interest-bearing loans, which burdened taxpayers with additional taxes meant to pay off this same interest.

The debate around the creditors' «*claims and complaints*»

Funding the *Corpus Christi* procession was not the only reason for the credit indebtedness of the Lisbon municipality. As we shall see, there were many discussions regarding the need to clear several public expenses, which usually resulted in interest-bearing loans⁵³.

On the 29th of July 1732, a *consulta* reports that municipal revenues are insufficient to settle new interest⁵⁴. The municipality reaffirmed its «*zeal*» on this matter, explaining to the King, on «*multiple occasions*», that expenses surpassed revenue, therefore remaining unpaid. Hence, the municipality referred to the vast correspondence exchange with the crown and the secretary of State regarding the city's financial crisis and the urgent need for measures to solve it⁵⁵.

One document worth highlighting is the letter from the secretary of State to the municipal scrivener, dated from the 10th of March 1731. Following a complaint from the *superintendente das carruagens* (carriage supervisor), the secretary of State

49. *Ibidem*: 385-388.

50. Taxes levied on meat and wine, under the municipal administration. See COSTA, 52 (2021): 157, 161.

51. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 11: 418-419.

52. *Ibidem*, v. 1: 437-438 (footnote); v. 11: 448.

53. Again, the payment of interest represented the main municipal expense. COSTA, 52 (2021): 165-168.

54. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 12: 431-439.

55. *Ibidem*: 431-432.

ordered the payment of the expenses on the cobblestone streets outside Lisbon⁵⁶. The municipality responded in the abovementioned *consulta* from the 29th of July 1732, accusing the supervisor of making a «misleading claim», further informing that the pavers had been paid with money from loans. However, the scrivener admitted that, over time, the municipality made payments less and less «*fervently*», since lenders stopped lending money to the municipality⁵⁷. To solve the matter, the municipality addressed the experienced city treasurer, Felício Xavier da Silva. In a «*exposition*» the treasurer proposed to increase rents, specifically by charging pensions over licences granted by the municipality⁵⁸.

A disagreement about the *consulta* from the 29th of July ensued between the city council and the *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro* [House of the Twenty-Four], represented by the guild attorneys⁵⁹. Vis-à-vis the above-mentioned treasurer proposal, the guild attorneys did not submit an opinion. Instead, they instructed the tribune of the people (*juiz do povo*) and the scrivener of the people (*escrivão do povo*) to address the municipality with a plea which, according to the senate, contributed to dragging the matter and postponing the *consulta* to the King⁶⁰. The representatives of *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro* accused the senate, on the one hand, of planning to submit the population to a tribute/tax to cover the high costs of cobblestone streets; and, on the other, of doing so without consulting them⁶¹.

The municipality of Lisbon responded by suggesting there had been a «*misunderstanding*», claiming that the treasurer was not proposing a «*new tax on this or that good*». Instead, he proposed to increase a pre-existing municipal rent. As for the tribune of the people claim that the municipality would normally «*hear the Casa dos Vinte e Quatro*» on this kind of «*business*», the city council responded that the «*inquiry*» into the allocation of revenue to the «*cobblestone streets work*» fell outside the purview of the *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro*, since the city council complied with royal decrees⁶².

The municipality goes one step further, claiming that the *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro* «*could lawfully only represent the people's complaints and act in their favour, but never interpose an opinion*»⁶³. This is because those who belonged to the *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro* were not «*required*» to know the laws of the city and the kingdom, unlike

56. *Ibidem*: 368-369.

57. *Ibidem*: 431-432.

58. Licences: «*Lisbon municipality's right to charge license tax for the sale of all goods and supplies*» (*ibidem*, v. 1: 132). The treasurer's exposition dates from the 1st of August 1731 (*ibidem*: v. 1: 133-134; v. 12: 439-442).

59. The guild attorneys were elected representatives of the *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro* «*or the assembly of mechanical trades deputies*», which had the important role of «*defending the people's interests*». LANGHANS, II/7 (1941): 10-11.

60. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 12: 432, 442-443. The tribune of the people was the president of the *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro*. The guild attorneys were «*required to inform the tribune and the Casa dos Vinte e Quatro of all matters, handled in the municipal senate, which were detrimental to the common good*». LANGHANS, II/7 (1941): 10-11.

61. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 12: 432.

62. *Ibidem*: 433-434.

63. *Ibidem*.

the «*six ministros togados* [judges]»⁶⁴ that made up the municipal «*tribunal*», who knew them «*ex professo*». The latter were better equipped to «*interpret those laws and aptly settle business*»⁶⁵.

Faced with the tribune of the people's insistence that this was a case of «*common good*» and that the *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro* should, therefore, intervene, the senate replied that the tribune ignored the meaning of said phrase. For the senate, the «*common good*» meant the increase of municipal revenues proposed by the treasurer, which would enable the payment of public works and other expenses⁶⁶. There is renewed emphasis on the excessive increase of municipal debt, due to new interest-bearing loans, authorised by the crown, «*whose principal amount*» had already been spent on paying the pavers partially. Hence, more money was necessary. This comprised the line of argument for the municipal proposal, presented as the most reasonable one. And, according to the city council, it did not hurt the «*mechanical trades*» represented by the *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro*⁶⁷.

Finally, the city council addressed the King and reminded him that the city's «*opulence*», i.e., available revenues, was vital to «*the prince's service and the subjects' convenience*». The city council further reinforced the need for a royal authorisation to increase revenues through the methods previously expounded. Even so, this would be a temporary solution, since the increase would not be enough to pay the interest from the loans the municipality took out in the meantime by royal decree. The *consulta* added that municipal revenues could not ensure the payment of ordinary spending because, although they were proportional to the expenses at first, they had become uneven⁶⁸.

Before closing the *consulta*, the alderman António Pegado de Lima conveys his agreement with the four guild attorneys, putting forward his opinion in favour of the King's authorisation for a hearing with the tribune of the people. He justified his position with several arguments: it is «*truly beneficial (...) to hear everyone when the matter concerns everyone*»; a good solution might come from those «*who you least expect*»; the population will accept better a solution to pay the pavers that is voted by the people with the King's approval; the treasurer's solution did not settle the payment and proved unequal tax wise, which hindered its acceptance. The royal resolution from the 5th of July 1735 aligned with the alderman António Pegado de Lima, «*giving voice*» to the representatives of the people and opposing the senate of Lisbon⁶⁹.

Subsequently, by notice of the municipal scrivener on the 9th of July 1735, the tribune of the people submitted an «*Exposition*» to the municipality (16th of July 1735)⁷⁰.

64. Reference to the six educated aldermen (*vereadores letrados*) of the city council of Lisbon, who also served as judges (*desembargadores*). Vide FERNANDES, 1996: 103-104.

65. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 12: 434.

66. *Ibidem*: 434-435.

67. *Ibidem*: 435-436.

68. *Ibidem*: 437-438.

69. *Ibidem*: 438-439.

70. *Ibidem*, v. 13: 88-90.

The *consulta* from the 26th of October 1735 was an opportunity for the senate to reply to such explanation. The municipality accused the tribune of challenging the treasurer's proposal by putting forward «*false assumptions, hiding the truth*» revealed by the senate about the municipality's «*lack of means*» to clear its many «*obligations*». The document listed all these expenses and underscored municipal indebtedness⁷¹.

The tribune's explanation contained other aspects which the senate refuted. First, his assumption that the «*reasonable pensions*» on licences, proposed by the treasurer, were a new and unequal tax⁷². The tribune also contested the high «*contributions*» paid «*daily*» by the people to fund the «*subsistence of the monarchy, as well as public spending*». According to the senate, these contributions, which the crown had approved, fell to the nobility rather than the people. Regarding this last aspect, the senate accused the tribune of the people of ignoring the taxes levied on food in the main European cities (especially Madrid) to pay, for example, for public works and military expenses⁷³.

The municipality continued its argumentation by defending measures frequently adopted to «*relieve*» the population, characterizing the tribune's proposals as an «*aerial fiction*». The document lists and refutes them thus:

- the revenue from the sale of offices was committed to the expenses of the demolished houses on *Douradores* Street;
- to decrease interest rates meant «*betraying the public trust*»;
- apportioning municipal rents was not viable, because these were not sufficient to meet the expenses and creditors wanted to collect their debt⁷⁴.

Among other points, the municipality underscored the urgency of the royal resolution regarding other documents about the municipal financial crisis that had been submitted in the meantime (I will look at some of these.) The guild attorney Francisco Cabral Bravo closed the *consulta* with his opinion in agreement with the tribune of the people.

This time, the royal resolution favoured the senate and accepted the proposal by the treasurer, Felício Xavier da Silva (19th of December 1736). Yet, in 1737, the tribune of the people tried, once again, to revert the situation by presenting new documents to the senate and the King⁷⁵. In the course of the following years, Lisbon lived in a climate

71. *Ibidem*: 97-101.

72. This «wordplay» present in the justification of raising more revenue harkens back to the reference to Pezzolo's study in the introduction. PEZZOLO, 2012.

73. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 13: 97-100. The study of Madrid's financial administration during the early modern period proves the recourse to consumption tax to ensure the payment of different expenses, such as public works and municipal debt, as well as crown expenditures, such as military costs. HOZ GARCÍA, 2007: 28-33, 77, 97-114.

74. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 13: 97-101.

75. *Ibidem*, v. 13: 101-102. The «intervention» of elected representatives of the *Casa dos Vinte e Quatro* happened often when new taxes were levied or old ones were raised (case in point), as an attempt to «*by all available means mitigate (...) the financial burden (...) of those people who gave them a mandate –the people from the mechanical guilds*». LANGHANS, II/7 (1941): 11.

of popular discontent, incited by the «*guilds and the Casa dos Vinte e Quatro*», about the «*levying of new licences*», which remained in place until 1766⁷⁶.

In this context of financial difficulties, in the *consulta* from the 6th of October 1733, the municipality exposes a situation of debt and rise of expenses, therefore underlining the urgency of a solution that quelled the «*constant claims and complaints from the creditors*»⁷⁷. The municipality listed the interest-bearing loans ensured by municipal rents in the previous five years, as per royal decrees and executed by the local administration «*with prompt obedience*». These were allocated to the Mafra roads, as well as to the *Corpus Christi* procession⁷⁸. This means that recent municipal indebtedness was due to spending with public works and public ceremonies, both in the crown's interest.

The same *consulta*, dated from October 1733, refers to a previous one, from the 16th of October 1726, which addressed the same subject matter and had received no response, even though the situation deteriorated⁷⁹. After explaining the state of municipal finances, the city council drew the conclusion that all the rents had been «*reduced or sequestrated*», which led to several problems:

- the constant increase of extraordinary spending, namely on public works, which were nevertheless deemed necessary and useful to the «*common good*»;
- the creditors seized municipal revenue, affecting the salaries of municipal officers, who had no other means to earn a living and wound up joining the «*group of plaintiffs*»;
- the lack of funds for the maintenance of public roads, which, in the past, had led to great spending and hard work, but could end up in ruins without the necessary intervention⁸⁰.

Given the severity of this situation, the municipal officers –who also saw their salaries being cut back– presented their opinions. Three aldermen (António Pegado Lima, Jerónimo da Costa de Almeida, and Francisco da Cunha Rego) called for measures that the crown had taken previously during similar situations, although (they underscored) not so severe. They suggested royal permission to channel part of the revenue «*from the new tax on meat and wine*», originally allocated to the construction of the *Águas-Livres* Aqueduct⁸¹, to pay the creditors, although the amount was not enough to clear

76. *Tributo das novas licenças*: designation used for the abovementioned rise of licensing prices. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 1: 134-135.

77. *Ibidem*, v. 12: 531-532.

78. *Ibidem*: 532.

79. *Ibidem*: 533.

80. *Ibidem*: 533-535. The study of municipal spending in Lisbon in the first half of the 18th century proves that the municipality did not execute some expenses, namely interest and salaries, which contributed to the municipal financial crisis. COSTA, 52 (2021): 161-165.

81. The construction work at the *Águas Livres* Aqueduct started by royal decree (12th of May 1731) in 1732. They were supervised by the municipality of Lisbon until 1738, with the establishment of an «*administrative committee, also in charge of collecting*» taxes that were levied to cover the costs of construction. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 12: 370-374.

the total debt. According to the aldermen, this solution would not hurt the people because it did not require new taxes⁸².

The attorney of East Lisbon, António Pereira de Viveiros, considered the municipal *consulta* as «*worthy of great consideration*» from the King. He then referred to the solution proposed in the, *consulta* from the 29th of July 1732 (analysed above) to raise municipal revenue through licences, «*until*» a more «*efficient*» solution had been found⁸³. I recall that the 1732 *consulta* would only receive a definitive resolution in 1736.

The four guild attorneys were in total opposition to the three aldermen regarding the allocation of the wine and meat tax destined for the aqueduct. In their view, the main cause for municipal indebtedness was the cost of the Mafra roads⁸⁴, which they considered useless for the Lisbon population, unlike the construction of a water main in the city – «*of such splendour*» and «*utility to the people*». Therefore, using the revenue destined to the aqueduct to settle debts seemed unfair. According to the attorneys, even the fact that the clergy, usually exempt from taxes, had to pay a levy for the aqueduct proved its importance⁸⁵. Considering that the Lisbon population should not have to settle the city's debt, the guild attorneys suggested the King made available the means for the municipality to prosper. They go one step further and propose, given the high revenue from the taxes on wine and meat, to cut the meat tax, a measure which would relieve the population⁸⁶. Thus, the guild attorneys took advantage of this opportunity to explain to the King the municipality's fragile financial situation. They reclaimed tax cuts or, at least, their sensible distribution for the benefit of the population, not to clear the debt generated by a royal need like the Mafra roads.

The response came, via decrees, in 1734, although there were previous documents regarding this matter. On the 26th of February 1734, the municipal scrivener wrote to the secretary of State concerning a creditor (the *físico-mor* [chief physician] Manuel da Costa Pereira). The creditor sued the city council for the reimbursement of the capital («the principal») he had lent, with five percent interest rate, for the costs of the Mafra roads – his goal being to pledge municipal property. The city council decided to present the case to the secretary of State as detrimental to the city's financial balance, stating: «*if said creditor is successful, other creditors will follow his example*», municipal rents will «*become exhausted and will not cover the needs*». For this reason, the senate requests the King to forbid the pledge of municipal property and authorise the payment of creditors only through municipal revenues⁸⁷.

On the 12th of May 1734, a new letter from the scrivener to the secretary of State, referring to previous records, made it clear that the aforementioned issues were still a problem and introduced another question related to municipal debt. Unable to raise

82. *Ibidem*: 535.

83. *Ibidem*.

84. A municipality about 30 kilometres outside of Lisbon, where D. João V had the palace-convent of Mafra built (on the Royal Building of Mafra, v.g.: PIMENTEL, 1989).

85. OLIVEIRA, 1882, v. 12: 536.

86. *Ibidem*: 536-537.

87. *Ibidem*: 603.

the necessary funds, the municipality was not able to pay the pavers of the Mafra roads. The cause: the royal order that instructed the municipality to borrow money at interest to settle said payments had not been executed in a long time, because there were no available lenders. This left the city council with no funds, as the municipal revenues were confiscated «*by the creditors*»⁸⁸. At the same time, as the *Corpus Christi* procession approached, workers did not want to be hired by the municipality and suppliers were not available to sell on credit, given the city's history of debt and insufficient revenue. The city council requested a royal resolution on this matter⁸⁹.

Once again, these records reveal a financially discredited administration, not only for those who once lent money to the municipality, but also the population that used to provide services to the city (as this last letter proves).

Consequently, the royal decrees from the 20th of May⁹⁰ and 11th of June 1734⁹¹ were published as rents administered by the municipality were being confiscated, with creditors demanding their auctioning, to recover the «principal» and the interest of their loans. According to the analysed documents, this situation led not only to the decrease of municipal revenue, but also to the municipality's incapacity to clear public expenses, namely salaries and the payment of old interest. In the first decree, the King proposed, as a solution, the seizure of revenue from municipal properties exclusively (not the properties themselves). The revenue should then be allocated to the payment of interest authorised by the King⁹². The decree dated from the 11th of June reinforced the previous order by forbidding the «*attachment*» of municipal revenues earmarked to «*certain ends, prior*» to the debt from the construction of roads that accessed the city. It also annulled all the attachments and auctions of municipal rents, so that the municipality could settle all the «*previous engagements*» that these rents were planned to cover⁹³.

The urgency and utility of public works

In the previous section, the reading of *consultas* from the 1730s made evident that public works had a sustainability problem, which was a recurrent issue. During the following decade, public works continued to «feed» a great deal of the correspondence exchanged between the municipality and the crown.

On the 14th of April 1742, the municipality of Lisbon submitted a *consulta* to the King regarding the access to the port area, as discussed in the royal decree of the 20th of October 1742, in the context of the need for construction work on the *Cais da Pedra* (pier) and in the entrance of the Customhouse⁹⁴. This *consulta* also referred to a previous one, submitted by the *Junta da Administração do Tabaco* [Tobacco Board

88. *Ibidem*: 607-608.

89. *Ibidem*: 608.

90. *Ibidem*: 611-612.

91. *Ibidem*: 612-613.

92. *Ibidem*: 611-612.

93. *Ibidem*: 612-613.

94. *Ibidem*, v. 14: 41-42.

of Administration] –an institution linked to the central administration– regarding two expense reports provided by the *Provedor da Alfândega* [Customhouse ombudsman] on said construction work. After an inspection and once the work was budgeted, the senate explained to the King why the repair of the pier should be funded: this was a work of «public utility» that could prevent further damages to the customs building, caused by «any storm, since it was exposed to the sea», and stood on the already deteriorated pier⁹⁵.

It was evident that Lisbon played a central role as the capital. This meant that the city should bear part of the costs related to central administration and, therefore, it was common sense that the senate should pay for this specific work, since it was a work of public utility. However, the depletion of municipal finances made this expenditure impossible. Still, alderman Duarte Salter de Mendonça argued that the city should pay for the work because it owned all the piers and harbours. Nevertheless, the alderman referred to the budget provided by the architect, the convoluted state of municipal revenue, and the rents allowed by the King for this kind of public work and concluded that the immediate payment of the workers' day's pay was not feasible. He thus suggested only an assessment of the work⁹⁶.

On the other hand, the city attorney, António Pereira de Viveiros, deemed the work adequate, both because it had to do with the safety of the Tobacco customhouse, and it allowed the city population to use the new pier for the «boarding of horses». He claimed that no other pier «with this capacity» existed in the Portuguese Court⁹⁷. Given this was a work of public service, the attorney believed the municipality should pay for it, claiming he knew a way that would not jeopardise municipal finances. However, he never revealed it. He asked the architect who assessed the work to make it safer and less expensive⁹⁸.

The royal resolution from the 9th of May 1742 ordered the municipality to have the work blueprints drawn and the city attorney to explain the payment strategy he had alluded to. The senate would thereafter consult the King⁹⁹.

After the King's request for a clarification, a new *consulta* was submitted three months later (25th of August 1742). The architect Custódio Vieira committed to supervise the work, explained the blueprint, and informed that the municipality's regular construction workers could execute this enterprise¹⁰⁰. This meant the reconstruction would not require new hirings, therefore becoming less expensive. Regarding the payment method, the attorney explained that the budget could be paid for by the amount owed in the tax of *variagem* since the previous triennium. The attorney added the possibility of channelling the revenue from the *variagem* into finishing work on the Marvila road, which had been funded by the Cardinal Patriarch until then. Financing

95. *Ibidem*: 41.

96. *Ibidem*: 41-42.

97. *Ibidem*: 42.

98. *Ibidem*.

99. *Ibidem*.

100. *Ibidem*, v. 14: 98.

the Marvila road was justified by its beauty but, above all, the safe access it offered the populations who lived in villages around the road¹⁰¹.

One month later (26th of September 1742), the monarch agreed to the city attorney's proposal for the Marvila work and requested the blueprint for the *Cais da Pedra* again, which proves he had never got it¹⁰².

The blueprint was possibly submitted only in 1743, the same year the municipality drafted a *consulta* (2nd of December 1743) regarding the architect's fee¹⁰³. In this new *consulta*, the senate admitted that the work was urgent, because the Customhouse was in danger, but insisted on the lack of resources. The solution was a loan from the Tobacco Board of Administration. Once the construction was finished, the municipality would bear all the effective costs and settle them like it usually did with the other creditors. However, the *consulta* rejected the city attorney's suggestion to use the revenue from *variagem*, claiming it made no sense, since this income was already channelled into other expenses by royal orders¹⁰⁴.

In the absence of a response, the city council rewrote the 1743 *consulta* on the 10th of September 1746 and the royal resolution from the 27th of September 1746 authorised the reconstruction work of the *Cais da Pedra*, financed by the revenue raised from the sale of offices¹⁰⁵. So, four years later, the King's solution for the funding of the reconstruction of the *Cais da Pedra* wound up not following the city officers' opinions. Still, an alternative to pay for the work, considered useful and urgent, was found.

The last example cited in this paper is a *consulta* from the 9th of June 1745 concerning a request from the Convent of *Nossa Senhora da Penha de França* for construction work on the road that led to the convent, also known as *Caracol* [Snail]. After an inspection, the municipality attested to the need for repairs and took the matter to a voting, which approved the use of *variagem* revenue to pay for the costs. The senate justified this voting by appealing to the public devotion of Our Lady's (*Nossa Senhora*) image and to the fact that the road would lead people to their devotional practices. Despite the result of the municipal voting, aldermen Manuel Martins Ferreira and Francisco da Cunha Rego considered that the payment by resort to *variagem* tax should be submitted to a royal decision, given the high amount in question and the fact that *variagem* revenue was committed, on the King's orders, to other purposes¹⁰⁶.

The royal resolution from the 14th of January 1746 sided with these two aldermen: the senate could not make changes to a royal order without consultation. Nevertheless, the «*circumstances*» surrounding this work led to the approval of *variagem* revenue as the source of funding¹⁰⁷.

101. *Ibidem*: 98-99. The *variagem* tax was levied «on all the wool and linen cloths» sold in the municipal measurements called *varas* (*Ibidem*, v. 1: 150-153).

102. *Ibidem*, v. 14: 98-99.

103. *Ibidem*: 198-200.

104. *Ibidem*: 198-199.

105. *Ibidem*: 199-200.

106. *Ibidem*, v. 14: 420-421.

107. *Ibidem*.

In the end, the King reprimanded the municipality for making a unilateral decision without consulting him, but also acknowledged how necessary the construction work was, therefore approving the funding. It seems evident that King D. João V was making a point of displaying his power and authority to the Lisbon municipality, while inside the municipal administration there were those who warned him against potential «abusive» decisions on the part of other officers. At the same time, even in a construction work of private nature, public devotion turned out to be a justification for the use of municipal revenue.

Final considerations

This paper tries to prove the specificity that characterises the interactions between different levels of power, through the close reading of the discourse about the financial administration in the municipality of Lisbon. The municipal administration of Lisbon, the capital of the kingdom, works closely with the organs of central administration based in the same city. In this study, the proof lies in the constant exchange of correspondence, the close and, very often, «swift» dialogue between the municipal administration of Lisbon and the crown. But another proof of this proximity lies in the channelling of municipal funds to expenses of greater interest to the crown, commonly justified by the fact that Lisbon was the Portuguese Court.

The records considered in this paper have revealed that, when capital ran short, the King or the Lisbon city council had to decide which expenses to pay. Usually, ordinary and older expenditures were prioritised, and the discourse shows a particular concern with the regular payment of salaries in the municipal administration as well as the settlement of interest. Nevertheless, in some instances, the payment of these expenses was compromised. At the same time, this study identified cases of expenditures related to municipal service which the King did not approve, despite arguments in favour of good service provision and customs.

The records also prove that both local and central needs usually tested procedures and negotiations. The municipality of Lisbon deployed arguments in favour of the common/public good, the King's service, or the urgency of certain expenses (namely urban improvements) to justify the payment of extraordinary expenses, although these were contradicted by the municipality's dire finances. So, was there no way to get around the facts? Actually, there was, and alternative financial resources would eventually come up. But from these alternatives resulted more indebtedness, mostly caused by the settlement of interest on loans that the municipality would take out to cover the expenses justified by the abovementioned arguments. In comparison, the analysis of the financial administration of Porto shows that this municipality also deployed the arguments in favour of the common good and of spending money in the name of immediate public necessity. But, unlike Lisbon, the municipality of Porto never resorted to interest-bearing loans during the reign of D. João V¹⁰⁸.

108. See COSTA, 2019: 266, 281-282.

At the same time, when the increase of municipal financial resources allocated to the payment of extraordinary expenses required heavier taxation, the municipality of Lisbon elaborated a rhetoric that stressed, once again, the idea of a great, public good and, frequently, the service to the crown, which always surpasses personal interests. Nevertheless, the argument about common good or public utility is open to more than one interpretation in the studied documents. On the one hand, the increase of municipal revenue through heavier taxation contributed to the public good, improving the health of the municipal finances and enabling the payment of public needs. On the other hand, the payment of said taxation jeopardised the population's common good and was sometimes believed to serve the crown rather than the city and its people.

The proposals that introduced increased taxation – namely to secure the payment of extraordinary expenses – highlighted its duration (limited to the period of execution of said expense), to avoid popular upheaval. Similarly, by framing this taxation as an «addition» to pre-existing taxes, the discourse conveyed the idea that there was not a new tax overload. Although they did not always work, terminology and careful discourse were key to ensure that the population would accept heavier fiscal burdens to guarantee the payment of large expenses in Lisbon.

This paper has demonstrated the complexity of analysing discourse about the «building up» and increase of Lisbon's public debt, by referring to specific expenses –some of which were executed by royal initiative, as several municipal officers often pointed out. The municipality could not risk undermining the trust of money lenders, municipal officers, and those who provided their services by failing to execute payments. However, during the period in question, the analysed records have revealed conflicts between the municipal administration and its creditors, who demanded their money back and therefore seized the city's assets. Moreover, the municipality's indebtedness and discredit had an impact on capital owners and their availability to grant the municipality new interest-bearing loans to meet necessary expenses over the years. Also, service providers started turning down the municipality's work offers or refusing to supply materials due to late payments. This compromised, for example, the maintenance of the capital's urban space and the ostentatious preparations for the *Corpus Christi* procession.

The decision-making circuits considered in this paper also point to a «lively» interaction between the central and local administrations –although not always respecting the deadlines that the municipality aimed for– and to an active participation of several officers in the municipal administration. At some point during the period in consideration, aldermen, city attorneys and guild attorneys put forward their opinions on Lisbon's financial administration issues. These opinions were not mere formalities; they conveyed positions, suggested alternatives to the solutions approved by the majority (which, in certain instances, revealed internal conflicts), and sometimes got support from the King. Although the «direct» communication between the municipality and the King was a constant, the secretary of State served as an important link between them. Finally, the analysis of these records reveals the existence of «allies» of the crown in Lisbon's municipal administration, namely aldermen nominated by the King

who warned the monarch of cases that challenged the law or that risked opening a precedent for legal noncompliance.

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