



Strategic Planning has contributed to the emergence of a new style of urban governance based on participation, co-operation and shared responsibility.

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN LATIN AMERICA

SUMMARY



Many Latin American cities have successfully carried out Strategic Planning (SP) bringing tangible results to inhabitants and to efforts to better manage the urban environment. City governments face particular difficulties in planning and managing urban growth, and in achieving long-term solutions to urban environmental problems. SP offers an interesting, participatory strategy for addressing these challenges. SP is different from conventional urban planning because of its cooperative process, drawing in businesses, civil society and different government agencies. It promotes these groups' continuing cooperation in envisioning the city's future, diagnosing problems, planning, prioritising, mobilising resources, and implementing and monitoring initiatives. This brief describes the SP process followed in Latin America, and concludes with lessons learned that will be useful for other cities seeking an effective way to engage in urban planning.

CHALLENGES OF PLANNING AT THE CITY LEVEL

Uncontrolled urban growth has generated serious environmental problems, along with increasing social fragmentation and poverty as informal settlements develop on city peripheries without planning approval or basic infrastructure, and often on unsuitable sites. This has also pushed to the limit the capacity of cities to provide services such as public transportation, electricity, education, health care and the rule of law, including security. Solving these problems means generating a long-term plan for managing city growth and development.

Anticipating demands due to urban growth is central to a more effective government response. Municipal planners must consider how future growth will affect, for example, traffic within and beyond their boundaries, and make plans now to be able to prevent future congestion.

Anticipation of future needs, combined with a participatory approach, is SP's key contribution to solving urban environmental challenges. Many Latin American cities have used SP with great success, and the lessons coming from this Latin American model could be useful for cities in Africa and Asia facing similar challenges.



LATIN AMERICA'S STRATEGIC PLANNING EXPERIENCE

Urban planning experiences in Latin America began between the 1920s and 1940. Planning was in the hands of experts in planning offices who had a strongly technocratic vision of planning, focusing mainly on instruments such as Regulatory Plans or Normative Urban Codes. This vision of the city was essentially static and mainly spatial. But in the last few decades, the vision has shifted from a view of planning as an expert-driven, technocratic activity to one which is inclusive of relevant stakeholders and communities.

In recent years, urban planning practices have undergone major changes, most of which are included in SP experiences:

- Urban problems have been reconsidered and redefined with a more comprehensive vision of the city's territory and of socio-economic and environmental factors
- Planning is understood as a platform for general urban development strategies that enable the implementation of action-projects together with the necessary updating of urban environment regulations
- City governments recognise a new composition of stakeholders for this platform, especially the private sector and citizens and their organisations
- A new system of 'public-private-citizen' alliances is considered in governing systems

Strategic Planning: Process and Key Characteristics

Strategic Planning (SP) is a planning instrument elaborated by the government with the principal social and economic actors of the city. It promotes engagement with businesses and civil society organisations in developing a shared vision of the city's future and ensures a continuity of actions and processes that help to organise the city's development in a more environmentally sustainable way. As a specific instrument of management and planning, SP encourages citizen participation in local policy decisions. By bringing in all the sectors of government and the private sector, it contributes to a more efficient environmental management of cities.

Key advantages of SP for cities

- Improving governance strategies and cooperation opportunities between sectors and between different stakeholders
- Mobilising stakeholder participation and consensus building
- Identifying initiatives with anticipation that address future urban environment and growth management priorities
- Developing innovative and sustainable city ideas, projects, initiatives and processes
- Improving the allocation of local and national budgets and orientating long- and short-term private investment

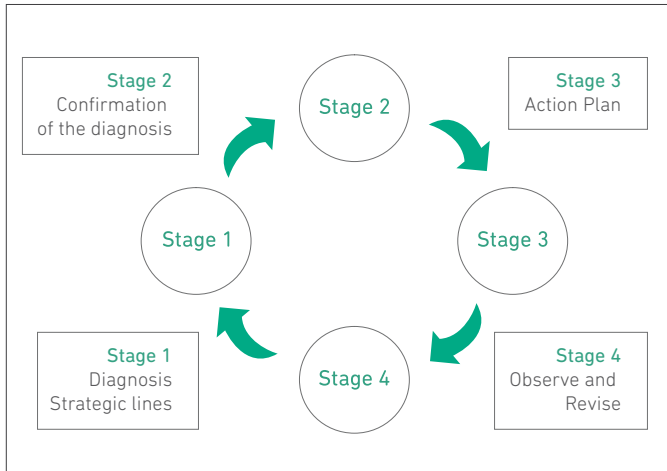
Not all SP experiences strictly follow the same implementation stages, but in general they do follow a circular process where each stage feeds into the next:

Stage 1 – Diagnosis: Identify critical problems to establish strategic lines of action. Simultaneous analyses of projects already discussed and approved that are considered strategic. Identify indicators for assessment and monitoring, including gauging strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and risks.

Stage 2 – Confirmation: Confirm diagnosis of critical problems at the neighbourhood level. Prioritise problems with residents and define vision, strategic objectives and projects that are coherent with these objectives.

Stage 3 – Action Plan: Definition of the action program and discussion of alternative options for implementation. In the management stage of the plan, stakeholders define their own responsibilities in the projects and design monitoring systems.

Stage 4 – Monitor and Revise: The projects and changes in the city are monitored, and new needs for city development are evaluated.



Across each of these stages, SP's principal activities are organising and managing the participatory process. Creating a technical secretary and executive committee for SP management is vital. These offices are in charge of organising committees and workshops for citizen and stakeholder participation through the different stages of the process. Capacity building and training courses for participants are also important.

A variety of stakeholders participate in SP, including individual citizens, politicians, government technicians, businesses and civil society organisations. In many cases, public-private partnerships emerge from the process. Participation requires clearly established rules so that collective and individual benefits are produced, which in turn strengthen each stakeholder's motivation for continuing to participate.

In every SP exercise, tailored communication to each stakeholder group, and a careful promotion of public image both play a central role in encouraging citizen participation and greater commitment.

The Santiago (Dominican Republic) SP, for example, engaged the population through a photo contest that promotes artistic and civic participation, in order to produce a book that reflects the vision for Santiago 2020.

The use of websites and e-mail distribution lists are the most commonly used dissemination strategies. For example, the Rosario City (Argentina) SP elaborated interesting [videos](#) of the [process](#).

Despite these common elements, SP is not a static instrument. There is variation in how Latin American cities implement SP.

Also, many cities, such as Ilo (Peru), Manizales (Colombia), and Porto Alegre (Brazil), developed models that are not officially labelled SP, but nonetheless include SP characteristics and elements, such as:

- SP for development that includes planning and management tools concerned with implementing an integrated and multi-disciplinary focus. These articulate a set of social, economic, spatial, environmental and cultural strategies, and develop a diverse set of programmes and actions.
- Urban or urban-environmental plans that involve territorial development plans or land use plans. These address physical-spatial and environmental concerns, such as River Basin and Watershed Recovery Plans, risk assessment, and recuperation of public land.
- Regulatory frameworks that include land use, urban codes and building regulations.
- Direct interventions, sometimes called mega urban projects or urban renewal projects. These are developed by local governments using a variety of funding mechanisms. Many aim to convert areas with obsolete infrastructure, depressed economies and degraded environments such as old port areas or industrial areas, and include redevelopment that encourages new investments and enterprises and improves social services, such as community centres. These often emerge through public-private partnerships.



Figure 1: Participants Meeting of the Urban Agriculture Program, Rosario Strategic Planning Process
Source: IIED-AL

Latin American City Experiences

The following table highlights a selection of the Latin American cities with successful SP experiences.

CITY, COUNTRY	PERIOD		STRATEGIC PLANNING CHARACTERISTICS
Santiago, Dominican Republic	1 st period 2002-2010 2 nd period 2011-2020	PARTICIPATION	Diagnosis phase for the second period undertaken by five technical commissions composed of 245 public and private institutions, as well as citizens, that included revising and assessing success of first SP. They then continued to participate by generating the plan Vision Santiago 2020, which included 50 priority structural projects.
		STRATEGIES	Principal objectives: promote improved quality of life, empower citizens, territory sustainability, strategic management, shared responsibility between actors 5 commissions: governance, culture and population, land use and territorial planning, and environmental sustainability
Rosario, Argentina	1998 -2010	PARTICIPATION	More than 100 organisations participated in developing and implementing the strategic plan, including cultural, sports, professional and neighbourhood organisations, private enterprises, trade unions and universities.
		STRATEGIES	Work on the Rosario Strategic Plan (Plan Estratégico Rosario PER) started by defining the city's main projects. This produced five thematic areas: work, opportunities and citizenship, integration, the river and improved quality of life, and innovation and creativeness. In total it covered 22 programmes and 69 specific projects, of which today more than 80% are functioning. They advanced in designing a Rosario Metropolitan Strategic Plan (Plan Estratégico Rosario Metropolitano - PERM +10).
Cochabamba, Bolivia	2010-2012	PARTICIPATION	The SP exists within Bolivia's deepening decentralisation context. Participation of 426 citizens in different stages of the Plan's elaboration, with an interdisciplinary Municipal Team, covering specialisations in Architecture, Sociology and Economics.
		STRATEGIES	Principal objectives: satisfaction of basic needs, improving social and material living conditions, preserving and promoting cultural values and traditions, preserving the environment, infrastructure and equipment for health, education and sports needs.
Merida, Mexico	2010 (4 th plan)	PARTICIPATION	More than 600 people participated in workshops and meetings during the process. As each of the SP projects is developed, another round of participation is initiated. The extensive consultation process also included interviews and socio-economic household surveys to provide an accurate assessment of the city's socioeconomic conditions.
		STRATEGIES	Included 6 strategic proposals to turn Merida into a(n): 1. Economic capital of the Mexican southeast 2. Global, high-quality tourist destination 3. Knowledge and innovation city 4. Sustainable and humane city 5. City with high-quality environment 6. City with a high quality of life, citizen participation, social integration, and inclusive governance and public administration

Own Elaboration.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

ENABLING SUCCESS IN STRATEGIC PLANNING



A number of contextual and enabling factors underpin Latin American cities' successful use of SP.

The Latin American cities that embarked on SP may vary in size, population composition, services and infrastructure provision, environmental and urban characteristics, and contribution to national GDP. However, they all share a participatory decision-making methodology where the local government is willing to share power, foster opportunities for participation and respect the decisions that emerge from the participatory process.

Spurred on by democratisation, some city governments decided to implement SP as a new administrative model based on consensus and collective participation. They based their SP approach on the experiences of European cities such as Barcelona, Lyon and Bilbao.

Individual characteristics of the implementation actors were important. The political will of individual mayors and other public officials underpinned successful processes. Technical capacity was also key, both of public officials and the full range of stakeholders.

Decentralisation that strengthens city governments and makes them more accountable to citizens is a key factor and starting point in any local planning process, and this has been the case in Latin America. For a city to be able to embark on SP it needs to have some autonomy from the central government, both in terms of managing resources and decision making capacity. A strong institutional framework is also important, especially for being able to establish clear rules that guide and manage the participatory process.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1 Innovative ways of planning and rapidly applying practical, integrated and holistic instruments, together with decentralisation processes, are effective in enabling more participation and greater citizen and stakeholder confidence in their local government.
- 2 Strategic Planning is neither a panacea, nor a rigid concept. It is an instrument that must be adjusted and tailored to local circumstances and desired results.
- 3 For planning, monitoring and supervising SP processes, it is vital that clear rules are established, along with a defined set of stages, instruments, and roles and responsibilities. This implies the need to institutionalise the plan's management and its implementation through a normative framework.
- 4 In city planning models, 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches should ideally co-exist, combining views and needs in an SP process that integrates all stakeholders and sectors, while still reflecting the particular needs and potential of individual city stakeholders.

Selected References

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CONTACT [IIED-AL](#)

To learn more about strategic planning in Latin America, contact Florencia Almansi, Team Coordinator, IIED–America Latina, falmansi@iied-al.org.ar.

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