

# Urban Planning: Methodology for the preparation of a Strategic Plan

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*Abstract:* The management of cities in the XXI century must be different to adapt to the rapidity of changes (technological, social, consumption, demographic and cultural trends...). These vertiginous changes, generate political and business uncertainty in decision making. In the current context, in which the problems that are presented to the municipalities are increasing in quality and quantity (social, economic, unemployment, mobility problems, etc.) those who must respond from a very limited budget situation due to local financial insufficiency and at the same time satisfy demands is more necessary than ever to have a strategic city plan. The main objective of this study is the development of a methodological proposal for the strategic planning of the cities that will help them to manage and order the city in an effective and efficient way.

*Key-Words:* Cities, Development of Territory, Regional Planning, Strategic Plan, Territorial analysis, Territorial planning, Territorial management, Urban planning

## 1 Introduction

It seems evident that the city cannot be planned without inserting it into the territory over which its area of influence extends, which will vary according to its size and the relationships it maintains externally, both in the immediate space and with the connections with other distant cities.

The city is never an isolated nucleus in space, much less an autarchic element that does not maintain economic, cultural, social exchanges, etc. with other regions of your country and with other foreign cities.

Therefore, considering that the territory is the space where not only the physiographic and natural factors

(geomorphology, geology, climate, hydrography, vegetation and fauna) but also the anthropic ones (settlement systems, land uses, infrastructure network and equipment, socio-economic structure, cultural identity and the political-institutional framework).

The territory, therefore, is the base on which all human activities are based, which in turn model and alter it according to their technological development or their aptitudes (vocation of the territory for certain agricultural, mining, forestry activities...), economic model, cultural schemes and population densities. At this point, it coincides with the concept of landscape itself (natural, rural, urban, etc.) but with the difference that, being administratively

delimited and geographically characterized, it is subject to political intervention to promote, control or reorient the spatial dynamics aimed at improving the living conditions of citizens, including environmental preservation through the compatibility between the economy and the rational use of natural resources (Mora and Bedón, 2016).

In this sense, territorial management, in its most generalized sense, is defined as a technique to delimit geographical spaces according to their aptitude to support the different land uses with the least impact, making compatible socio-economic development and environmental preservation.

All this process is part of a series of legal tools consisting of rules, programs, guidelines and plans, which guide and regulate the actions and settlement processes on the territory, integrator and coordinator of public policies with impact on the physical space defined for your planning. It supposes an ordering of the sectoral specific policies that can affect the territory directly or indirectly.

It is common among the doctrine to cite the definition contained in the European Charter for Territorial Planning, sponsored by the Council of Europe (Torremolinos, 1983): *“is the spatial expression of the economic, social, cultural and ecological policy of the whole society”*.

In any case, we must always differentiate between Economic Planning (added policies with territorial incidence, especially those supported by sectoral legislation and regional policy) and Physical Planning (the process of determining the land uses - urban, urbanizable, non-urbanizable and protected -, of "physical generation" of the territory ordered and delimited cartographically). However, it must be considered that economic planning, in a free market model, establishes recommendations or guidelines for private actors, while physical planning is a public function, which obliges all sectors to comply with it, at the scales local (urban planning), regional (territorial planning) or state (sector legislation infrastructure, hydrography, agriculture, environment...), through the establishment of zoning.

In Europe, since the origin of the Nations, local institutions have been subject to various forms of rationalization interventions, both functional and structural. In the first case, it is about forms of association and management between local entities in order to optimize the performance of their

functions. In the second one, it deals with solutions of global cooperation of the local government and review of the territory and the institutions that exert their competences their (Pavani, 2013).

From the perspective of its application in the international comparative context, spatial planning has shown three aspects (Morell, 1992 and Jaraíz, et al., 2013).

On the one hand, we have the Anglo-Saxon side, called Regional Planning, which is identified as a management technique, in a decentralized context, of the various aspects that affect a specific sector (socio-economic, environmental, infrastructural, etc.), going beyond the strict urban approach.

On the other hand, there is a model of spatial arrangement, which has a background in France, called *Aménagement du Territoire*, introduced by the geographer Jean Labasse in the middle of the last century, characterized by being a centralist in its conception, like the French state itself, and linked to the poles of economic growth, of Perroux and Boudeville.

In Spain, it was taken as reference during the Franco dictatorship through the Stabilization Plan, of 1958, and later with Law 15/1963, by which the Plan of Economic and Social Development was approved, which tried to combine the geographical and economic planning, very much in line with the many studies of Professor Casas Torres.

Finally, in this comparative context, we find ourselves before the Germanic model (Austria, Germany), under the name *Raumplanung*, defined by constituting itself as a technique that sets guidelines for municipal planning; for their concerns towards environmental issues and for their capacity to articulate sectoral policies.

### 1.1 Objectives

In the Spanish bibliography there are a large number of works that have focused on analyzing regional and sub-regional territory planning plans of the seventeen Autonomous Communities (Zoido, 2001; Fera, Rubio and Santiago, 2005; Benabent, 2006 and 2012; Hildenbrand, 2006; Aldrey and Rodríguez, 2010). But there are few works related to the strategic planning of cities. Therefore, the main objective of this study is a methodological proposal for the development of a strategic plan that may be applicable to all cities regardless of their size and scale.

## 2. Methodological Proposal

Any strategic plan must be adjusted to five phases through which every strategic plan must pass: Preparatory phase, information and diagnosis phase, prospective phase, planning phase and management phase (Gómez, 2008)

The preparation phase is composed of:

- Provisional definition of the scope or areas to which the plan will affect. In many cases, it is necessary to overcome in the analysis the extension of the scope established according to the location of the causes of the problems, their effects or solutions. Certain problems have their causes and agents outside the defined scope, others generate effects beyond their borders, and certain determinations of the plan must be extended to those areas. The proposed actions within the scope of the plan may produce effects outside of the plan, which must be foreseen in the plan.
- Prediagnostic or preliminary diagnosis, is the approach to knowledge of the most significant problems, the most relevant potentialities, the weaknesses that afflict, the strengths available, the opportunities and threats that appear in the external context. It is about having a first contact with the area, with its population and with qualified people that can be consulted.
- Type and style of the plan. The instrument or type of plan to be prepared will normally be one of those available in the legislation in force, but one could also opt for a specific one for the problem to be addressed. The style of the plan refers to the way to understand the problem and to focus its resolution on the part of the writing team. Also, the style of the plan may be complexity, when the relationships between territorial and cultural aspects are difficult to predict; of change, what is accepted in a moment, may not be accepted in a later period; of uncertainty, the planners have to decide under conditions of uncertainty, hence the idea of adaptation, flexibility and social learning with which the plans must be conceived; of conflict, the differences of interests and expectations between the socioeconomic agents supposes the existence of conflicts whose resolution

requires the agreement between the socioeconomic agents.

Likewise, the development of a plan has to be limited to shared responsibility, since it is a responsibility of society as a whole, and not only by the authorities, for which it requires the mobilization of socioeconomic agents and of the population in general. The problems, current and potential, do not reside as much in their manifestation as in the behavior of the socioeconomic agents that motivate them, in such a way that to prevent or solve them, it is necessary to influence the attitude and aptitude of the agents and the citizens in general. For this reason, it is considered preferable to act through conviction and encouragement of positive measures, than through coercion or punishment to avoid undesirable behavior. In this idea it is necessary to reflect on the following aspects for the elaboration of a plan: participation, giving channels to the expression of the sensitivity and preferences of the population; awareness, training, motivation, of all staff, as a basis for committed participation in the development of the plan and its management; communication, transmitting information in a fluid and reliable, horizontal and vertical manner; agreement, negotiation between the various socioeconomic agents, in order to share correctly the responsibilities between them, the burdens and benefits of the plan; subsidiarity, points out that problems must be solved at the lowest possible level of responsibility; quality, refers to the excellence of the space, the environment, the processes, the services, the products and the management to achieve a good quality of life.

However, any strategic plan that is carried out must have a great value on endogenous and local development, since part of the own resources - natural, constructed, human and territorial - of each community can be understood as a supply factor. In the same way, the systems must be connected through the integration and operation of the whole, in such a way that, relating some aspects with others, a positive synergy is achieved, the idea of complementarity. For this, the system must be functional, dynamic, global, cautious, flexible, not finalist, evolutionary and prospective.

Every plan must have sensitivity and environmental commitment; it must be sustainable with air, water and soil; besides having the possibility of maintaining a social fabric and a population with such a quality of life that makes emigration undesirable. For this there must be an environmental

integration of the activities; interdependence between the economic and the ecological; prevention, aimed at avoiding or reducing problems before they occur; internalize all costs, trying to ensure that productive activities face all the costs incurred, avoiding their transfer to society.

The focus of the plan may be related to the content: comprehensive approach, analyze the area to identify problems and opportunities, set the objectives, identify the alternatives to achieve them, evaluate them to select one of them that then applies the corresponding controls and evaluation of results. Strategic approach focuses on the critical aspects that strangle the system and towards the fields with the greatest impact on development.

In relation to the method a plan can have an approach: incremental, this approach considers unabated, or prohibitive for reasons of time or economy, making a diagnosis of the situation in all its complexity. It makes a qualitative approach to the problems and considers how they would foreseeably evolve. Spiral of improvement, is a variant of the incremental approach that operates by cycles.

In a first cycle, it presents attainable goals in the short term and through small actions, which it uses as a platform from which to access new and progressively more ambitious objectives. Mixed approach, this approach advocates the comprehensive diagnosis and the continuous taking of incremental decisions in which the planner continuously examines a limited set of alternatives. Content and scope of a strategic plan, the scope refers to the degree of detail or level of depth with which it is intended to analyze and diagnose each of the aspects considered. The plan must have a legal content, where the laws specifically promulgated, attribute disparate contents to plans whose denomination and purpose are similar; conceptual content, regardless of legal regulation, the logical planning process is developed according to a vertical line, where the determinations are cascaded from one level to another, so that the plans of higher levels constitute reference elements for the of lower scope. From each of the plans arise the investment projects or units, which completes the cycle of decision making. Documentary content, is of a general nature, and must have the following documents: document of previous intentions, informative, interpretative or evaluative, propositive, management, studies and information plans, explanatory memory of the plan, economic-

financial study, program of execution broken down by stages and plans and ordinances. The document that contains the plan must be able to easily transmit what was planned for those in charge of executing it, so its drafting and presentation must meet this objective.

Team work, the team is not only a solvency element of the plan, but also determine the cost of the plan. The team must be defined in the following terms: curricular profile, organization, operation and dedication of each member.

The team must be transdisciplinary that is, formed by representatives of the various fields involved in the realization of the plan and work in an integrated manner, so that, by interacting knowledge, an interdisciplinary result can be achieved. The multidisciplinary must be understood at expert level, not degree, in the idea that the condition of specialized expert of a subject is only acquired through experience and that you can access the development of a plan from any professional field. The team must have skills and a disposition to work, a spirit of collaboration, positive attitude, dialogue skills, precision in the language and a capacity for reflection on the subject as a whole from the field of specialization, being aware of the multiplicity of dimensions that form it.

Therefore, the work team must be formed by a coordinator with generalist training, by specialists in the different environmental factors and by advisers who provide security to specialists in specific aspects.

Programme of work: schedule of tasks, an element that allows to control the times for the joint team and for each of its members.

The budget for the preparation of the plan, it is about applying a unit price to the dedication of the different members of the team.

In the phase of information and diagnosis of any strategic plan, the necessary studies must be done for the knowledge and interpretation of the territorial system in light of its historical evolution and its tendency towards the future in the absence of intervention. The diagnosis is facilitated on the basis of two forms: with sectoral diagnoses or with integrated diagnoses of the territorial system. The sectoral diagnosis consists of collecting relevant information from the four subsystems that comprise it: physical environment; population and economic

activities; settlements of population and infrastructures and legal and institutional framework.

The analysis of the information will allow understanding the functioning of the territorial system and detecting its problems and its potential. Within both terms include the conditions, weaknesses and strengths, bottlenecks, problems, the aspirations of the population, the most appropriate administrative possibilities and levels and the opportunities provided by the unexploited resources both natural and built and human.

The role of the physical medium in planning is understood in terms of relation to human activities, since it starts from the idea that all activity is necessarily located in its natural physical environment, and is related to it through what enters into the activity (influents), what comes out of it (effluents) and physical elements (buildings, facilities and spaces) that form it. Both systems - physical environment and activities - have to form a harmonious and functional system, since the physical environment has three indispensable functions: it is a source of natural resources and raw materials; it is the support of the physical elements that form the activity and is the receiver of the effluents that the activity emits.

The population is the active element of this strategy, acting through the activities of production, consumption and social relation, while the physical environment is the support of such activities, the source of natural resources and raw materials and the recipient of its effluents. On the other hand, the population is the ultimate recipient of land management, as it does not intend anything other than to achieve a good quality of life for the population.

From the point of view of the analysis and territorial diagnosis, the population has a triple consideration:

- Territorial resource: in so far as it represents the labor force that has to exploit the available resources and produce goods and services. The population develops the production activities, which may be current, which at the time the analysis is performed are present in the territory, and potential, which could be derived from the use of idle or insufficiently utilized territorial resources: endogenous, exogenous or traditional.

- Territorial subject: as it demands the goods, services and equipment, whose endowments, in quantity and quality, are a function of expectations associated with the quality of life.
- Territorial object: as a set of individuals that are related and thus configure three basic elements of territorial analysis: the groupings of individuals in certain places, the groupings of individuals by affinities and the scale of values that determines social and individual behavior.

When we study the population, what is involved is to detect the possibilities of this for the development of economic activities, by evaluating their productive capacity. This depends on the existing demographic strengths, their structure by sex and age, their skills and their attitude to the problems and opportunities available.

For this we need both qualitative and quantitative information; quantitative: existing total population, population density, evolution over time, distribution in space, structure by age and sex, active and dependent population, employed and unemployed population, etc. Qualitative: aptitudes of the population and attitudes or disposition, state of mind, for action. Culture, lifestyles or patterns of behavior; level of participation in relation to decisions of the community and with political and social cohesion.

The population is also demanding of equipment and services, so it is necessary to estimate the needs and aspirations of equipment and services of the population and compare them with the current endowments. They are considered equipment: teacher, sports, health, cultural, social, religious, welfare, administrative, catering or recreational. In order to estimate the demand of each one of them, it is necessary to distinguish between potential demands: proportion of the total population capable of using a service or equipment, and effective demand: proportion of the potential user demand of a service or equipment.

Regarding productive activities, it is about identifying and analyzing existing activities from the points of view of their location, their viability, their behavior and their relationship with others or role in the set, as well as identifying the activities that must be carried out be subject to regulation in the plan, in respect of which the host capacity of the territory will be determined and on which the socio-

economic development of the work scope will be supported.

In terms of economic activities, production and consumption, they must be analyzed in a general framework and at the level of the farms or production units. The study in the whole scope of the diagnosis, will lead to detect: the economic base or activities that generate more employment and / or income; the imbalances derived from inter- and intra-sector relations: production, transformation, intermediation and sale; the relations with external scopes: export and self-consumption level; the lack of services and infrastructure to support economic activities through the analysis of public investment; the bottlenecks that prevent the proper development of activities and sectors.

At the production level, the exploitation or operations must first be determined, and then analyzed to detect problems related to productivity, labor, capital, profitability and management, describing each one of them of the attributes that make up the diagnosis of the problems. The economic base of the field of study refers to that activity or set of economic activities that occupy most of the active population; they generate a greater gross domestic product and contribute to a greater retention of added value within the scope of the plan.

Thus, in the economic structure the analysis of the sectors of activity must be as much of the agrarian sector: agricultural, livestock, forestry, extractive activities and productive units; secondary sector: production processes and marketing processes; tertiary sector: electricity, gas, water and sanitation; Wholesale and Retail; banks, credit institutions and insurance; public and private transport, etc. Once all the activities have been identified, what needs to be done is to analyze the relationships between them, expressed in terms of: synergy, when two or more activities are reinforced; complementarity, when one activity complements the requirements of another and others; compatibility, when two activities can coexist in time and space; dysfunctionality, when the activities annoy each other without becoming incompatible; incompatibility, when two activities cannot coexist in the same space and at the same time; neutrality, when the relationship does not exist or does not affect positively or negatively.

The subsystem of settlements is formed by the population centers: cities, towns, villages, districts, hamlets, etc., and the channels (infrastructures) through which they relate exchanging people,

goods, services and information. Three elements define, then, the system: the settlement or organization in space over time of the population settlements, the relationship channels and the exchange flows.

The diagnosis of this subsystem aims to assess its capacity so that the population can easily access all the points of the plan's scope, and the exploitation of the territorial resources; provide the population with the necessary social goods and services, in quantity, quality and accessibility, economically; that the population can access comfortably and quickly to work places; facilitate the exchange of goods, people and information among inhabited areas; that there be a smooth interrelation of the individuals among themselves and with the institutions, in such a way that the vertebration and the cohesion of the society are favored and that the rents of localization can be exploited through the opportune connections of the scope of the plan with the outside. To do this, the structure is analyzed, that is, the size of towns and cities, infrastructure endowments, hierarchies, service levels, etc.; the operation of the system; the factors that determine the population: relative to the natural environment, historical, social, productive, spatial, etc. In addition, techniques and indicators are used for the analysis of population, infrastructures, spatial organization or flows and areas of influence such as measures of the tendency to centrality; dispersion-concentration; of regularity; vector model ruler / size; horizontal models and flows of the population, economic or information.

Consequently, this subsystem consists in understanding the spatial organization of the settlements in terms of the factors that determine the location and the patterns that it follows by comparison with the theoretical horizontal and vertical models; show the limitations and strengths of infrastructures to achieve internal integration through the connectivity of settlements; understand the way in which the system is integrated into higher territorial units; to detect the flows derived from the structure of the commercial system, its adaptation to the settlements and the productive and its role in the transforming dynamics of the territory. A prognosis must also be carried out on its evolution towards the future, making of it a simulation of what would happen in the territory of not acting on it. The projections are made on the demographic forces present in the scope of the plan, with which we can see the population dynamics of the settlements; the evaluation of future workforce or labor supply that has to carry out the tasks of

production and exchange; the forecast of housing needs, services and social facilities and the spatial need of said population: urban land, and its possible impact on municipal and county planning.

The institutional and legal framework can be understood as the subsystem that establishes and controls the rules of the game that intervene in the territorial system. It includes the legislation of interest in each case: community, national and autonomous, and the institutions with responsibility in the scope of the plan.

Integrated diagnosis or synthesis, consists of the interpretation of the current situation of the system in view of its historical trajectory and its foreseeable evolution, which requires synthesizing in a brief and coherent outline the sectoral diagnoses outlined, highlighting the interconnections that they occur between the problems and the opportunities of the different subsystems. Likewise, the main elements in which the integrated diagnosis can be specified are: the settlement system, the communications network, the territorial units, the problem tree structured by representative levels, a list of resources or usable potential of the system, the DAFO matrix, among others.

Another phase through which any strategic plan passes, after the diagnostics, is the prospective, since it is something fundamental in any plan. The prospective refers to predict, from the present, the possible futures of the variables, components or systems to which it is applied, to represent them by translating them into models and to guide the planners on the path to follow in order to advance towards those that are considered desirable. To do this, in a prospective analysis part of the diagnosis and imagine future assumptions about the most representative variables and components and determinants of the territorial system as well as other relevant aspects indirectly related to it.

To arrive at a prospective model, multiple scenarios are generated, but there are three paradigmatic ones: trend, optimum and commitment, based, respectively, on the three following predictions: what is the most likely future if the system is not intervened; what is the most desirable future, assuming that there are no limitations of means, resources and wills; which is the most viable future, given the circumstances that occur in the system under study and the interplay of interests and conflicts that occur in the system.

The planning phase goes through the definition and analysis of the objectives, the identification of proposals or measures that we will carry out and the implementation of the selected alternative.

An objective is what you tend to pretend to achieve it. Therefore, this task consists of solving current problems, preventing future ones, taking advantage of opportunities and satisfying the demands of the population, as well as complying with the higher-level guidelines, if any, and the forecasts of institutional levels of less than on the field under study. The formalization of this task goes through the following stages: identification of the specific objectives based on the diagnosis made; disposition of objectives in the form of a tree with several levels of disaggregation; analysis of the horizontal relations between objectives of the last level, expressing them in terms of incompatibility, dysfunctionality or competence, neutrality, complementary or synergy; order of priorities among the objectives and compatible system of the objectives.

The identification of the proposals will consist of finding solutions aimed at achieving the objectives set out in the previous phase. For this, as important as what needs to be done is what not to do, and how it is going to be done; therefore there are three kinds of measures: regulation, which are then translated into standards; of intervention, which are made operational through other plans, programs and projects and management, which operate through a managing entity and a management system.

The generation of alternatives is vital to the plan, since they are a coherent and compatible set of proposals or measures to achieve the set of objectives. The generation of alternatives involves designing alternative objective images and evaluating them to select one of them. The fundamental elements that make up each objective image are: a model for the organization of the physical environment, a population, an economic base that supports it, a system of settlements that shelter it and communication infrastructures that give it functionality. If the plan adopts a purely summative approach, there will be no defined objective image, but a series of proposals that are supposed to improve the current situation of the system.

The instrumentation of the selected alternative consists of expressing the selected alternative in such a way that it can be put into practice, it is about deciding what is not done, what is done, when it is

done, how it is done, who does it, who finances it and who controls it? This means grouping and arranging the proposals in terms of the following concepts and similar ones: measures aimed at controlling land use; positive intervention measures and measures for the management of the plan.

Finally, the management phase of the plan consists of moving to the executive phase in which the proposals are materialized, and involve the following tasks: design of a Management Entity; management system; indicators for management; start-up program and follow-up program. The follow-up task is very important, since it analyzes the reality in a continuous way to make decisions capable of adapting the determinations of the plan to the changing reality.

Each one of the phases requires the knowledge contest of very different origins: physical environment, population and activities, settlement and infrastructures and legal and institutional framework. Likewise, each phase uses different methods and techniques for its development, which demonstrates the multidisciplinary nature of the planning. However, transdisciplinary could be sterile to understand the functioning of the territorial system if the interaction of all knowledge does not occur, complemented by the participation of different sensitivities of socio-economic agents, conflicting interests and local knowledge, which are so important for the success of any plan (Gómez, 2008).

### 3. Conclusions

Strategic planning in the last years of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century has undergone a transformation in applied methodological models, since local governments are seeking to adapt to current social and economic contexts, as they are increasingly complex and changing. The new scenario of globalization, increasingly developed, has caused that the traditional planning based on the physical and spatial planning of the cities is not enough for the promotion of public policies of urban development. For this reason, our methodological proposal for the generation of strategic plans promulgates that trying to start one of the indispensable parts so that the strategy is a success is the participation of the citizens, understood this as any process by which opinions, values, preferences... of citizens, organized or not, are considered as a "substantive input" in the decision-making processes on the

design, implementation and / or evaluation of public policies, (Clemente, 2008).

Strategic planning can be conceived as a process oriented towards long-term objectives, developing in cycles of three phases: territory analysis, territorial planning and territorial management. The professional who carries it out may encounter the challenge of developing various types of plans, with different functions, areas, styles, approaches, content and determinations, according to the nature of the plan, the particular problems of the ordered environment and, consequently, the aspects in which the emphasis is placed: regional, subregional, regional or local, sectorial versus integral, strategic versus comprehensive, referring to the rustic soil, emphasizing the physical environment, in the socioeconomic aspects, among others.

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