

# STRATEGIC URBAN PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT



Climate change means that cities need to be conceived in a more energy efficient and resilient way; the emergence of civil society and technology innovations mean that it is necessary to redefine the spaces for dialogue about the development of cities; the financialisation of the city provides the incentive for territories be granted tools for regulation aimed at greater social and spatial justice. For those reasons, and in the face of strong demographic growth, the planning of cities is a major issue, notably for intermediate and secondary cities.

The growth of cities also poses challenges in terms of land use and informal dynamics. Around half of the urbanisation in developing countries takes place in an informal manner, and this phenomenon should double over the next twenty years. The integration, through planning of the existing informal neighbourhoods in cities enables access for all to urban services and decent housing, to combat social, spatial and economic inequalities, and to diminish lessen vulnerabilities.

The territorial approach, which integrates the suburban and rural worlds into development policies, fosters the development of exchanges between complementary spaces, notably in terms of energy and food resources. Solidarity between those spaces is an intrinsic condition for the harmonious development of territories.

## FRENCH ORIENTATIONS IN SUPPORT OF STRATEGIC URBAN PLANNING

Strategic urban planning makes the link between the strategic (policies and planning) and operational (regulations, development projects and urban services) tools, an essential condition for the harmonious development of territories.

### **Orientation 1:**

Consolidating the role of local authorities  
as the main contracting authority

For a better coordination of interventions on a territory, States can facilitate vertical integration between different administrative levels, whilst still respecting

the principle of subsidiarity. At the national level, better coordination involves the deepening of institutional and financial reforms. National government thus ensures that the local authorities have favourable legal frameworks and the financial, technical and human resources required to carry out their missions and, where necessary, takes measures to strengthen their powers and means of action.

One of the challenges for local authorities is to ensure their actions are in coherence with the national development policies that frame the local strategies whilst also ensuring that the local specificities and particularities of its own urban environment are taken into account. For the national authorities, the issue is to support vulnerable authorities that do not have the capacities to meet the challenges they are faced with.

### **Orientation 2:**

Making strategic urban planning part of a political and contextualised vision of the city

Urban development policy is a political project that responds to a comprehensive understanding of the territory. In order to safeguard the common interest, strategic urban planning is led by the local authority alongside the adjoining territories according to participatory processes that encourage consultation with stakeholders from civil society. As leader of the planning process and its implementation, the local authorities ensure the continuity of the project, even though the terms of office of local representatives may be time-limited.

In a general sense, urban planning aims to anticipate future changes, with the aim of achieving inclusive and sustainable growth:

- Its aim is to improve the living condition of the inhabitants and service users, and to strengthen inclusion and social cohesion. In order to do this, it is essential to take account of local heritage and culture, and to recognise the specificities of the various groups involved. Public facilities can be key elements for social mixing and cohesion.
- It rests on, and interacts with, the territory's economic development strategy.
- It is the frame of reference for the preservation and management of natural resources

and the environment: it specifies the actions to be undertaken for the resilience of the cities and populations, as well as the mechanisms for prevention and management of risks.

Urban planning also makes it possible for local specificities to be taken into account and to adapt measures according to the location: vulnerable area, historic neighbourhood, outstanding landscape, central or peripheral location, economic situation of households, etc. The contextualisation is essential for planning to be effective.

### **Orientation 3:**

Involving the territory's stakeholders by the use of democratic local urban governance

Within a framework of democratic local governance, local authorities ensure the participation of all stakeholders in the urban planning process. The joint construction of a vision for the territory is a long process, but it fosters the participation of actors from different cultural backgrounds, including the operators of urban services, the job creators and the inhabitants. The public debate takes place on a territorial level, in such a way as to be able to produce studies that reveal the potential and vulnerabilities of the territories. Various tools can be utilised: geographical information systems, official surveys, local expertise, or the traditional knowhow of the inhabitants.

### **Orientation 4:**

Promoting an integrated approach

Strategic urban planning takes account of changes in the city and its environment. It means anticipate urban transformations and respond to the present and future needs of populations. Thus, the local authority must seek, through territorial planning, to integrate the approaches by neighbourhood, by city and by territory, in order to promote an approach that is integrated between sectors and over time.

The primary aim of this approach is to achieve better coordination and linkage between the various sectorial policies, and involves the setting up of multi-disciplinary technical teams that will have a grasp

of the cross-cutting issues such as the environment, the fight against unemployment and exclusion, safety and security or social diversity.

Ensuring planning over time requires having the capacity to monitor and analyse policies, in order to adapt planning to urban changes. Territorial planning is adaptive and, as such, demands a constant dialogue between the formulation of policies and their implementation, in order to remain flexible to the evolution of local priorities and needs.

### **Orientation 5:**

Regulating land use for an urban development that is inclusive

The issue of land is central, notably in growing cities adjoining rural territories, or metropolitan areas. The use of land, and that of coastal or fluvial interfaces, crystallises the conflicts of interest between landowners, those holding the rights to use the land and investors.

Fully integrating the question of land into planning presents several major issues:

- respecting the diversity of existing land tenure systems;
- identifying and adopting intermediate forms of arrangements for land use (leases, rental arrangements, transfer procedures, shared ownership etc.);
- adopting alternative and accessible procedures for administration of land and land registry that involve local stakeholders and local authorities.

Local authorities must take measures to preserve the affordability of cities and their accessibility to all categories of the population, through policies to formalise inclusive land rights and regulation of land markets.

Setting up land agencies (for example public land establishments or land trusts) can enable urbanisation to be prepared and to curb land speculation. The local authorities share this task with the national government, which defines the frameworks for territorial planning, puts them at the disposal of local technical services and trains local authorities in their use.

### **Orientation 6:**

Developing information services on the city and territories

One of the key aspects of planning is the collection, management and dissemination of information at the local level. In particular, small and intermediate cities, which will concentrate urban growth in the coming years, often do not have quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient data on the urban fabric. Information systems make it possible to increase local actors' knowledge of their territories, to provide reliable statistics and thus be able to produce genuine tools in support of local authority decision-making. In order to gather this data across territories, the local authorities or their partners in development could, for example, support the setting up of urban planning agencies or observatories on urban development.

### **Orientation 7:**

Building the capacities of local actors as pillars of strategic territorial planning

National governments, international donors and agents of international cooperation must support capacity building of local authorities (governance, technical or financial) in order to enable them to take on the role of leader of local public policy.

An effective programme for technical capacity building will, for example, include the training of trainers in order to carry out a transfer of skills over the long term, encourage local autonomy and reduce the dependence of local authorities on outside expertise. Projects for exchanges between peers and city-to-city collaborations are beneficial and contribute to building this expertise.

Finally, national governments and its partners should also build the capacities of local actors and associations in order to enable their informed and conscious participation in the planning process.



## **HABITAT III CONFERENCE** TOWARDS DEFINING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA