

# URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN LABS

tools for integrated and  
participatory urban planning

Quito, Habitat III Version 1.0.

**URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN LABS**  
**tools for integrated and**  
**participatory urban planning**

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participatory urban planning

# UN-HABITAT | LAB

urban planning and design

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# FOREWORD



Dr. Joan Clos

I am delighted to present this publication on the UN-Habitat Urban Planning and Design Lab.

Since its inception in 2014, the UN-Habitat Planning and Design Lab has provided direct assistance to more than 40 cities across all continents. The Lab has become an integral part of UN-Habitat's strategic support to local, regional and national governments, by improving urban planning and design processes.

In a relatively short period of time, the Lab has contributed to the creation of the Spatial Development Framework 2040 for Johannesburg; the Urban Planning Guidelines for the Union of Myanmar; the Planned City Extension National Priority Project in Ghana; and the Urban Renewal Plan for Canaan in Haiti. UN-Habitat's Urban Planning and Design Lab has also created a network of Planning Labs that exchange applied knowledge of best practices in cities.

The New Urban Agenda (NUA) identifies urban planning as one of the key principles for achieving sustainable development and growth. In the new paradigm shift of urbanization, urban planning and design is a crucial tool that can help to effectively address the complex urban challenges and make from urbanization, a strategy for development.

We strongly believe that urban planning is, along with rules and regulations and urban economy, one of the three fundamentals of sustainable urbanization. Good urban planning and design does not come by chance. It comes by choice. At UN-Habitat we stand ready to support cities and governments in urban planning and design processes through the Planning Lab.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joan Clos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Dr. Joan Clos**

Secretary-General of Habitat III  
Under-Secretary-General, United Nations  
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UN-Habitat founded its in-house Urban Planning and Design Lab in Nairobi in order to provide assistance to local, regional and national authorities with urban planning and design. The Lab has been a response to a growing demand from cities to UN-Habitat not only to provide tools for their urbanization challenges, but also to respond to urban planning in general that remains to be hampered by general reflections without providing clear solutions that can cope with the speed of urbanization.

As cities grow and change rapidly, they are confronted with a wide range of new problems. Planning departments often struggle to address such problems as they are occupied with daily administrative tasks. This leaves them with insufficient time to introduce new approaches, and with plans that are not fit-for-purpose. Furthermore, the typical institutionalized sectoral approach (separating 'sectors' as land management, infrastructure, water) delays the integration of issues in an urban plan. Plans get stuck in procedures as a result.

The Lab started as an in-house technical team developing concrete planning projects, and has been evolving into a program with a distinct approach, activities at global and local level and a network of Labs associated directly or indirectly.

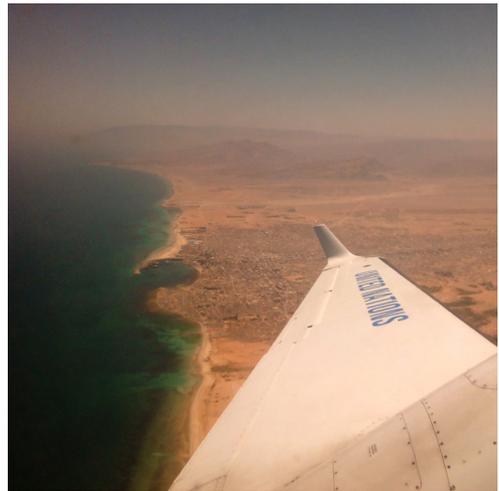
By using the normative work available within UN-Habitat, the Lab has contributed from the onset to the definition, design, coordination and actual implementation of urban projects, and has supervised the setup of similar facilities where necessary. Constituted by a core team of professional planners, the UN-habitat Lab brings

together in-house expertise on urban legislation and urban finance in every assignment. The Lab methodology is based on a strong project approach that integrates different sectoral demands and brings stakeholders and citizens together around projects, fast-tracking the design of clear planning proposals that can be implemented on the short and medium term.

The Lab does not work in an isolated way, but through equal collaborations with the local authorities - this is key to implementation. It is important to emphasize that the Urban Planning and Design Lab (later in this publication to be referred to as Planning Lab) model as described in this publication is not an alternative or substitution to local government planning functions, nor to private sector consultancies. It acts as an urban planning advisory service, indeed, but combines deploying specialized capacity with the management of the process from within the government apparatus. This has proven to help cities understand how to navigate urban projects towards implementation, how to inform the leadership and to understand which crucial changes in policies, legal and financial frameworks would help to move from the business-as-usual to more transformative action. A Planning Lab works best as a focused strategic intervention carefully tailored to a specific demand - it can address a range of issues from emergencies to institutionalized processes, and help introduce planning in places where there is no planning yet.

The Planning Lab approach can only lead to actual results when the proposals are supported by relevant policies, legal frameworks and financial mechanisms. With a focus on implementation, a Planning Lab will put a plan on the table and explore the most integrated and effective solutions. In the process, it often unveils key systemic issues thus informing broader policy and capacity needs. Therefore, setting up a Planning Lab gives a city a mechanism to introduce new knowledge, methods and expertise to become more efficient, output-oriented and inclusive.

Although the Urban Planning and Design Lab in the Headquarters of UN-Habitat in Nairobi has been successful in the acceleration and implementation of planning related issues, it is not a silver bullet. Urban planning is a tough process that needs participation, political leadership, supporting policies, legal frameworks, commitment, technical expertise and so on. It is exactly in the complexity of this process that the Planning Lab finds its existence and application: to create, navigate and accelerate the urban strategies and transformative projects to implementation within a complex set of actors and technical realities.

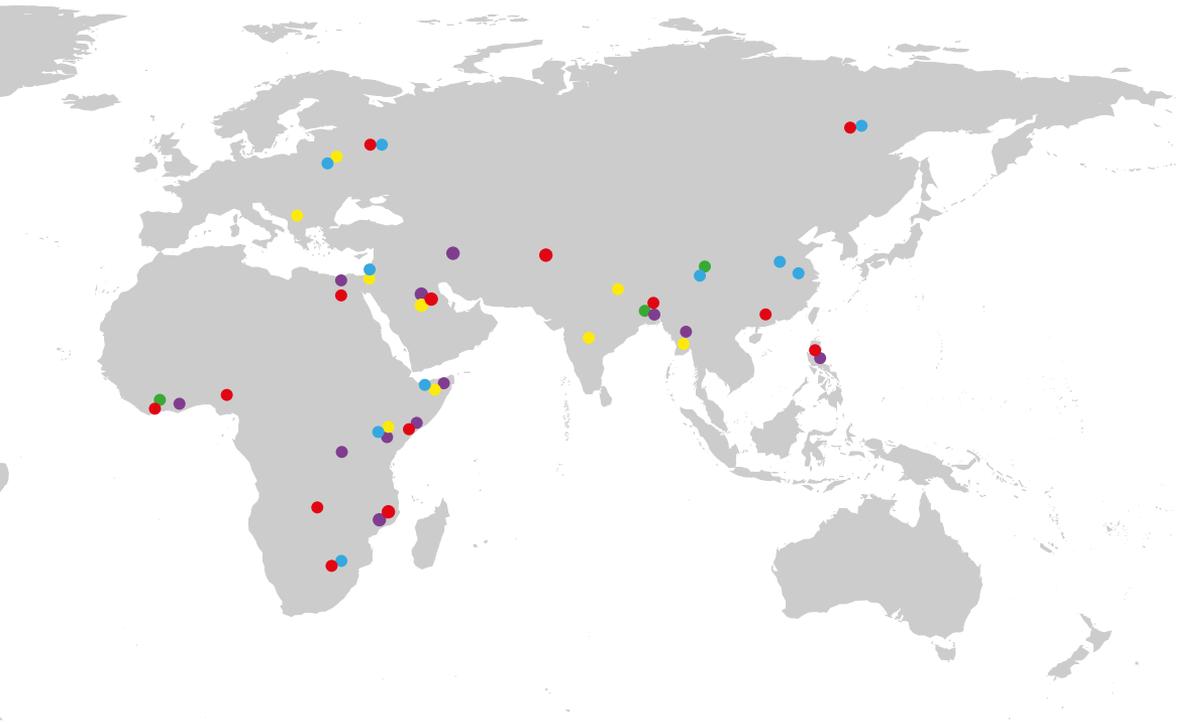


Bossaso, Somalia  
One of UN-Habitat Lab's areas of work  
© UN-Habitat

This publication discusses three themes: key challenges that urban planning faces today, how a Planning Lab can address these and help local or national governments, and straightforward step-by-step guidelines on how to set up a Planning Lab. By exploring these themes through the past and ongoing practices of the UN-Habitat Planning Lab's work and through concrete case-studies, this publication deduces experience-based guidelines and advices that can help cities facing similar challenges, offering methodologies for inspiration and duplication.

Urban planning is a constantly evolving field. Correspondingly, the work of UN-Habitat's Planning Lab is constantly adapting. It takes a reflective and self-critical approach with a view to revise and improve its methodology. The principles and guidelines described in this publication are well-tested, but not final. They are meant to evolve and develop with future experiences - experiences of the Planning Lab and of other partners, colleagues and cities. This publication aims to share the Planning Lab's features, working approach and experiences to learn from, and to invite cities and peers to discuss further how to improve and progress these methodologies and to empower city authorities to respond to the urbanization challenges they face.





- Citywide Strategy ●
- Planned City Extensions (and new towns) ●
- Urban Infill, densification and renewal ●
- Planning guidelines and capacity development ●
- Climate change and urban planning ●

Where the Lab is active

# A

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## WHY WE NEED PLANNING LABS

Any Planning Lab in any city should be considered as a strategic intervention that should drive change in the way cities are being planned and planning processes are being conducted. Here, we briefly reflect on this strategic role of Planning Labs.

1

## PLANNING LAB AS STRATEGIC INTERVENTION

UN-Habitat's Urban Planning and Design Lab (from now on - Lab) has been a strategic intervention within the agency itself. For city leaders it is important to recognize this, otherwise this tool is of no use. The Planning Lab requires commitment, leadership and openness to self-assessment. If done right the Lab can create new ways to integrate expertise and stakeholders in the planning processes and truly build new capacities and accelerate implementation.

Urbanization has serious consequences related to climate change, risk, livability and the economic performance of cities which in turn affects regions and nation states. There is a clear interaction between urban planning policies at the national, regional and local scale and the implementation of projects in the city. This is why a facility serving cities to develop plans can be anchored in an organization serving member states.

Understanding the contextual reality has been crucial for understanding how the Lab can be positioned in order to make an impact. The experience is that this impact is only there when the Planning Lab is considered as a strategic intervention as opposed to a technical advisory service only. The Planning Lab should be used to drive change and to accelerate implementation.

The UN-Habitat Urban Planning and Design Lab has always relied on a very close collaboration between the city and the partners within the Lab. It has aimed to be positioned at the same time inside and outside the city administration: inside, to tap into knowledge and inform the leadership, outside, to have space to manoeuvre and to critically reflect on urban issues and processes. The context in which the Lab operates is always different. A society's culture, legislation, economy and its position in the region and the world, define among others the reality in which planning takes place. Climate, mobility demands and housing typologies are all relevant to a plan. Context is not static but often temporarily or permanently disrupted or changed as a result of conflict, migration, natural disasters or financial instability.

## UN-Habitat's Urban Planning and Design Lab's Mandate

The mandate of the UN-Habitat's Lab is rooted in a series of resolutions of its Governing Council and driven by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were adopted by world leaders in September 2015. UN-Habitat's Governing Council adopted, among others, the following key resolutions, related to urban planning policies:

**Resolution 24/5:** Pursuing Sustainable Development through National Urban Policies, stressing the need to work on Planned Cities Extensions

**Resolution 25/6:** Adopting the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning which provide guidance on planning at national, regional and local level

**Resolution 25/6:** Endorsing the creation of a Network of Urban Planning and Design Labs

The Global Sustainable Development Goals clearly mark the importance of urban planning in SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities:

"Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", particularly through targets 11.3 and 11.7:

**11.3:** By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries

**11.7:** By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

These mandates were important incentives to set up an integrative facility that translates different policy directions into action, providing services to cities.

Despite of all these obvious or subtle contextual differences, Planning Labs - seen as a strategic intervention- all support or drive the transition from one stage to another, changing urban planning processes by being able:

### 1. TO SELF-ASSESS AND TO SUPERVISE

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The Urban Planning Lab as a strategic intervention is not a substitute for private sector planning consultancies. In the experiences in the 40 cities the Urban Planning Lab has operated, it is a combination of technical support, facilitation of the participatory process and addressing urgent issues of change within the political arena that makes the difference. As such, the role of the Urban Planning Lab should not be thought of as a strict client-consultant role. Rather, the Planning Lab drives an integral process of change within the local, regional or national government. The strategic decision the government takes when considering a Planning Lab is if the government can commit to a process of change and critical reflection. But above all, it needs to be willing to take place in the driving seat. A Planning Lab does not externalize capacity in urban planning, regulations and financial mechanisms. Rather, it is a facility that is set-up to internalize these aspects in order to really change the way of working.



A local, regional or national government should be willing to commit to that and to take the risk of being confronted with systematic gaps, errors and mismatches in planning tools and planning processes. The Planning Lab will always encompass a type of self-examination or diagnostics. But, it will not be a self-assessment only, and a Planning Lab should truly operate as a strategic intervention. It should always provide a plan, a set of tools or frameworks that can support structural change or that can provide the inspirational pilot project to draw structural support from.

Many aspects within the Lab will still be executed by consultancies, and in various Labs the team consisted of different government agencies, UN-Habitat and a consultant. Furthermore, the outcome of a Planning Lab will not focus so much on the detailed planning. At the moment detailed planning comes into focus, key issues on the principles for urban planning, and their supporting rules, regulations and financial mechanisms should already be in place. The detailed plan, which is extremely important for achieving the final quality of the urban environment should be guided by the key principles and frameworks developed by the Planning Labs. In a sense, the Planning Lab, contributes to set the 'rules of the game' and to enhance supervision of externalized planning work by the local authorities.



Exploration of participatory land-readjustment in Medellín to achieve structural change © UN-Habitat

## 2. TO INTRODUCE PLANNING AND GUIDELINES, AND BUILD CAPACITIES WHERE THERE IS NO PLANNING

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In many countries there is still no urban planning, or it is very limited. There is limited technical capacity, but also no legal frameworks to guide urbanization. A national urban policy or a planning law that structures the legal process of making and approving plans are also often absent. These conditions are frequently seen in post-conflict countries or in countries where an authoritarian government structure changes in favour of decentralized structures. For example, the Lab served Somaliland to test the newly drafted Urban Regulatory Framework with actual plans for two secondary cities. These sort of exercises do not only illustrate how these rules and regulations could be applied, but also test the approval and participatory processes proposed.

### Bringing planning in places without planning: Strategic planning in Somalia

In Somaliland and Puntland, in Somalia, there was no such a thing as a planning law. After UN-Habitat facilitated drafting of an Urban Regulatory Framework (URF) for Somaliland and Puntland, the Lab explored what applying the URF would mean in practice for the town of Gabiley in Somaliland and the port city of Bosasso in Puntland. In Gabiley, this exploration resulted in a new urban boundary, the definition and layout of extension areas, the design of the urban structure with its streets, centres and parks and the definition of a series of projects, such as a bus terminal. This was the first time for this town that anyone drafted a plan with a set of new rules that was adopted.

As mentioned before, the context is key to understand the dynamics of urbanization. Gabiley is now a small regional centre in the west of Somaliland with around 20.000 inhabitants and a current population growth of about 3%. But its position along the East-West Somaliland Highway,

close to the economic powerhouse of Ethiopia and with a connection, although still a rough road, to the port of Eritrea and Berbera, will have an impact on the economic reality and urbanization of this town. In order to facilitate future economic activities, population growth of the town and to preserve valuable agricultural land, a plan is essential. Effects of no planning or poor planning are clear to the city administration: economic activities are sprawling in valuable agricultural lands, houses are being built with no access to water, and the poor location of a bus terminal has led to congestion.

In such cases, the Lab's work is not only to test planning and the planning process, but also to deduct lessons in order to provide contextualised tools and documented methodologies to be used in other secondary towns in Somaliland and Puntland.

In Myanmar, the Lab worked the other way around, by improving two secondary cities and testing UN-Habitat's principles for sustainable urban development. These principles were developed into contextualized guidelines for planning that can be used for the 84 extension plans that are being drafted in the light of the decentralization of planning procedures and planning capacity.

### **3. TO INTRODUCE NEW APPROACHES, PRINCIPLES AND TOOLS**

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In many contexts, there is planning, sometimes very sophisticated, sometimes highly technocratic and sometimes based on colonial laws from 100 years ago. The planning system and planning culture does not always correspond to the urgent challenges ahead. A Planning Lab provides new principles and tools to anticipate these urbanization challenges. The tools are meant to be practical, enforceable, democratic and people-centered.

### **4. TO COUNTERBALANCE SENSITIVE POLITICAL DYNAMICS**

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A Planning Lab can serve as a strategic tool to balance complex, often sensitive political dynamics that might obstruct implementation of urban plans and projects. One has to face that urban planning is always political. Planning is often misunderstood for being a technical expertise only. Urban Planning includes land management, rules and regulations and prioritizes public investments in infrastructure for example. Citizens, landowners, political parties and the private sector have a stake in this. This context gets more complex and sensitive if there are limited rules and for example when land ownership is unclear. A Planning Lab can play an important role in the balancing act between national, local and international stakeholders making plans for an unregulated urban condition, and evaluating with a non-biased perspective what needs to be done.

### **5. TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN EMERGENCY AND DEVELOPMENT**

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From disaster to development, from war to peace, from shelter, food and healthcare to urban development, from refugee camp to city, Planning Labs can help bridge the gap between immediate response and long-term planning. In the experiences the Planning Lab built during the last years in post-conflict and post-disaster situations, it has become clear that this shift needs capacity and often a partner from outside. The focus changes from ad hoc problem solutions to medium and long term development thinking, without losing sight on implementable projects that can continue to improve the situation of tomorrow.



Bridging the gap from emergency and development in Haiti © Rogier van den Berg

## 6. TO ADDRESS NEW DIMENSIONS OF THE CITY: THE CITY REGION AND METROPOLITAN REALITY

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In many countries, the urban footprint has exceeded its city limits or municipal boundaries. There is a mismatch between the functional urban area and its administrative boundaries. In many countries the governance model of the city region is not in place yet. This means that planning stops at the municipal boundary, either to be continued across the border by another municipality, by the province or region, or not at all. The Planning Lab is a strategic tool to fill this gap in planning and governance and to integrate the spatial structure at the city regional scale and to test which is the right scale to address certain problems. A Planning Lab as such cannot only technically advise on the improvement of regionally functional systems, but it can help to define a new governance model.

## 7. TO WORK IN CONTEXTS WITH STRONG POLITICAL DIMENSIONS AND FLUID RULES AND REGULATIONS

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Urban Planning and Design Labs coordinated and driven by UN-Habitat have a certain advantage. First of all, the presence of the UN within the planning process helps governments and related stakeholders to walk the extra mile or push the constraints that limit sustainable urbanization. The UN-Habitat Planning Lab puts challenges in the centre of attention and positions them in a bigger context in which different levels of government are involved and in which the challenge gets an international dimension and normative framework. The latter is important to benchmark local or national rules and regulations related to development that frustrate the planning process and implementation.

Secondly, the UN-Habitat Planning Lab is able to operate in contexts with very strong political dimensions or political instability: in areas of conflict, post-conflict, post-disaster and in politically sensitive areas of migration, informality and social segregation. UN-Habitat's infrastructure of country offices and long-term commitments with member states has proven a strong base to build upon. It provides access to the political leadership that should drive change.



Design charrette in Gabiley, Somalia © Ivan Thung

The country and regional offices also provide a wealth of information that has been build up by producing country reports, surveys and by having a continuous link to different levels of government. In contexts where there is conflict the UN has the security measures in place to operate on the ground. UN-Habitat's Planning Lab has been active in places like Somalia, Afghanistan, Gaza, but also in planning operations in Haiti, where 250.000 dwellers in 4 years informally occupied the area of Canaan, leading to civil and political tensions. The Planning Lab has been able to respond to Ecuador's earthquake of 2016, providing assistance to the national government and to 6 teams of experts that are making reconstruction plans for 20 affected cities and towns along the coastal areas.

Another example of working in a highly politicized situation is the planning of Kalobeyi in Kenya. To accommodate migration streams to the west of Kenya, this settlement is a first time approach not to plan a refugee camp, but to plan a permanent settlement, a real town, with a legal approval process, like any other town. This is a great opportunity to provide better basic infrastructure, amenities, but also gives an impulse to the new citizens to actively engage, invest and develop the area. All these examples are extremely difficult to manage when not operating under and in cooperation between the UN agencies. This publication aims to provide tools and describe processes, in order for governments to better understand the dynamics of project oriented planning, but also to provide the insights that enables them to set up their own Planning Labs. The factor of the international experience and the external balancing powers in highly political contexts should not be overlooked as an important vector to successful change and implementation. Nevertheless, an important lesson one has to draw after 3 years of operation of UN-Habitat's Planning Lab is that success and implementation should always rely on the combination of local champions and the external balancing act. Without commitment of leadership and without a local champion that drives the process change and implementation of urban plans is barely possible or will not provide long term capacities and change.

## 2

## WHY GOVERNMENTS CAN BENEFIT FROM PLANNING LABS

The major challenge in addressing rapid urbanization is often not the lack of plans or planning departments, but cities failing to make the most out of urban planning, being stuck in business-as-usual and 'reactive' planning. Urban planning is often seen as a bureaucratic activity of land management and issuing building permits - only dealt with by technical experts. Often planning techniques are used in a simplified (large scale zoning of monofunctional areas) and generic way not recognizing and reacting to the cities' specific issues and population's needs. A Planning Lab is an opportunity to respond sensitively to ongoing needs of the cities and citizens by focusing on specific problems in a specific context, using tools that address these at the appropriate scale.

Business-as-usual planning revolves around drafting legally required documents and issuing permits, neglecting the intrinsically political dimension of planning. Citizen inclusion and stakeholder participation are seen as add-ons rather than as integral parts of the planning process. Planning has in many places been reduced to a checklist of legal steps, followed through by one or two officers in the office, rather than an open process that aims to build a vision for all. Planning is being used and perceived as a tool for approval or rejection, but not as a tool for development and negotiation. In reality, the planning process is a technical and a political process taking place between a multitude of stakeholders: the cities and politicians, citizens, communities, local organizations, academia and the private sector. A Planning Lab would use planning as a platform for development thinking and facilitating

negotiation, treating the planning process as a continuous back-and-forth between technical facts and politics, design and negotiation - in a process that includes both the civil society and the private sector. This not only creates a more inclusive process, it also helps the feasibility of plans by ensuring public support and mobilizing the private sector.

Many planning activities neglect the spatial dimension of planning, while planners no longer draw or discuss issues on a map. This separates the discussions from the physical reality of the city. A Planning Lab has the role to help instate strategic planning on a city scale, and reaffirming the strategic role of spatial decisions - street patterns, public space density, and building boundaries, are all relevant strategic decisions that cannot be delivered when the spatial dimension of planning is neglected.

Planning processes too often result in unnecessary complex legal frameworks at the wrong moment in time. Often, the legal planning framework is missing, or it is too complex too early in the process. Many cities deal with an 'overregulated' planning system. This can mean that cities work with a very precise land use plan, comprehensive master plan or a detailed hierarchy of regulatory plans without having a city-wide strategy in which the key directions for the development of the city are set. Planning Labs create opportunities for revisiting the restrictive laws and policies and rebuilding clear legal frameworks that are the key to guarantee a process of stakeholder involvement and implementation, and smooth enforcement.

Business-as-usual planning fails to address the problem of plan implementation from the beginning, making urban plans as spatial blueprints only, unrelated to policy, a legal framework or a financing strategy. In this scenario, planners are the technocrats that do not think about implementation, and leave its financial and legal feasibility for someone else to figure out. As a result, thousands of urban plans concentrate on creating the perfect city, often planned only for the upper and middle class despite a different situation on the ground. Therefore, these plans remain unimplemented, being ultimately a waste of resources, costing local governments a lot of time, money and energy. This leads to frustrations in the planning process and to disrespect for the need of planning, not bringing any gains and benefits in return.. A Planning Lab puts a strong focus on the fact that a data set of the current situation, financial and institutional feasibility estimations and an implementation plan, need to be part of planning from the onset. At the same time, a comprehensive approach to planning considering all aspects of implementation from the onset could speed up implementation, lower costs and improve outcome.

Business as usual planning means silo thinking and silo administrations - compartmentalization and sectoral division of functions. On a horizontal level, planning is often managed on a sector-by-sector basis, dividing the efforts in thematic areas. Each department carries out their mandate, with limited knowledge of other department's activities. As a result, urban plans become products of a series of loosely connected sectoral decisions. On a vertical level, different local and regional departments

tend to only collaborate with each other at limited points in time - not throughout the entire process - leading to frustrating alignment and coordination problems limiting the vertical transfer of objectives. Departments are often budgeted separately and pursue parallel, but separate lines of development rather than a unified path in a collaborative department. Business-as-usual planning, allows for the design team to deal with the spatial layout, the finance department with the budget and the building or legal department to approve permits. This brings the planning down to a set of well-practiced steps leaving little room for change, progress and innovation. [Planning Labs are a way to bridge the gaps in information exchange horizontally and vertically.](#) Furthermore, Urban projects are complex and take long time to mature or to be executed, and few people have gone through the whole process. A Lab is a place to bring together local, national and international knowledge, to exchange knowledge based on (global) best practices.

Business-as-usual planning struggles to respond to the needs of today's cities, as it fails to address cities' rapidly evolving realities. The most commonly practiced models of urban planning and management today, are based on the city problems and theories from the 1950's and before in the Western hemisphere where cities grew relatively moderate with less environmental impact than the cities of today. In line with those theories, in many cities planning still consists of large-scale zoning plans for separating functions and land use allocation for individual large-scale projects and buildings, rather than on the quality of public spaces, street patterns or physical structures.

Examples of outcomes of such zoning-oriented planning are the residential suburbia, with long commuting times and the isolated business districts. This type of planning has been unsuccessful in catering lower income residents and the urban poor, actively exacerbated spatial and social inequality instead. At the same time, new challenges such as climate change and increased risk of disasters have put additional pressures on cities and governments. [A Planning Lab creates an opportunity to introduce and test new approaches and tools in urban planning responding to the cities of today and to the past mistakes of planning. A new low-carbon model of development can be tested in Planning Labs that could offer a format of collaboration between typically divided sectors - such as energy management and urban planning.](#)

When faced with more difficult challenges, in many places planning is outsourced to external consultants. While this fills in possible gaps in local expertise, it also creates additional problems such as poor link between technical and political processes, no real ownership of the projects by the local staff, and problems in supervision. Moreover, externalized planning often lowers the implementation rate, as it disconnects drafting the plan from the 'contractual' dimension of planning - the procurement, hiring of implementation firms and agencies and other forms of negotiation or auction.

[A Planning Lab is a model of planning that can improve the local capacities of city governments in order to provide better reliability in complex projects, being better equipped to supervise external partners throughout the process.](#)

A global survey of urban governance confirmed that many of the main obstacles of local governments arise from business-as-usual planning, as one of the biggest challenges they face, beside funding, was 'inflexible bureaucracies and rigid rules'<sup>1</sup>. Planning Labs give opportunities for cities to make a sensible shift from business-as-usual planning practices towards planning grounded in the present day realities and problems, grounded in a city's context and legal framework and more concerned with implementation.

## LAB as strategic tool to change business as usual in Johannesburg

In Johannesburg the Spatial Development Framework is on top of the hierarchy of legal planning documents. It needs to be updated and revised every 5 years. In 2012, the newly proposed SDF was rejected by the council. Reasons for rejection included that the document was seen as too technical and elaborate, as well as a desire to find new approaches to solve the complex socio-economic problems. The city initiated already a new approach by introducing the Corridors of Freedom; a transformative project of the city to rebalance the jobs-housing mismatch and to provide access to city services by introducing a Bus Rapid Transit system. The Lab was called in action as a strategic intervention to build upon this, to facilitate a truly participatory process and to introduce new planning tools. The SDF was approved in July 2016 and is - thanks to the broad participation of civil society, academics, the private sector and the sectoral departments of the city - sustainable as a policy after changes in the city leadership, in 2016.



Design charrette in Johannesburg © UN-Habitat

## Urban planning for prosperous cities

Planning is a crucial and powerful tool for guiding the rapid urbanization for the benefit of cities. However, the potential of urban planning often remains underestimated. In a nutshell, urban planning has the potential to:

### Growth sustainability

Rapid population growth and increasing rural-urban migrations bring rapid growth of cities - and failing to plan and catch up with this pace has led in many places to informal settlements, segregated suburbs and destroyed nature. When paired with an evidence-based approach and scenario planning, urban planning can respond to population growth and create a framework for urban growth that would benefit the city and its inhabitants and shift its development in a desired direction.

### Anticipate problems, saving money<sup>2</sup>

Good planning anticipates tomorrow's problems, rather than reacting to them when reversal is costly. This saves the time and resources needed to deal with the negative consequences of unplanned urbanization. Restructuring already occupied land, or reversing already urbanized natural areas is a costly and difficult process. Moreover, inefficient spatial patterns that ask more investment for services and infrastructure are likely to be irreversible. Vice versa, planning efficient urban patterns can significantly lock-in positive effects for generations to come.

### Help to grow the economy

Planning helps coordinate the distribution of economic activities and facilitates value sharing from public and private investments. Planning allocates sufficient space for infrastructure such as electricity, water, sewage, guaranteeing reliable services necessary for economic growth. It helps to attract investment, generate economic activities and create jobs. Planning helps setting long-term goals and strategies based on the existing possibilities and capacities of a city and its inhabitants. As a result, it creates economic value through infrastructure provision, allocation of industries and services and creating linkages between people, jobs and services.

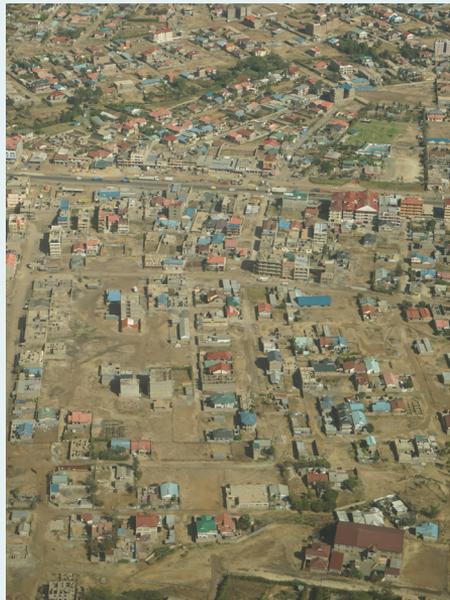
### Protect valuable natural resources and mitigate negative climate change effects

Planning seeks to find the balance between preservation and economic use of natural resources, as it allocates and connects strategically the spaces of recreation and production that use them. Urban planning helps adapt to climate change effects - it can help save thousands of people's lives and millions of economic damage by making sure that vulnerable settlements become resilient to

natural disasters and by preventing development in vulnerable locations such as wetlands, eroding coasts, steep mountain ranges or waste dumps. Mixed-use compact cities with efficient transport links can significantly reduce energy consumption and reduce emissions<sup>3</sup>.

#### Foster inclusion and building of common visions

Planning provides a common ground for debate and negotiation between different stakeholders affected by urban development. At the same time, design provides the tools to shape local ideas and identities into the future city creating a sense of belonging and contribute to placemaking. Design helps creating strategies, visions and narratives to bring people together, supporting and strengthening communities. Urban planning and design can offer a platform where all stakeholder groups can engage in the decision-making processes, helping to build inclusive cities and overcome the marginalization of vulnerable groups.



Urban Sprawl in Nairobi, Kenya  
© Rogier van den Berg

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## FEATURES OF PLANNING LABS

A Planning Lab is an integrative planning facility that works on urban planning assignments, with specific tried and tested methodologies. This chapter discusses some of key features that differentiate a Lab from other approaches.

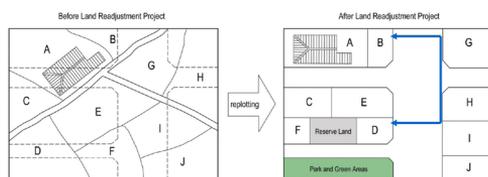
In 2014, UN-Habitat established a Lab in Nairobi to develop assistance to local governments with running planning projects and processes, and supervise the setup of similar facilities. This chapter discusses how local governments can change business-as-usual planning by making use of Lab's services, or introducing a Lab by themselves.

In practice, a Planning Lab is a smart way of deploying technical expertise and bringing people together to fast-track the creation of clear planning proposals that bring together spatial, legal and financial aspects. A Lab focuses on developing implementable proposals early in the planning process, synthesizing sectoral concerns and inviting input from a wide range of relevant stakeholders. The Lab-approach is agile and flexible and Labs can be set-up by governments in varying sizes and permanence. Labs help cities to introduce new knowledge, methods and expertise to become more efficient, output-oriented and inclusive.

By installing or making use of a Lab, local governments build or reinforce their technical capacity, foster planning innovation and optimize the resources and capacities already at their disposal. Usually, Labs are introduced in local governments, but a Lab can also be introduced to support national planning departments.



Bringing together expertise in Myanmar  
© Rogier van den Berg



Thinking of implementation tools, such as land readjustment from the onset

A Planning Lab has specific features that are designed to overcome the problems of business-as-usual planning. These features are described below:

**1. Project based approach**

Rather than sector-based, Planning Labs take a project-based approach, gathering human capacities and resources around actual implementable interventions.

**2. Normative framework**

Planning Labs introduce well-researched normative frameworks to help local governments assess plans and process.

**3. Integrated Institutional Process**

A Planning Lab integrates a variety of sectors working on urban planning - spatial design, finance, legislation, social and environmental sciences. It facilitates participatory processes and brings together central government, local governments, urban actors, communities, the private sector and academia around urban interventions.

**4. Capacity Building**

While many cities still routinely outsource planning, Planning Labs put a focus on capacity building and reinforcement. Not to do everything themselves but to improve knowledge of new approaches, to be in charge of project definition, to be better equipped in design, to better coordinate processes and to better supervise external parties in planning and implementation of projects.

**5. Participation**

Business-as-usual planning offers limited participation moments. Planning Labs aim to foster inclusive participation, through the inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders from the onset.

**6. A design process**

Design is often seen as the final outcome of the planning analysis and synthesis. In contrast, Planning Labs use design in the process to integrate demands of different sectors.

**7. A Focus on implementation**

Urban plans and projects are often left on paper. The Planning Labs promote to discuss implementation and feasibility from the onset and provide tools to approve within legal frameworks partial plans and pilot projects that can take shape on the ground.



# 1

## A PROJECT BASED APPROACH

- + A project-based approach brings together various sectors around integrated proposals.
- + A project-based approach fosters innovation.
- + A vision becomes tangible by breaking it down in transformative projects.
- + A project-based approach mitigates planning fatigue by enabling quick wins.

A key feature of a Planning Lab is that it works with a project-based approach. A project-based approach revolves around the definition of integrated projects that can drive change in cities. This is in contrast to business-as-usual planning, which revolves around general sectorial policies. Rather than each sector confining their thinking to their assigned task in the phasing process, in a project-based approach various sectors collaborate to create an integrated proposal. A project is an activity with a limited scope and a defined implementation point, and can be carried out on different scales, often linked to a specific area development objective. At the same time, the speed and momentum of a project-based planning approach creates the right conditions to introduce innovative approaches of planning and management in local governments. This type of approach can better deliver plans that are fit-for-purpose, by offering solutions already tailored to the demands of different sectors.



Project in Kalobeyei that integrates settlement with agriculture and water-runoff concerns © UN-Habitat



Minister of Local Government of Ghana with the Planned City Extension of Ningo-Prampram © UN-Habitat

## TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS

It is often elusive to realize city visions or larger metropolitan visions. With a project-based approach, long-term visions and large-scale spatial plans can be broken down into transformative projects that can be implemented in the short (1-5 years), medium-term (5-10 years) and long term (10-25 years). Transformative projects are those projects that have the capacity to trigger change and - a wider impact. Transformative projects come in different sizes and scales: in one context it can be a major infrastructural project, in another the re-development of a decaying neighbourhood, raising its attractiveness and value, and starting a chain of investments.

The main criteria of the transformative projects is that they should be able to instigate change

at scale, and in order to be successful in doing this, they need to be complemented with a set of policies and regulations that would make them work. For instance, planning to redevelop an old neighbourhood and trigger investment is one thing, but motivating investors and businesses to put their money in that area is another. Another example is the large scale transformation of a brownfield. You can make a transformation plan, but without a land readjustment law or a land pooling policy, this will be a very costly operation. This is why each transformative project should have its own implementation strategy, including legal policies enabling its realization, incentives for private investors and big employers, financial tools etcetera - depending on the nature of the project.

## The transformative projects of Johannesburg

Achieving Joburg's spatial vision through priority transformation projects. The Spatial Development Framework (SDF) for Johannesburg 2040 is a city-wide spatial policy document that identifies the main challenges and opportunities for Joburg for the next 25 years, envisioning the new city as a Polycentric Compact city. This complex long-term vision is broken down into five 'transformation areas' where investment is prioritised, as they have the capacity to trigger city-wide effects. These transformation areas also indicate where the development of detailed spatial plans will be prioritised.

The transformation areas are: (1) Strengthening the metropolitan core - consolidating the inner city through a public space/street network and expanding it towards the industrial area, targeting crime and lack of affordable housing, (2) The Corridors of Freedom - upgrading an existing strategy for consolidated growth and development along public transport nodes and lines, (3) Unlocking Soweto as a True City District - diversifying the largest informal settlement and addressing its largely residential nature and dependence for jobs on the inner city by developing economically productive mixed-land uses and social services, (4) Unlocking the Mining

Belt - targeting the massive spatial discontinuity of the city, and using it as a place that could integrate the north and the south by identifying strategic interventions along the belt, (5) Developing a Randburg - OR Tambo Corridor - establishing a strategic connection between northern areas and the airport and creating a regional logic for the development of strategic land parcels as to reduce expansion pressure.

The City of Johannesburg has a key role in the directing and promoting of private investment in the transformation areas. This will be done by preemptively investing in bulk infrastructure, services and social infrastructure including health, education and recreational facilities, close to public transport infrastructure. In order to maximise private investment, two mechanisms will be used: capital investment prioritisation process focusing investment in transformation areas, and land value sharing and financing mechanisms. At the same time, the realization of the transformation areas would be aided and complemented by a set of policies and regulations such as form-based codes, urban development boundary, densification guidelines, affordable and low-cost housing regulations etc.

Transformative projects should be well communicated with the wider public, because their realisation has a severe impact on city, they last long and need support of the citizens and stakeholders. A plan to transform a former port area into a new neighbourhood or the urgency to plan for fast urbanization, doubling the size of the city with a Planned City Extension needs continuous communication to inform, inspire and attract people for their commitment and support in the approval and implementation process. Transformative projects are supported by strategic interventions that in general, are short-term interventions that contribute to the transformative character of the larger project. In professional literature transformative projects have an analogy to area development plans, but not always. In the case of Johannesburg, the Spatial Development Framework aims at the development of all areas around a public transport backbone. The latter is not one area development plan but rather a collection of transit oriented developments around a linear transport corridor.



City of Johannesburg © Arthurjspring  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/arthurjspring/8944937679>

## STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

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Strategic interventions support the implementation of a transformative project. Strategic interventions can have different scales, but all provide a key to the implementation of larger scale transformative projects. In general they are short term (1-5 years) to medium term (5-10 years) projects. A transformative project that aims to transform a deteriorated or empty city centre into a dense, attractive economic core of the city is being supported by the upgrading of the city market. Or the Planned City Extension of a secondary town is being supported by a well located bus terminal and the area development around that transport hub.

## QUICK WINS

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Urban planning processes take a long time to reach visible outcomes, which discourages local administrations, politicians and citizens alike and leads to frustration and 'planning fatigue'. Quick wins and rapid results demonstrate successes to the constituency, rally support and ensure political commitment to the process, at the same time motivating the administration. Quick wins can be part of bigger transformative projects in order to provide quick results that are proof of action-oriented processes.

## PILOT PROJECTS

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Pilot projects can entail anything from a public space design to slum-upgrading or even to a first Planned City Extension of a city. These projects 'pilot' a first time approach with a tangible result. The outcome could be a plan and process or the execution of an intervention on the ground. Pilot projects can get special public attention and opportunities for implementation, so that the result, if successful, can inspire replication and be scaled up on a city or regional scale or even drive institutional change. If current legislation or for example financing mechanisms are not supporting new approaches intended by the Pilot, this project could be given a 'special status'. This could temporary allow it to test mechanisms that are not in place or that are legally limiting the good intentions of the project. Once the pilot becomes a success one might consider to explore to what extend the special status regulations could become general policy.

## FROM MASTERPLAN TO CITY-WIDE STRATEGY

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The project approach of the Urban Planning and Design Lab requires other guiding documents than the comprehensive Masterplan. Urban Planning is not there to control everything. It should guide and prioritise developments and provide the authorities a tool to discuss and negotiate with the various stakeholders in the city. In big cities or cities in largely unregulated contexts, like areas of conflict, it has no use to decide on every detail at the scale of the city. A 'masterplan' for the city is often not the practical tool at city-wide scale. A masterplan, where everything is orchestrated in every detail is expensive, time consuming and often based on too many assumptions that later on are outdated or fail to materialise. The City-wide strategy is a key tool to guide and prioritise developments. It assesses the key objectives for future development, directs urban extension and or urban infill, balances the urban and the rural, identifies valuable landscape elements to be preserved and protected and defines key transformative projects and infrastructure needs and formulates evaluation criteria. In many cities the City-wide strategy is not the business as usual. The business as usual is often still based on 'total control'. To shift from 'total control' to a more strategic way of planning requires new tools. The Planning Lab can provide the tools and the vehicle to introduce the shift.

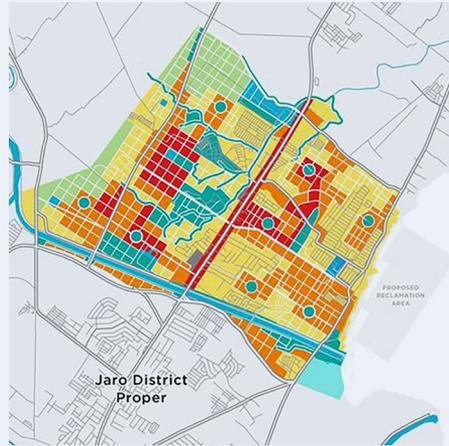
## Planning Tools

The LAB has commonly approached cities through one of the following planning tools:

### City-wide strategy instead of masterplan

Urban Planning cannot control everything. A plan should guide and prioritise developments and provide the authorities with a tool to discuss and negotiate with the various stakeholders in the city. In big or unregulated cities, like areas of conflict, it has no use to decide every detail at the scale of the city. A masterplan for the city is often not the practical tool at city-wide scale. A masterplan, where everything is orchestrated in every detail is furthermore expensive, time-consuming and often based on too many assumptions.

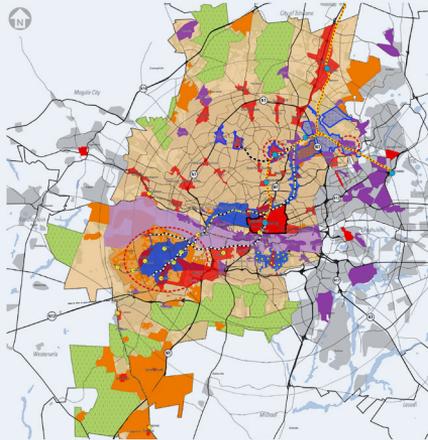
The city-wide strategy is a key tool to guide and prioritise developments. It assesses the key objectives for future development, directs urban extension and or urban infill, balances the urban and the rural, identifies valuable landscape elements to be protected, defines key transformative projects and infrastructure needs and formulates evaluation criteria. In many cities, the city-wide strategy is not the business-as-usual. In many - there are strategic city-wide plans but they are not statutory, and the development is still guided by a masterplan that may or may not be influenced by the strategic plan. The business-as-usual is often still based on 'total control'. To shift from 'total control' to a more strategic way of planning requires new tools, which a Planning Lab can introduce and explore.



Development of Planned City Extension in Philippines  
© UN-Habitat

### The Planned City Extension

In cities that are confronted with rapid urbanization there is often a lack of expertise on how to guide the urbanization process. The Planning Lab is being involved in numerous situations where small or secondary cities are confronted with population growth rates between 5% and 10% as a result of internal growth combined with rural-urban or migration from areas of conflict. With a population growth rate of 7% a city doubles in size every 10 years. For smaller and secondary towns this is a new reality to anticipate. This new reality requires new capacity and new tools to anticipate the future growth, while there is limited time to do planning. Without a plan, growth can easily turn into a social and economic problem. The Planned City Extension is a tool that focuses on the basic urban structure with basic rules and regulations at a sufficient scale to accommodate rapid growth and secure development opportunities over time in the future. The rapid growth of the city often also means another balance between the local authorities, regional and national authorities.



City-wide strategy in Johannesburg, South Africa  
© UN-Habitat



Urban Renewal and Transformation in Candellaria,  
Bogotá © UN-Habitat

### Urban Renewal, Urban Regeneration and Urban Transformation

Processes of renewal, regeneration and transformation are part of the lifecycle of cities and neighbourhoods. In countries like China that successfully linked economic development with urbanization, planning for extension is now complemented with question about the renewal of city centres, the regeneration of economically underperforming areas and the transformation of industrial heritage.

After decades of planning for rapid expansion this new challenge requires different tools. While in a greenfield development there are limited stakeholders involved and development goes fast, in Urban Renewal, Urban Regeneration and Urban Transformation the city administration has to deal with a lot of stakeholders, slower processes and processes that are not primarily driven by real estate development.

These processes deal with changing land use, evaluation of heritage, reprogramming of existing buildings, the provision of incentives to attract or redirect stakeholders, and incremental public space improvements. These are fundamentally different processes (greenfield versus renewal) need different expertises and tools. The Planning Lab is a strategic tool to introduce these tools and bring in new expertise into ingrained planning processes.

The Planning Lab brings stakeholders together in the drafting of a plan. The reference to a 'Lab' refers more to the testing and contextualization of new approaches in a city, rather than to 'a place for new inventions'. Let us explain that further. In complex processes like urban planning with many stakeholders involved and often in highly political dynamic situations, it is essential to have a normative framework that provides guidelines, methods and principles to anchor plans in reality and that provide assessment tools, criteria and indicators. This normative framework is essential to be effective in the assessment and drafting of the plan. If there is no normative framework it is extremely difficult to moderate discussions around a plan. It means that you enter into a discussion without guidelines on the process and without evaluation criteria for the plan. This makes discussions extremely versatile and difficult to moderate. Furthermore, it slows down the process, because the 'wheel needs to be reinvented' first before the bandwagon can go ahead. For the ones involved in processes with many stakeholders it is a familiar setting where instead of talking about a plan the discussion shifts to the general framework and evaluation criteria that should precede the plan. In mature planning agencies of cities where over centuries or decades a certain planning 'culture' evolved, guidelines, tools and evaluation criteria are consciously or subconsciously part of professionals or others involved in the planning process. In contexts where there is limited planning let alone a trained profession and a planning 'culture', a set of guidelines, tools and evaluation criteria should be introduced.

UN-Habitat's Urban Planning and Design Lab is fundamentally built around the normative frameworks of the agency that aims to develop more compact, better integrated and connected cities that foster equitable sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change. It takes this framework, described in the following key publications as a point of departure:

- » International Guidelines for Urban and Territorial Planning
- » Urban Planning for City Leaders
- » Sustainable Principles for Neighbourhood Planning

Furthermore, it taps into the global experience with data from the global observatory and best practices from the various specialised Branches of the agency. With this global dataset and best practice experiences, documented in compendiums, studies and country profiles the Urban Planning and Design Lab has been able to provide tailor-made references and benchmarks that resonate with cities in a specific region and that can guide ambitions and objectives. The Urban Planning and Design Lab functions in that case as a link to the 'brain factory' of UN-Habitat.

For every Planning Lab, no matter if it is guided by UN-Habitat or any other authority, the normative frameworks and global overview are key anchors within the process. These could be provided by academia, research institutions, an international authority or well supported national or international professional organizations. Coming back to the start of this paragraph, the Planning Lab is not a 'play garden to reinvent the principles', but rather vehicle to contextualise them.

This does not mean that the Planning Lab is not providing new insights and innovations. The new insights and innovations are found in the proposed urban form and in new relations within that urban form as a result of design explorations, modelling and benchmarking. Innovations are also to be found in the process proposals for drafting and implementing plans and in the correlations it establishes between the spatial, legal and financial component of planning.

## UN-Habitat's vision on sustainable development

UN-Habitat supports countries to develop urban planning methods and systems to address current urbanization challenges such as population growth, urban sprawl, poverty, inequality, pollution, congestion, as well as urban biodiversity, urban mobility and energy, by promoting its vision at the national, regional and city scales, to achieve more compact, better integrated and connected cities which are socially inclusive and resilient to climate change.

### **More compact**

places emphasis on a sustainable urban form (shape, density and land use) that reduces the over exploitation of natural resources, promotes economic viability, livability, environmental quality and social equity. Urban compactness aims to increase built area and residential population densities; to intensify urban economic, social and cultural activities and to manipulate urban size, form, structure and settlement systems in search of the environmental, social and global sustainability benefits, which can be derived from concentration of urban functions.

### **Better integrated**

holistic approach to urban development that interlinks various dimensions of urban life; social, economic, environmental, political and cultural. Emphasis is placed on the linkage of spatial

aspects of urban development with economic, social, environmental components, in particular to achieve both mixed use and social mix. Both vertical and horizontal integration also constitute the crucial components of the integrated approach. On the one hand, vertical is in terms of the early integration and involvement of the various players of government, administration and non-government players involved in urban development. on the other hand, horizontal is in terms of integrating the various sectorial policies, and actions of the public and also private sector for sustainable development.

### **Better connected**

involving the development of policies, plans and designs that offer better physical, social and virtual connectivity among people living in different locations and urban areas. It regards cities as entities connected to neighboring settlements, surrounding regions and hinterland, with which they share resources and opportunities. It also includes national and regional strategies such as the development of networks and corridors to address transportation-related needs based on a full understanding of the dynamics of human and goods flows and all interacting influences including national and international trade. Connectivity fosters innovation in business, government and education, allowing interlinked cities to gain from

complementariness in their production structures and service structures.

### **Socially inclusive**

conferring certain rights to individuals and groups in a society, recognizing diversity and promoting equality by giving attention to those whose voice has often not been heard in conventional public policy. It promotes the concept of participatory planning which is not limited to the integration of stakeholders with more influence, but also the integration of all stakeholders with a particular focus on the needs of women and those who are most vulnerable, including, inter alia, children and youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, the poor, the landless, rural to urban migrants, internally displaced people and indigenous peoples in the plan making process so to effectively impact their lives.

### **Resilient to climate change**

recognizing the role of cities in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, as well as the potential role cities play as centres of innovation, development and application of new technologies and solutions in the effort to curb, halt, reverse and adapt to global climate change. Human activities in cities are major contributors to climate change and the source of a considerable portion of global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, especially CO<sub>2</sub>. Resilience to Climate Change therefore includes policies, strategies, frameworks, plans and designs that promote both, the adaptation to climate change and mitigation of GHG emissions.

# 3

## INTEGRATED INSTITUTIONAL PROCESS

- + An integrated institutional process improves efficiency, increases the implementation rate and fosters innovation.
- + Such processes enable better horizontally and vertically integrated solutions.

Urban governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a city. It comprises complex processes, mechanisms and institutions through which interests and articulated legal rights and obligations exercised<sup>4</sup>. Managing urban planning requires navigating through these complex mechanisms. The Planning Lab approach aims to make influential shifts, big or small, in the working mechanisms of city administrations.

### HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION

In most administrations, the planning process has remained unchanged for many years. In a linear process, departments pass along a plan from department to department, for sectoral development and specific approvals. For example, the departments responsible for implementation and budgeting are only consulted after the plan is finalized, leading to plans which are currently unaffordable for the municipality. This forgoes the opportunity to include innovative financing or private sector based solutions as part of the plan. Planning Labs can be a pivot between sectorial departments gathering specialists around specific projects and as such breaking the 'silos' in which departments tend to work. The Urban Planning Lab is able to facilitate internal discussions, exchange knowledge and bring in external partners reflect on working methods and approaches.

### VERTICAL INTEGRATION

Vertical integration is crucial to any larger urban transformation at the local level. First of all, because large urban transformations often need technical capacity that is not available at the local level. Secondly, because large scale transformations need to be integrated in National Development Plans in order to tap into funds, like for example, national infrastructure provision or urban renewal funds.

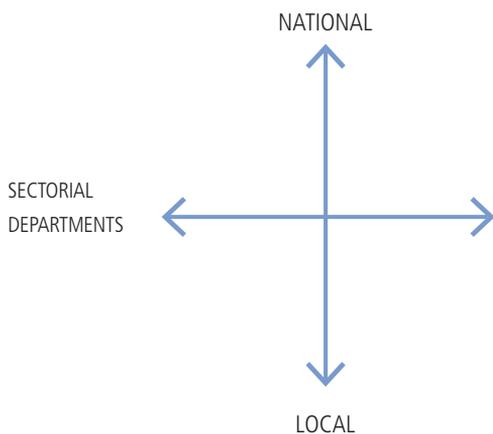
In many developing countries there is a clear bias towards the capital city. Here, the ministry responsible for planning is located that is mandated to plan even for cities far from the capital. The capital also often hosts all the technical planning capacity, while planning staff on local level in secondary cities are largely administrators. As a result, there is little knowledge sharing between different levels of government (national, regional, local). This leads on the one hand, to centrally created plans that don't adequately address local challenges, and on the other hand, to local actions that miss the bigger picture.

Planning Labs act as a link to explore new ways of bringing together local and national actors, and as a pivot to match local and national ambitions.

Making an integrated institutional planning process possible requires to:

- » understand the balance of power and budgets of different departments and levels of government
- » understand the implementation process: the planning system and the legal approval trajectory of (sectorial) plans
- » manage channels of communication and lines of decision-making
- » Understand the balance of power and budgets of different departments and levels of government

To understand the balance of power between departments or levels of governments, is essential to understand how to better integrate work. Some departments have more investment power and therefore a bigger impact on the development of a city. Infrastructure provision is in many cases more powerful than the planning department, and the national budgets always exceed the local ones. This means that project diplomacy within the institutional reality is essential to convince sectorial departments and levels of government to 'buy in' to the process. Diplomacy might not be enough to gain momentum and support to really enter into integrated proposals. This requires to change the balance of power by introducing a 'special project' or a 'special area' that eliminates some of the obstinately firewalls between actors. An example is to introduce a 'project office' that is primarily responsible for the integration, implementation and management of the plan, with powers to overrule sectorial ambitions in that specific area. The Planning Lab can be predecessor and/or part of such an office.



## New tools and vertical integration in Ghana

A Planning Lab can serve as an integrative facility to accelerate implementation by introducing new tools and fast track procedures. In the case of Ningo-Prampam, an area in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Region, the Planning Lab had this role. Due to the growth pressure from Accra, the area sees a lot of land speculation, and without a plan, the area will sprawl with uncontrolled growth. Using the Planned City Extension tool, the lab planned Ningo-Prampam, which has led the national government to recognize the area as important to accommodate future growth.

The Lab facilitated a consultation between different levels of government while safeguarding the ownership, initiative and control at the level of the district. As in many countries, in Ghana the growth of urban regions happens at such a scale and speed that it is difficult to just perform 'business as usual' procedures of planning. While action at large is needed to respond to rapid growth, this task is often barely performed as neither the district nor the national government has experience to perform this task. In this case, vertical integration matters, as city extensions of this size are of national importance, and can barely be seen as 'local'. As most of the growth in Ghana takes place in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area, national investments and strategies had to be taken into account in developing this plan. Furthermore, vertical integration matters as infrastructure needs assessment and budget allocation should happen at different levels of government, and define the possibility to tap into national resources. To achieve this, the district plan had to be part of the National Development Plan and the national budget. On the other hand, a decentralization of capacity is still necessary to give the local government the tools and capacity to implement the plan, talk to landowners and demarcate a street network.



Traffic issues in Accra © UN-Habitat



Planned City Extension, Ningo-Prampam © UN-Habitat



Stakeholders forum © UN-Habitat

## UNDERSTAND THE PLANNING SYSTEM / IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Only with a proper understanding of the planning system and procedures of approval a better integrated planning is possible. Some rules and laws simply do not allow for integration. For example, some rules make a mix of different land uses impossible or municipal boundaries limit the contiguous extension, resulting in a plan that is being blocked by opposing municipalities. Sometimes different sectorial interventions require different approval processes or processes with totally different time spans. To understand the way to integrate institutional planning processes in depth, understanding of the planning system is essential. Any planning lab should assess this system prior to intervention.

## MANAGE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND LINES OF DECISION-MAKING

Depending on how the Planning Lab is linked to, or where it is positioned in the administration, the functioning of the Lab will be dependent on the communication and collaboration with that administration; with the planning department (if there) and with the other sectorial departments. It is therefore important to establish:

**A clear relationship between the Planning Lab and the department responsible for urban planning** - There are a number of ways in which the institutional relationship between the Planning Lab and the main planning agency within, can be arranged. The Planning Lab can be a facility that deals with specific on-demand projects, while the agency does the day-to-day work; it can be positioned under the agency, taking assignments directly from the agency or it could work parallel to the agency, collaborating on projects.

Another relevant decision is whether the Planning Lab would be working on specific projects from inception to implementation, or each project will be the product of collaborative work between the Planning Lab and the agency. For instance, the Planning Lab could do the strategic planning, while the planning agency translates it into land use plans, legal frameworks and is responsible for supervising the implementation and issuing permits.

**Channels of communication with related sectors** - The Planning Lab will be collaborating on a regular basis with different departments situated in the same city administration, such as finance, environment, social services, housing etc. The success of implementation of complex urban projects depends on a strong link to the bureaucracy and politics, and should be shaped, reshaped and governed according to the political and bureaucratic reality. This is why establishing a good and clear relationship with these departments, and having mutually communicated focal points for communication and collaboration when needed, can be determinative for the implementation of projects.

## DATA PRODUCTION, SHARING AND EXCHANGE

Advances in information technology have had a significant impact on the efficiency of local governments and is continuously changing how cities are being managed.

Urban planning is an activity that brings together numerous disciplines and demands large quantities of different spatial data. Built area, typology and age of buildings, infrastructure, topography, demography, natural hazards, waters and other natural elements, heritage - are just some of the spatial data that are needed and used in urban planning.

The possibility to easily share and exchange digital data, as well as to produce faster demand-driven data, has opened new doors for urban planners and civic bureaucrats. Different agencies and departments, along with many institutes, the private sector, academia, NGO's or civil organizations simultaneously produce huge quantities of data for same areas. Yet, data often remains unused due to the absence of communication paths between different actors. This often leads to a duplication of efforts and is a missed opportunity for better integrated urban plans.

At the same time, there are many situations where there is very little data and very little resources to produce new data - however with today's state of technology there are ways to work around this by using publicly available data and quick data production tools.



# 4

## CAPACITY BUILDING

- + In-house capacity building strengthens local governments.
- + A learning-by-doing approach builds lasting skills.

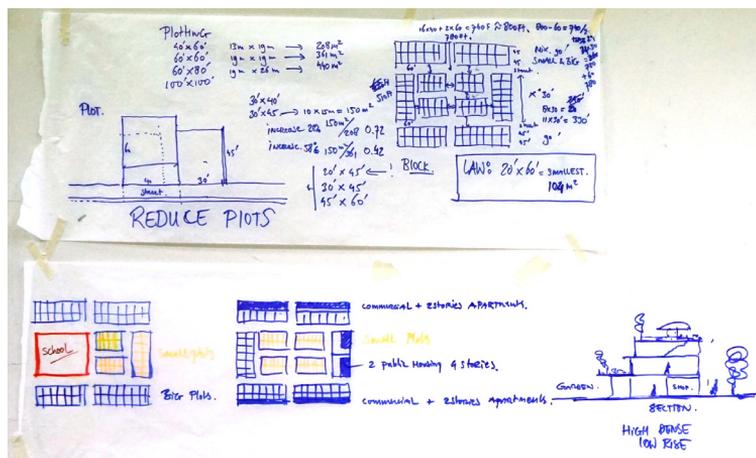
The effectiveness of urban governance depends highly on the quality of human capacities in a national and local city administration. Urban Planning is not always well represented as a tool or profession in national or local administrations. This can have various causes. Planning could have been performed as ad hoc land management without an urban development plan, a country shifts from rural to an urban society and faces the need for urban planning, or cities are confronted with new areas of planning without having the tools: integrating internally displaced people (IDP's), responding to climate change and disaster risk reduction. There are also new technologies that require new capacities, like Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Furthermore, developing cities and states need to address issues of local economic development, community participation, slum upgrading and affordable and low cost housing. In an ever more urbanizing world all these issues enter the domain of the 'urban' and are inextricably linked to urban planning tools and approaches. It is important to consider that a lack of capacity not always is linked to the fact that a country is in transition or developing. Urban Planning is slow and there are often not a lot of people that have been involved in large scale urban transformations from a to z. Many of these complex transformations (city extensions, port transformations, airport redevelopments, city centre renewal, brownfield redevelopments) anywhere in the world require international exchange of knowledge through expert group meetings, international conferences or sister city approaches.

Planning Labs are a very effective way to build new capacities in the administration by bringing local, national and international expertise together around real cases that need to be solved on the short and medium term. Ideally the outputs are enhanced capacities of people and a (better) plan. The Planning Lab methodology is based on a 'Learning-by-Doing' approach combined with training modules. A Planning Lab can work within administration of a city, bring different levels of government together or can also be a collaborative effort of two or more cities. On the level of the state multiple planning labs can even build capacities and drive policy change nationally.

Some of these capacity building methodologies are described below:

## LEARNING-BY-DOING APPROACH

In practice Learning-by-doing means that people learn new methods and skills whilst working on a concrete project. The direct and instant application of theoretical knowledge speeds up the learning process and motivates participants, making this method very effective. In a series of sessions or workshops, a planning lab can assemble planners and other relevant people from the local, regional or national government around a specific project. By using a step-by-step methodology, introducing participants to new approaches, principles and guidelines a planning lab can prepare the administration for new urban challenges. Another important effect of the learning-by-doing approach is the plan as an output. If the plan is made in a collaborative effort, with participants actively applying new tools and approaches it means that the plan is also understood by the ones who are often also in charge of implementation, evaluating comments and managing land and resources in a later stage. This can help to bring the 'paper tiger', often made externally, down to the ground, to the people who need to work with it.



Sketches in a capacity building workshop © UN-Habitat



Capacity building workshop in Myanmar © Rogier van den Berg

## **IN-HOUSE CAPACITY BUILDING**

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It is extremely difficult to drive change from the inside out only. Moreover, if you face challenges that did not exist before. Therefore a collaboration of in-house participants with external partners can be beneficial. Apart from the in-house and external partner collaboration it is important to have a variety of professions as part of the planning lab and of the learning-by-doing approach.

- » Make sure that urban planners, urban economy and urban law experts are included as core members of a planning lab - depending on the planning lab's focus they should be complemented with other expertise; architects, geographers, engineers, social workers, housing experts, climate change experts, disaster and resilience experts etc.
- » Make sure that at least a part of the participants comes from different sectors of the city administration. People familiar with the bureaucratic procedures at place and people that have experience with implementation in a given context are needed to ensure that things run smoothly. At the same time, experts coming from outside are needed to bring new knowledge, ideas and a fresh perspective - these should be ideally established bodies having expertise since a number of years with a firm set of normative principles, guidelines and a global perspective.

## **TRAINING MODULES AND THEMATIC AREAS OF LEARNING**

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Parallel to the learning by doing process, thematic modules on sustainable planning principles<sup>5</sup>, on useful legal frameworks and policies to improve implementation and modules on various components of municipal finance should be added where needed. A global overview of best practices is needed to widen the perspective, to proof that it can be done and to showcase that the specific problem is less specific than it may look. Every context is specific, but many challenges cities face are similar just like the tools and principles to address them.

## **CITY-TO-CITY COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING**

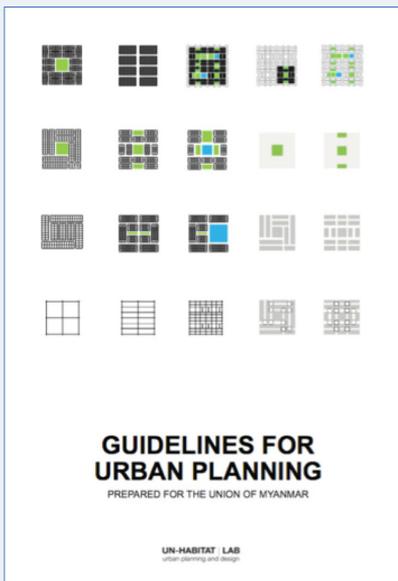
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City-to-city collaborations are a great method of practical learning from cities that already have experience in dealing with comparable challenges. This can be done through networks or joint projects and knowledge exchange conferences. Another effective way to do this is through one-on-one (city-to-city) direct partnership with a focus on specific common issues that one city needs and the other has experience dealing with or who wants to partner in solving this specific matter attracting outside expertise. It is of essence to select the right city partners - from the same country, or internationally - and the methods of skill and knowledge

# Capacity building through learning-by-doing: Myanmar urban plans review

Urbanising in fast pace, Myanmar is anticipating its expected urban growth by preparing urban plans for over 200 cities. The changes in the country's leadership and its gradual opening up have led to the drafting of a new planning law, placing a huge demand on the government's technical capacity to plan. However, as Myanmar currently has few professionally qualified planners, drawing its planners mostly from a pool of civil engineers, the country has limited urban planning capacity. To address this issue, LAB-HQ organised several capacity building events as learning-by-doing workshops. With a step-by-step method developed by UN-Habitat, using the existing urban plans that were being made, planners were guided in both reviewing and proposing alternatives for city-wide, neighbourhood and street-scale urban plans for selected secondary cities.

In addition, several trained planners were invited to work together with professional Dutch planners on the proposal of a city extension in Yangon, applying the lessons learned and exchanging knowledge in an international context. In a country where there has been a lack of education in the last 40 years the Lab acted as a strategic capacity building tool to help and create hands-on Guidelines to support the new planning law, a step-by-step planning methodology and a concise handbook of applicable urban patterns and street sections. These Guidelines, adopted by the Minister of Construction in the first 100 days of his term have been deducted, from planning reviews and exercises in the two secondary towns of Kalay and Pyay and have been applied in a later stage to a large Planned City Extension of Htantabin in Yangon



Guidelines for urban planning developed for Myanmar © UN-Habitat

transfer in order to gain the most of this type of international networking. This often means pairing up with cities from the same geographical region or joining networks focusing on issues that are priority concerns for a city, but it is also relevant to be alert of the different systems of bureaucratic and political administration - not all best practices are feasible and applicable in each city. Having Planning Labs in several cities in one state can help to verify tools in principles in the same legal but different social and economic context for example. In the case of UN-Habitat's Urban Planning and Design Lab this has been done in country programs of the Achieving Sustainable Urban Development program where Rwanda, the Philippines and Mozambique where nationally testing new principles for planning in several cities while contributing to and tapping into an international body of knowledge. More recently, similar programs are being developed in Saudi Arabia and Myanmar.

## **CENTRE-PERIPHERY CAPACITY BUILDING**

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In many countries, planning capacity is very centralized and focused only in ministries and the capital city, with other cities severely lacking capacity. Apart from in-house capacity building (within a ministry, or municipality), a Planning Lab can also be tailored to build capacity of local governments by bringing together expertise of different hierarchies. In such a set-up, central government provides the knowledge on legislation and planning frameworks, while local governments provide the needs and local analysis as well as suggested local solutions. The central government benefits by the feedback it gets on its regulations. In largely rural countries, countries with a centralized regime or countries after conflict, this is not an unusual situation. The capacity building also contributes to establishing new channels for integration and communication between national and local governments.

## **DEDUCTING GUIDELINES FOR REPLICATION**

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A Learning-by-doing approach, especially performed with more cities involved, should not conclude in local capacity and local plans only. It is advisable to add to the learning and doing, a phase of analysing the new plans and deducting the guidelines for planning in a specific context or country. When there is a lack of capacity locally, it is elsewhere too. Using the learning experience and the local application of international principles to deduct guidelines for a region or country is extremely valuable in terms of further capacity building and replication of pilot approaches.

# 5

## PARTICIPATION

- + Participation is a right
- + Participation increases local ownership of a plan
- + Participation captures local knowledge, and information on potential risks and opportunities
- + Participation makes a plan sustainable to electoral change

Governments globally have become increasingly aware of the relevance and value of participation in planning and public decision-making. However, it is often difficult for governments to 'fit' a completely new activity within their usual routines of day-to-day planning - it can be difficult to estimate when and where to introduce participation in a rigid bureaucracy. A Planning Lab offers a platform where the routines can be built anew, and through which participation can be introduced, piloting methods and tools then can be more steadily integrated into the system.

### WHAT IS PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING

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The city is shaped by a long list of actors with different interests, including inhabitants, landowners, investors, banks, private sector companies, non-governmental organizations, street vendors and other informal workers. Participation is the process in which affected stakeholders of an urban plan take part in its development. Through a participatory process they can be actively involved in the process of informing the planning process and influencing the decision-making, the plan and its execution. This process can range from months to years, in which stakeholders periodically come together in a moderated setting with a clear objective to provide input for a project.

### PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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Participation is often confused with public consultation. In many countries public consultation is a legal requirement in the planning process, requiring a plan to be publicly published to give the public the opportunity to review and comment. Both participation during the planning process and public consultation after the draft should be taken seriously and can positively influence the substance and commitment to the plan. It is especially the participation in drafting the plan in which the Planning Lab can be a valuable instrument to gain information related to planning proposals and scenario's rather than receiving general input without a plan on the

## Stakeholder design charrettes and Community mapping: planning the post-disaster Canaan area

After the earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010 and the establishment of the first IDP camp there, a large number of inhabitants started to move to Canaan; a barren area located in the northern outskirts of Port-au-Prince which was declared public utility land. Currently, a population of around 200,000 people live in Canaan. This area has developed informally right after the earthquake, and it is not adequately serviced by infrastructure networks. During the last 6 years, plans followed mostly a humanitarian approach and missed a long term development/strategic plan.

A new approach was needed. The UN-Habitat Office in Haiti and UN-Habitat's Urban Planning and Design LAB in collaboration with UCLBP (Unité de Construction de Logements et de Bâtiments Publics) and the American Red Cross, organized a series of Charrettes gathering different National and Local Government institutions, private sector, community groups, NGOs, planning professionals and academia to discuss the current situation

and the future vision for the area of Canaan. The charrettes aimed to create a factual understanding of the urbanization process in the Canaan area, to draft a common vision for the urban development and upgrading of the area, and to jointly assess the best way to prioritise interventions and actions. From the very beginning of the project the community's participation was required to obtain a meaningful project. The maps developed with LAB-HQ Design support on the neighborhood scale were proposed to the community, who gathered to proofread, validate, amend and make alternative proposals when necessary. This approach to community mapping of the main social, spatial, economic and environmental characteristics of the area enabled multidisciplinary working groups to draft a strategic vision and an urban structure for Canaan. As a result, several social and infrastructure projects are currently being selected to implement.



Second Charrettes in Canaan, Port-au-Prince © UN-Habitat

table. For the Public Consultation part there are many procedures to do, ranging from public outreach, town hall meetings, gazetting, and plans on display, to questionnaires. Information coming from this public consultation should be evaluated and taken into account before the final plan is there, but the experience with the Planning Lab is that if the first part, the participation in drafting the plan is done well, the public consultation is more about details or very specific individual claims related to the plan rather than on the general direction and principles.

## PARTICIPATION AND POLITICS

Participation is not about including civic society, the private sector and academics only. Participation in the planning process requires to integrate horizontally and vertically (see an integral institutional process) and it requires to have political consultations during the process. Not all societies or governments allow or encourage political intervention during the process. To not match the planning proposal to the political reality is simply ignoring the fact that approval processes and budgeting of projects still goes to council afterwards. Technical expertise and participation is both necessary to build the arguments for decisions a council has to make eventually. The Planning Lab is a way to build a strong body of knowledge and arguments underpinning the plan in order to stand strong in the process of political decision-making. A planning process should not ignore the political day-to-day reality and at the same time balance this with the long-term objectives of an urban plan. Political reality is not only within the council, it is also within



Residents in Haiti were involved in validation of neighbourhood plans © UN-Habitat

the various departments - infrastructure, green, planning for example - and how they respond to a plan. Their modus operandi/behaviour are directly linked to their mandate, capacity, the budgets that they have and the objectives they are (often personally) accountable for.

## **PARTICIPATION AS A STRATEGIC TOOL TO IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANS**

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Participation should be an integrated component of any public process if the government takes its citizens seriously. This is crucial in Urban Planning processes. The city is not an abstract reality. It is the living and working environment of people who all have a stake in their surrounding. A plan has an impact on the value of land and real estate as a result of infrastructure provision, on the way that businesses are able to operate and on the location of public amenities among others. With a well-organized participatory process implementation of a plan will be enhanced. By the time implementation starts there is less chance on obstruction of the plan, moreover if done well a participatory process can lead to public-private partnerships or at least the clustering of activities and investments in order to have maximum impact with minimal resources. Furthermore a participatory process is part of the assessment. Data collection, mapping and discussions within different departments of government do not necessarily match with the ideas of actors in the city. Therefore the interests of civil society, the private sector and academics should be addressed in the various stages of the planning process. It is the Planning Lab that can play an important role in the participatory process during the assessments and drafting of the plan.

Generally speaking the participatory process should have at least two stages: one during the drafting of the plan, and another one when the concept plan is going for public consultation.

The latter is many societies part of the legal requirements for plan approval, sometimes reduced to only gazetting the legal opportunity to comment on or oppose the plan before a specific date. There many ways to improve this stage by doing wide public outreach, putting the plan on display and organizing town hall meetings.

This requires a well organized communication strategy and a team that registers and evaluates the inputs.

The Planning Lab adds a component to the participatory process that is less common. It is a participatory element during the drafting of the plan. That means that during the assessments and the plan preparation various stakeholders are included in the process. Not only representatives from the private sector and civil society, but also from different departments and levels of government.

Using charrettes, workshops and bilaterals a broad group of stakeholders can be included in shaping a plan before a city council approves it for broad public consultation. The stakeholders involved can also play an important role in communicating the plan to their constituency in the public consultation later on. This broader participatory process is important to avoid unnecessary obstructions later on, to create potential partnerships during the process and not unimportant to create a strong commitment to the plan of various stakeholders.

This is the only way to also create a continuity of the plan when the political leadership changes and avoids that every plan is obsolete after change of government. Urban Planning processes are slow and the impact of a plan on a city relies on continuity, perseverance and commitment of the public and private sector. The participatory process is a strategic way to guarantee continuity and a life span of a plan that is longer than one political term.

## Neighbourhood Participation in Urban Renewal projects, la Candelaria.

In Medellín, UN-Habitat facilitated a long-term participatory process that incorporated legal innovations to improve the neighborhood La Candelaria. La Candelaria is a neighbourhood with approximately 3000 inhabitants. Under the program 'Participatory Land Readjustment', a three year engagement with the community led to a renewal plan in which all current inhabitants will be rehoused step-by-step in new buildings. But instead of offering mass housing in a remote location, the plan rehouses all inhabitants in the area and offers space for new income groups. The plan focuses on public and collective urban assets with options to continue small scale economic activities on the ground floors.

The participatory process that engaged each of the inhabitants is progressive, and builds on the social urbanism that Medellín started a decade ago. Community workshops were organized with strong involvement of the city authorities. This three year process a dedicated team of local staff and consultants worked with the community. They set up community centre with a large scale model of the neighbourhood, so people could see their house and the linkages to relevant challenges. The team also made a full characterization of the community and different types of tenureship, which was the key to value the people's assets and balance that with the provision of new. The project has been approved as part of Medellín's 'Macroprojecto' as a legal 'Plan Parcial' (legal, local area development plan and is awaiting allocation of budget for the first phase.)

## **GETTING PARTICIPATION RIGHT**

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Participation in itself does not guarantee a good outcome. Generic non-directed participatory processes can, aside from wasting time and resources, lead to dead-ends, conflicts, and result in 'participation fatigue' amongst all involved. To avoid this, one should:

### **Decide on the types of participation**

Based on the desired outcome of the process (regional plans, city plans, neighborhood plans, visioning) the right method of participation with each stakeholder group needs to be identified. In each case, the target groups and stakeholders are different, so the participatory methods need to be tailored accordingly. This is ranging from informing to consultations and shared decision making on steps in the planning process. Not every stakeholder needs to be maximum involved in every step, appropriate levels have to be found. In organizing participatory exercises also the local circumstances in culture, religion and work norms have to be factored in.

### **Create a common language and understanding**

When building a common understanding in a participatory process - it is very important to inform the stakeholders what the issues are that can be decided upon - not everything is always open to a debate. The rules of the game should be clear. This is often based on the legal requirements or obstacles regarding the planning document or project at stake. The moderation of a participatory meeting is extremely important. Planners could be

moderators

or providing input to the moderators. Planners can provide the input, tools and information to the stakeholders so that participants can form informed opinions.

## **UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF CITY LEADERS**

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City leadership should use participatory processes as a way to engage with their constituency, announcing and communicating the possibilities for transparency, participation and accountability as a key component of their administration. Participation should become a common method for all policies at a city level, including planning. Furthermore the participatory process and the decisions taken during the planning process are invaluable information for later decisions such as prioritization and budgeting.

Participation directly helps higher level political decision-makers to direct investment into what people want, ensure better outcome and more efficient processes, prevent future protests and unsatisfied electorate. Participation helps to anticipate and avoid problems, rather than dealing with post-ante crisis. Results and information from participatory processes need to inform higher level governance and direct citizen knowledge into political decisions. This kind of approach can be a game changer for politicians.

## LOBBYING AND NEGOTIATION DURING THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS: TRUST AND MISTRUST BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR

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There are different opinions on how to engage the private sector in the first stage of a planning process. Although the Planning Lab methodology as described in this publication promotes an early interaction with the private sector the situation should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Private sector inclusion works well in the first stage of a planning process if there are clear legal rules and regulations and a transparent government. If not, it is likely that the process will be taken over by lobbying and decision makers, cutting deals before the plan is

in place. For these reasons, sometimes one has to decide that politicians are being informed in parallel to a process of participatory charrettes and discussions or that a plan is being developed by public sector partners before entering into further participatory processes that involve the private sector.

In general the Planning Lab should be a way to better interact with the private sector partners. Plans are only partially built by the public sector as a large share depends on the private sector.



Planning Lab meeting with local chiefs and land owners in Ningo-Prampram © UN-Habitat

Charrettes, workshops and stakeholder consultations should provide a good sense of peoples stand towards the plan and can be vehicles to mobilize support by explaining the benefits on the longer term.

Negotiations during a drafting process have their limits. Not everything is negotiable. In the end the leadership should also use the plan to get things done that private sector parties otherwise do not feel responsible for.

Once the plan is a legal document it provides the legal basis for real negotiations. The planning process should find a balance in 'soft negotiations' to steer the plan and rally support and the power of the 'rule of law' that a legal planning document can have, when applied and enforced. Let us give an example of the 'rule of law' and the 'soft negotiations'.

## Soft negotiations / mediation in the case of the Spatial Development Framework of Johannesburg

The Planning Lab together with the City administration decided to have private sector parties on board of the planning process of the Spatial Development Framework of Johannesburg. Politicians were informed in a parallel process, but the senior management of the different departments within the city were present during a series of charrettes. In the case of Johannesburg it has been interesting to follow and moderate the discussion of one of the Transformative projects (see BOX...), the Mining Belt. During the charrettes this division in the city of Johannesburg has been one of the key discussions. The interest of

the Mining industry, represented in the charrette was initially on the preservation of the industries core business. Along the series of charrettes the discussion on the transformation of this 112 km<sup>2</sup> area of land started to evolve in a concept of gradual transformation that has been illustrated within the Charrettes by showing best practices; in this case the IBA Emscherpark in the Ruhrgebiet. By carefully explaining and discussing what the transformation of a 'brownfield' could mean for the city and in terms of development potential, an entry point to bring the private and public sector interests together was found.

## **RULE OF LAW: THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC SPACE IN LARGE-SCALE PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENTS.**

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It is in the short-term interest of private sector developers to decrease public space provision and to increase the quantity of private space, while it is in the long-term interest of the city to have a finer grained street and public space network. An urban plan and local rules and regulations should use bylaws to impose a certain quantity of public space to private developments. If this is not done, a city structure can easily evolve into the provision of large-scale infrastructure without a secondary and tertiary system of avenues, streets and footpaths. This is a common problem in urban development of today's cities. The tension between interest, profit and the commons of the city and the public cannot all be resolved by mediation, and sometimes needs firm visionary leadership and the rule of law. A Planning Lab can provide the leadership of a city the arguments and information through global best practices and well executed feasibility studies to underpin the validity of the rule of law.

## **TOOLS FOR PARTICIPATION DURING PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

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As stated before the Planning Lab is particularly strong as a vehicle for participation in the development of a plan. In the numerous longer commitments the UN-Habitat Planning Lab had in cities over the last 3 years you could see some key tools being defined and combined in the drafting stage of a plan. Some of the main tools are described below:

## Design charrettes

**when:** large scale urban projects, involving many sorts of stakeholders, high level decision makers, politically sensitive objectives and decisions.

**duration:** several (3-5) one to two day charrettes in the course of several months or a year

**who:** high level decision makers of the public and private sectors, representatives of communities, technical experts in planning and other relevant disciplines, local government representatives

**goal:** making informed, collaborative decisions in the planning process and providing a level playing field for argumentation back and forth.

A design charrette is a meeting with public and private stakeholders, representation of civil society and academics in order to provide input and set the direction of a project. It brings together high level decision makers of the public and private sector, representatives of society with an organized support and key technical advisors. The debate will revolve around arguments related individual interests, technical opportunities and constraints, as well as political objectives.

A charrette is a level playing field to influence and debate the project, to share technical arguments across various actors present and to bring civil society, the private sector and the municipal officials together. It is important that the participants in a charrette represent a group so they can take the debate back to their support. It is important to structure the debate around the plan and planning options. A project - depending on its scale - can be structured around a series of charrettes, each feeding the work taking place in-between that is then brought back to the discussion table on the following charrette. The Planning Lab is feeding the charrettes with analysis and proposal, but also coordinates the necessary bilaterals and smaller workshops that should be scheduled to solve pending issues coming out of the discussions. It is very important that people involved in the charrettes have a mandate to represent a group, department or community otherwise this relatively large-scale event that costs a lot of preparation is too open-ended.

## Community (design) workshops and mapping

**when:** neighbourhood scale projects

**duration:** one/two-day charrettes, few weeks preparation and follow-up

**who:** local communities, business owners and workers, youth and children, architects and planners, artists, local government facilitators

**goal:** mapping places generating ideas and solutions for smaller scale interventions.

Community mapping is a tool that can be used in two different, mutually compatible, ways:

> for mapping some details, or specific aspects of the area where the citizens live - when this is not already available data (ex. Map the water or waste infrastructure, the spaces where children play)

> for mapping how the citizens use and perceive the area (ex. The routes people commonly use, the spots perceived as most problematic)

Community (design) workshops bring together citizens, architects, planners and municipal officials to discuss and develop spatial solutions for the neighbourhood<sup>7</sup>. This can be a specific design exercise for public space, but it can also be more strategic on the location of public amenities or new infrastructure for example. These workshops typically take place in an easily accessible local venue (ex. School, church, community centre). The workshop can be broken down in smaller groups or be a plenary discussion. Architects and planners facilitate the workshop using visual materials, sketches and physical models.



Participatory mapping exercise with the refugee settlement development group in Kalobeyei, Kenya  
© UN-Habitat

## Participatory enumeration

**when:** slum upgrading, small communities that lack basic demographic and spatial data

**who:** Citizens, Community Based Organizations, NGOs

**goal:** empower vulnerable communities, produce demographic and spatial data not available to government databases

Enumeration is a survey of the population aimed at gathering wide sets of data on the population of a settlement for statistical purposes. Participatory enumerations involve to a significant extent the people who are being enumerated - who may design, manage and implement the enumeration. The process consists of each household being surveyed, connecting the data with a map -

where the house locations are matched to the demographic data. The questionnaire may include questions on the household members, age, gender, work, housing tenure etc. depending on the context. Through this, simultaneously statistical data and maps can be made. This tool is particularly useful in informal settlements because it bridges the issues of distrust and offers a transparent method for the community to be directly involved in planning, it enables self-empowerment through control of the process, and it ensures improved data gathering and better data<sup>6</sup>. One has to be aware that not all inhabitants of a neighbourhood want to participate and that some issues related to for example housing tenure or even household size could be sometimes too sensitive to share.

## Interviews, bilateral discussions, technical working groups

The interview is obvious tool to gather information, but it has the power that collective gatherings do not have. It can be personal, off the record and it offers people who do not speak in public opportunities to contribute to the assessment or drafting of a plan. Furthermore, private sector parties are not always eager to share their insights in for example high-level design charrettes, but might be interested in sharing their vision in smaller committee.

Bilateral discussions between the Planning Lab and a stakeholder(group) or specific department can provide in depth and more detailed knowledge that is necessary for plan development but not always contributing to the general discussion in larger groups.

Technical working groups can be clustered around a specific area of expertise or a subarea of a plan.

Design charrettes are always complemented by interviews, bilateral discussions and technical working groups.

- + Design integrates different expertise by facilitating discussions around concrete proposals.
- + Design fosters participation by presenting complex problems in clear and accessible concepts.

The design process is a crucial element of the Planning Lab approach. In many planning processes, design comes at the end of the process, after problem identification and analysis have been concluded. As such, design is used to translate guidelines, demands and requirements into physical form. This positioning fails to take full advantage of the potential of design as a process. When carried out well, a design process is an effective tool for synthesizing a myriad of parameters and concerns into feasible solutions while bringing together seemingly incompatible demands and mobilizing people around a vision into a direction forward.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A DESIGN PROCESS

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A well carried-out design process has the following characteristics:

### » Iteration

Activities (analysis, data collection, thematic explorations, synthesis) are repeated within the design process, across different thematic areas and across different scales of intervention.

### » Flexible and dynamic

Different types of information can be useful in a design process - some types known from the beginning, but the process should remain open to absorb new and fresh information, and different perspectives. An approved document should always be dynamic in terms of monitoring, updating and entering into the next level of detailed area plans. A planning process does not end with an approved plan, it just enters a next stage of detail and iteration again.

### » Works with concrete proposals

Proposal integrates many disciplines and parameters, and allows a discussion in which different concerns can be considered simultaneously. Interdisciplinary discussions are most fruitful when they revolve around concrete proposals.

### » Works within the legal system of plans

A good design process needs to be tailored to the legal framework in which the plan is made- and the type of plans or policy documents that are expected as final output.

## STEPS IN THE DESIGN PROCESS

The design process is not linear as discussed above however it includes common steps towards finalization of a certain stage.

» Problem definition

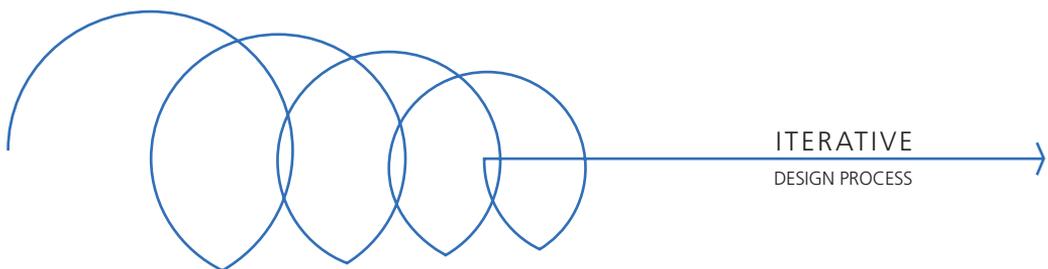
The design process is built upon comprehensive data to understand the situation on the ground. This data will not be used once. Rather, data becomes the input for the iterative design process through which the interpretation, analysis and solution is developed. The data can include information and spatial maps of the demography, built surfaces, natural elements, infrastructure, slums, commercial and industrial functions, social and economic poles, as well as participatory input turned into maps (ex. Favourite spots, most dangerous areas)... and whichever other type of spatial, textual or numerical information is available. Analysis can include main demographic information, economic analysis, value chains analysis and

estimation of

sectors of economic growth and opportunities, economic poles in the city. Using design means always understanding the spatial dimension of data - for example, which neighbourhoods are problematic and why, where should better connections be made, which areas have no access to parks. Through a design approach, this data, being seen, interpreted and discussed by planners and stakeholders advances into collectively recognized problems.

» Developing spatial strategies and concept plans

In the design process the tendencies, possibilities and opportunities for development are mapped using tools such as scenarios and models. Scenarios are possible different outcomes for the same situation. Models are scientific scenarios based on numerical or other data, for example a model can show how much traffic is



a neighbourhood expected to have after the addition of two new streets or parkings, or how will the commuting times be influenced by certain infrastructural projects. The visions and potential alternatives are tested, discussed and revised, and through continuous input they mature into spatial strategies. Design is a crucial component in this process. There are often contrary demands, too much or lack of information, or different factors in feasibility. It is the design component that can synthesize these seemingly contradictory elements in clear, logical proposals. With these synthetic proposals it becomes easier to identify necessary gaps in information and it narrows down what to acquire to come to an informed decision.

## The drawing as planning tool

Some planners prefer digital design tools because of their precision. However, in all the case studies presented in this publication, the hand drawing has been a key tool for the development of the plan. For analysis and design, the hand drawing makes it easy to reduce complex information to the essential components. Hand drawing also makes it easy to synthesise different types and sources of information. In contrast, when working digitally, conflicting data formats and a focus on precision complicates or slows down such synthesis. As an example of quick synthesis, a satellite image can be analysed simply with markers and tracing paper, using the drawing to reduce complexity and isolate a wide variety of features of interest. In a Charrette setting, using drawings invites participants to be more involved and draw themselves, encouraging them to articulate their ideas directly in spatial proposals.



Drawing as a tool to synthesize complex information, Gabiley, Somaliland © UN-Habitat

» Breaking down spatial strategies into projects

The project-based approach means that long term spatial strategies should be broken down into short, medium and long-term projects - this deduction of projects and selection of priority and transformative projects can be done through a design process. This selection can also be based on maps, models, scenarios and alternatives - helping to choose the projects with the biggest urgency, widest impact and political support.

» Foster participation

The participatory tools discussed in the previous chapter should be organized in the course of the design process - giving input for it. This way, the stakeholders are directly influencing the design outcomes, by having the opportunity to discuss and suggest concrete proposals while they are in the making, and unfinished designs while they are still being discussed. By thus facilitating a debate on concrete proposals, a normally opaque process can be made understandable by everyone. This improves the quality of the feedback and foster a sense of engagement and ownership, as the public is not presented with a fait accompli.

» Build consensus, manage negotiations and integrate different sectors

Design is a political process and it helps navigate through negotiations and conflict resolutions - two stakeholders or specialists are more likely to make an informed decision or reach a consensus or an integrated solution if discussing over a specific map, project or design. For example, a community and a private developer are more likely to reach an agreement if they both understand fully and visually what is at stake in terms of the space they have.

» Integrate different sectors and create common visions and goals

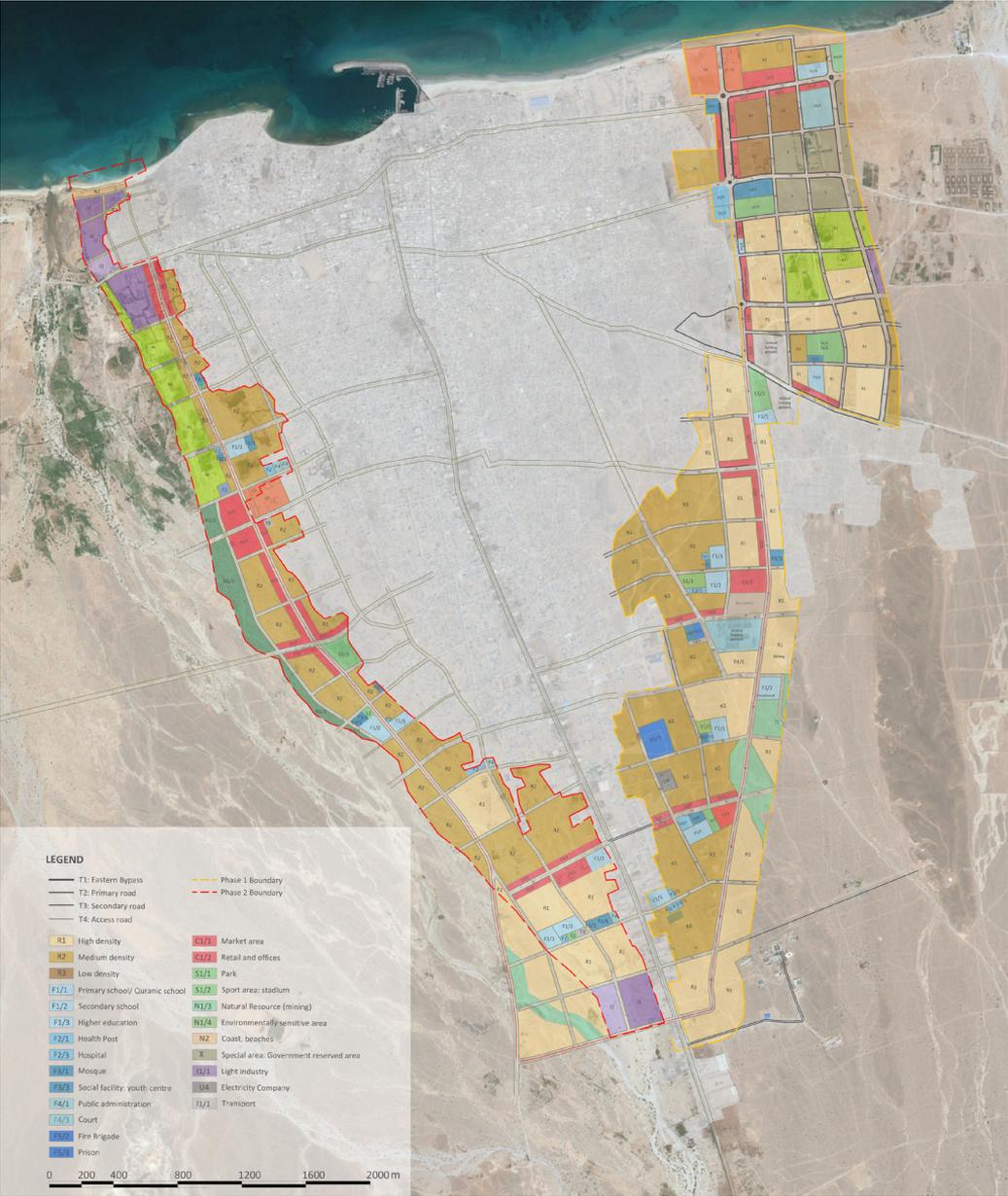
Design has the power to be a common language that crosses disciplines. Economists, planners, engineers, climate change experts and concerned citizens can all come together and talk, understanding each other's inputs over a commonly understood design. Furthermore, the design can be used to build a shared vision, consisting of a design and a narrative for the future. A clearly articulated and easily understandable vision, can mobilize people and coordinates efforts.

- » Creating political commitment at an early stage.

The design process and concrete design proposals deriving from it have the capacity to mobilize not only citizens, but also politicians, building commitment to the planning process, which can help both visibility and popularity, as well as funding for a project.

- » Translating into legal planning documents

The drafting process eventually will lead to a legal document. This needs to be approved and drafted according to the regulatory framework that exists. In the design process there should be a balance in the freedom to design and the regulatory framework that is in place. After the stage of drafting the key components of the plan and discussing them in a participatory trajectory, they will follow a stage of translating this vision into a legal document, often a land use plan. This requires another level of detail. In small towns this can be still part of the participatory process of drafting the plan. In bigger cities this is too extensive to discuss citywide. For the legal plans there is a break-down into districts and smaller areas of participation or the participatory part on the translation of the plan in a land use plan for the city is being part of a wider public consultation.



Planned City Extension for Bossasso, Puntland, State of Somalia  
© UN-Habitat

- + Planning Labs focus on implementation by addressing planning, legal, and financial concerns from the onset.
- + A focus on implementation helps prevent redundant plans and frustrated processes.

## WHY IMPLEMENTATION SHOULD BE PLANNED FROM ONSET

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Urban projects often get stuck when they have to be implemented. This is partly caused by a lack of coordination between the different sectors involved in planning and implementation. In a common process the spatial plan development is executed first, after which the planning department passes on the plan to implementation entities, and withdraws. As these entities become aware of implementation obstacles, the plan is often too difficult to change. Aligning the spatial vision with the financial and legal feasibility, managing a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities will therefore improve the implementation rate. To save time and money, coordination between planning and implementing partners is required early in the process. A new or changed work setting - a Planning Lab is an opportunity to set a working environment, where the process is collaborative and transparent - with a focus on implementation from the onset.

## COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT

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The Urban Planning Lab is based on a project-approach and as such needs a project coordinator or manager. Linking, evaluating and building consensus is an essential part of making projects happen. This simply needs time to manoeuvre the project within the complexity of participation, bureaucracy and politics, and this needs someone that is accountable for meeting milestones within the process. Planning processes do barely move forward themselves, especially not in cities that face problems of land management, economy and informality.

## LEADERSHIP

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Political commitment and strong leadership are indispensable to achieve implementation. Mayors, city council members and other political actors are in the position to give visibility to a project and mobilize stakeholders and investors, to gather public support, or to contribute to building cross-municipal, regional or national level partnerships.

## **COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT / LOCAL CHAMPION**

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In addition to political leadership, a coordinator is required from conception to realization who pushes the project and facilitates communication, coordination and feedback between different sectors or agencies. The role of the coordinator is of particular importance in the phase of implementation, as implementation often requires the division of tasks. Therefore, a coordinator should from the onset of the project identify the responsible institutions or line agencies that implement on the ground. Who constructs and finances the infrastructure? Who issues building permits? Which agency is responsible for ensuring affordable housing? As each city has its own formal and informal practices, the coordinator should connect to someone within the bureaucracy that knows 'how to turn the wheels'. At the same time, external experts can bring a fresh perspective and ideas. Therefore, a Planning Lab should connect internal and external expertise on a regular basis.

## **PHASING TO CONNECT LONG-TERM VISIONS TO SHORT-TERM PLANNING**

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The outcomes and evaluation of previous planning paradigms have shown that planning for the future should be done with care. While it is important to have a long-term vision, based for example on current growth expectations, it is very hard to predict the upcoming challenges with precision. While it is important to develop longer-term visions, these visions should be indicative and flexible as they can easily become outdated. Lower-level plans, such as development, regulatory or legally binding detailed plans, should be phased for shorter, foreseeable periods (1-10 years maximum). To this end, a feasible phasing plan that breaks down long-term visions into a series of prioritized short-term projects is a good tool. However, while phasing should be planned with a realistic budget, it is ill-advised to prioritise projects on feasibility and costs only. Rather, prioritization should also take the largest estimated impact into account and select projects that have the potential to trigger larger scale positive change.

## THE THREE-PRONGED APPROACH

Based on the previously outlined principles and previous experiences, UN-Habitat has developed guidelines for sustainable urbanization and urban governance that foster implementation called the three-pronged approach.

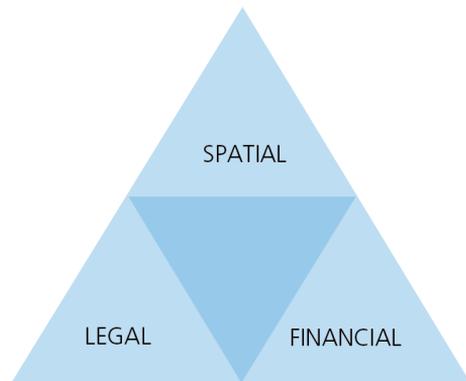
The approach brings together three fundamental components of urban planning:

- » urban plan and design,
- » rules and regulations,
- » a financial plan.

The three-pronged approach is above all, a strategy for efficient, collaborative implementation of urban projects. The approach recognises that there is an intricate relationship between the legal, spatial and financial aspects of urban planning. It is based on the practical experience that spatial urban planning alone cannot achieve successful implementation without the support of targeted regulation and an implementable financial plan. A plan that does not integrate these three components from the start will very likely encounter problems at implementation.

The first component concerns the relevance of spatial design, public space design and well-planned street pattern to influence the character and quality of everyday life in a city. A team of urban planners, designers, infrastructure engineers, landscape architects and others are responsible for managing this aspect.

The second component concerns to the power of rules and regulations to shape the form of



THREE-PRONGED APPROACH

the city and control its growth. These include building rights and permits, the regulation of public space and building codes that regulate the spatial qualities. In addition, some projects, such as land-readjustment, require laws on municipal or national level to enable implementation.

The third component concerns the financial plan. A plan that cannot be paid for cannot be implemented. It is therefore important to think about innovative mechanisms of funding and budgeting from the beginning, including the concepts of land readjustment, value sharing and public-private partnerships. Sometimes, a financial strategy requires a review of aspects of municipal finance practice, such as the capital investment budget, national or international fund transfers, taxation systems and lending capacity.

While the presence of other expertise depends on the project focus, a Planning Lab should consult experts from these three fields (planning and design, legal and financial). The execution of a Planning Lab project can uncover policy issues before unknown and the outcome of a project can therefore turn into wider policy recommendations.

The Design part of the three pronged approach (including reference to the legal and financial aspects) is elaborated in the previous chapter. Below there are financial and legal recommendations for developing projects with a Planning Lab in order to foster implementation potential.

## IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH LEGISLATION AND POLICY

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Urban law is the collection of policies, laws, decisions and practices that govern the management and development of the urban environment. Urban law has an important role to play to advance cities' sustainability: defining conditions for access to land, infrastructure, housing and basic services; laying out rules for planning and decision making; guiding the improvement of livelihoods and living conditions by setting requirements for urban development initiatives; setting the context within which urban authorities, local governments and communities are expected to fulfill their mandate and reacting to emerging challenges.

Urban planning has considerable consequences for private property rights, establishing what and how property owner can develop their land and ultimately influencing positively or negatively its value and it can provide the "public good reason" to justify compulsory acquisition processes. Urban law provides a framework in which to mediate and balance competing public and private interests, especially in relation to land use and development; to create a stable and predictable framework for public and private sector action; to guarantee the inclusion of the interests of vulnerable groups; and to provide a catalyst for local and national discourse.

The legal approach of a planning lab typically follows the following steps:

(1) Understanding the objectives: the legal component work of a Planning Lab typically starts by understanding the objectives and the scope of the planning exercise to identify issues and problematic areas that would need to be addressed to facilitate the design and implementation of the plan. The clear understanding is normally acquired by working closely with the planning experts of the Lab and by participating to the various charrettes and community meetings.

(2) Once a clear understanding of the objectives and of the most critical issues has been gained, the legal review focuses on all the laws and regulations, both national and local, which are applicable to the planned area. Commonly, the essential regulatory elements that have the power to shape the form and character of the city are:

- » Land management and information systems. By land management we refer to a broad category of systems and mechanisms that need to be in place to support the planning exercise such as a cadaster, the understanding of the formal, informal and customary tenure systems existing in the planning area.
- » Clear understanding of the urban planning tools at different scales (for ex. city wide, detailed, local area plans), their content and scope.
- » Regulations to acquire and secure the land needed for an efficient street network and a system of open spaces.
- » Regulations on minimum/maximum plot sizes, including mechanisms to consolidate and reshape plots.
- » Rules related to buildability rights, plot coverage, distance between buildings and setbacks.
- » Building regulations
- » Financing regulations: in particular legislation related property tax, land value sharing, developers' contribution, and in general all rules that could help financing the plan both in-kind and in cash.

(3) The legal analysis: in order to find the right answers to the most pressing planning problems, a baseline analysis should be carried out to identify the relevant laws and regulations to produce an accurate picture of instruments, keys steps and decision points of a given process or regulated situation. The baseline analysis needs to be accompanied by a governance and institutional analysis: the analysis of all the institutions involved in a given planning process. For every institution it is important to identify their roles and mandate along the process and the degree of discretion they have as it is stated in the law. Lastly, it is important to assess the capacity the institutions have to implement their functions in terms of human resources and financial means. While developing the legal, governance and institutional analyses, the assessment of the practical implementation is fundamental.

## Building back better in Gaza

The 2014 conflict in Gaza damaged a major part of the housing stock. While reconstruction programs for such issues usually focus mainly on relief, an international Planning Lab created the space to think reconstruction not only in terms of housing units, but to integrate public space amenities and water management in the plan.

By doing several reconstruction plans locally, the lab also discovered that the directions given by the planning law, such as very large mandatory plot-sizes, inherently pushes cities to develop into low-density sprawling cities. As a result, urbanization is likely to force out agriculture. This is concerning as food security is already under pressure due to trade restrictions and Gaza's lowering and salinization of the groundwater. As such, plans could test the formal planning procedures, making

it the first time that Gaza is making plans and testing planning law and procedures. The Planning Lab made it thus possible to shift thinking from emergency to development planning, while using the experience to advise on issues on the scale of Gaza as a whole.



Charrette in Khuza'a, Gaza © UN-Habitat

This assessment must be informed by a range of sources: from government institutions to the stakeholders that are impacted by the regulations.

In particular in the developing world, statutory law is not the only relevant form of regulation in cities. Most urban residents are subject to multiple regimes of regulation, most notably where many households rely on informal networks and resources to access land, build shelter, secure livelihoods or avail themselves of basic services (health and traditional medicines, water, transport). These informal regimes of regulation and control can have a variety of sources: quasi-traditional, religious or ethnic-traditional authority, or a local strong-man or network with control over land-use or trading permits. Some of these can be linked to the threat of violence or the power to prevent it. Complicating the matter, these parallel regulatory systems can overlap with formal systems of rule and authority.

(4) Continuous legal support: the nature of the planning lab and its 3-pronged approach requires that every component informs and conditions one another. The process of a planning lab is in fact iterative in nature. Typically the city regulatory framework conditions what the planning exercise can achieve and the planning objectives shape the plan regulations and the creative interpretations of existing rules. For this reason, the legal strategy needs to accompany every step of the planning process from the participation strategy to the design of the plan to its implementation strategy.

(5) The legal strategy: the strategy that should accompany every plan will be a balance between compliance with the existing legal framework, creative solutions and applications of rules to achieve the objectives of the plan. The Planning Labs' legal strategies: (i) consider their feasibility and appropriateness to the local context and are reflective of the capacity and resources that are locally available. (ii) reflect local practice and culture and are adequate to the concrete challenges of urban development: flexible, affordable and capable to respond to on-the-ground needs and changes. (iii) aim at reducing regulatory constraints on land supply, such as poor land allocation practices and arbitrary or discretionary normative regulations (densities, floor-area ratios, plots sizes), increasing urban productivity and the supply of affordable housing.

The Lab proposes a simplified approach to urban legislation based on the establishment of a basic system of regulations and rules able to support the planning exercise and that provide a solid and predictable long-term framework for urban development that can be built upon, and that is adequate to real needs, existing capacities and available resources. This approach reinforces the legal effectiveness and the rule of law while at the same time achieving higher implementation success of plans and higher compliance by communities.

## FINANCING IMPLEMENTATION

Financial planning should influence spatial planning. Part of planning for implementation from the start is considering the financial resources and tools available. Financial feasibility should be considered during the planning process so that plans found to be unrealistic can either be adjusted and/or paired with innovative financial strategies for implementation. This will require estimating the costs of implementation, revenues likely to be generated from development, and the capital budgets of implementing agencies. If initial plans are found to require more resources than available, a participatory prioritization process can help to adjust plans. In addition, new revenue and financing options can be explored, including a wide variety of land-based financing instrument and public-private partnership arrangements.

Financial planning should consider the financial capacity of the private sector. Many plans prescribe land uses, densities and building types to be implemented by the private sector, including real estate developers and individual households. The capacity and market demand of the private sector should be considered to ensure that planned private development is achievable. For example, low income households may not have access to the financing to build at planned densities in the immediate term. Another example is real estate developers who may be unfamiliar with planned mixed use or mixed income housing types and too risk-averse to attempt a new real estate product.

In such situations, plans may need to be adjusted, or implementation planning can incorporate a mix of private sector supports, incentives or regulations to achieve what the market may not naturally provide.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are cities where the private sector may have higher more capacity than the local government when it comes to development experience and access to financing. Particularly in places where developers have experience in infrastructure and service provision, their experience and financial capacity can be tapped to bring about quicker and more efficient plan implementation, given the right cooperative agreement, regulatory structure or incentives. This option should be explored as a means to achieving plan goals.

Land value sharing can help plans be self-financing. Land value sharing describes a set of public revenue tools intended to collect part of the increased land value resulting from public actions. Land value sharing refers to the idea that land values frequently rise in response to public actions to improve a city or neighborhood, and that the windfall gains to private landholders can be shared in the form of public revenues to pay for planning and implementation, creating a cycle of financial sustainability.

The annual property tax is the most common instrument used for land value sharing. Other instruments include betterment levies and special assessments aimed at recouping the cost of specific improvements, capital gains taxes on the sale of property, sale of development rights, and the sale or lease of publicly owned land.

Land value sharing provides an opportunity for local governments to recoup some of the investments made during plan implementation, including in basic infrastructure and services. As the value of the planned land rises, increased revenues from property taxes, betterment levies or public land sales and leases, etc. can be used to repay loans, bonds or a revolving capital fund. Ongoing public revenues from land can also be used for operation and maintenance costs of planned areas, including keeping infrastructure in a state of good repair. Planning paired with public revenue enhancement can leverage big opportunities.

Good planning creates value. At the same time, finance will be one of the most critical challenges for most countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. Therefore, the opportunity to leverage the value created by good planning to improve public finance should not be missed.

Planning and enhancement of local revenues are complementary in many instances. The regularization of land provides opportunities for improving land-based revenues; coordinated plan implementation provides opportunities for collaborative financing; and improved public capacity for urban management can support both planning and public finance. The cross-silo work of planning labs can foster these synergies and support parallel planning and revenue enhancement efforts.

Spatial planning paired with economic planning can create better outcomes. The financial success of a plan often depends on its ability to support economic growth. Beyond the improved economic efficiency of a well-designed city or neighborhood, there may be specific catalytic projects that can help to realize a planned area's highest economic potentialities and create spillover benefits and job creation multipliers. Aligning spatial planning with national, regional and local economic development plans can ensure that location-specific economic opportunities are supported by the critical infrastructure, services and space to successfully develop.

Vertical and horizontal coordination are critical for the financial feasibility of many plans. Plans that require significant capital investments for implementation will likely also require coordination with higher levels of government and possibly utility companies or independent service providers. Separate agencies have separate budgets and sometimes separate plans which do not necessarily align with each other. Financial feasibility is much easier to achieve if implementing agencies at all levels coordinate their actions early in the planning process.

Additionally, horizontal coordination between sub-national governments may be needed if plans span across multiple administrative areas. Regional planning authorities or special-purpose districts can be established to institutionalize ongoing horizontal coordination for plan implementation.

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## HOW TO SET-UP A PLANNING LAB

This chapter aims to help city leaders and administrators understand how to start and setup a Planning Lab in their city.

## HOW TO SET-UP A PLANNING LAB

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### 1. Types of Labs and Programs

Temporary Lab or Urban Project Lab  
3-6 months / 6-12 months / 12-24 months  
Emergency Lab  
1 month - 1 year  
Institutionalized Planning Lab/ Permanent Planning Lab  
2-5 years - permanent.  
Programs

### 2. Supporting tools

Rapid Planning Studio  
3-5 days  
Expert Group Meetings  
3-5 days  
Training Modules  
1-3 days, 1-6 months  
Plan review and assessments  
1month - 6 months

### 3. Preparatory Tools Main Decisions

1. Project focus and normative framework
2. The normative framework
3. Timespan
4. Institutional and legal placement
5. Team and capacity building
6. Participation
7. Mobilization of resources.
8. Measuring of success, self-evaluation and revision.

This chapter puts together all the components of Planning Labs elaborated in the previous chapters and synthesizes them into simple guidelines, building on the concrete experience of creating LABs accumulated by UN-Habitat in the past 3 years.

The idea of an Planning Lab is to address some of the urban planning and development problems in city administrations through small and feasible changes in the management of the planning methods and procedures, while setting up a collaboration around one or several strategic projects. In the process, a LAB often unveils key systemic issues thus informing broader policy and capacity needs that require change.

As a model of integrated urban planning and management a LAB is flexible and adjustable to both the urban and the bureaucratic context, as well as the limits of available space in the city facilities. LABs can be created on various level in the planning hierarchy, as the set-up can be tailored to metropolitan, regional and national requirements. This means that each city can develop its own version of an Planning Lab, following the advices and directions elaborated here. This chapter outlines simple step-by-step guidelines for how to start a Planning Lab. In the proceeding chapters, the individual components of the steps will be elaborated in detail.

## TEMPORARY LAB OR URBAN PROJECT LAB

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3-6 months / 6-12 months / 12-24 months

Temporary relates to the fact that the Lab is established to a specific question and has not found a fixed position or place within the government. So the term temporary or project Lab can be exchanged. The time span of these project oriented Labs depend on the complexity of the project, the approval processes involved and the level of participation. The Project Lab revolves around a specific urban project, for example a city-wide strategy, or the extension or renewal of a specific part of the city. This Planning Lab is often the core or backbone of a larger program that can include expert groups meetings, rapid planning studio's and capacity building modules. In the Temporary Lab the various experts, stakeholders and decisions makers follow a step by step methodology towards the approval of a plan. If the temporary Planning Lab has an impact and for a period of time disclosed new methodologies and mobilized different groups of people, the temporary lab might evolve in an institutionalized one, having a permanent position within the local, regional or national authorities. A temporary Lab can also be followed by another temporary Lab. In the case of the Lab in which the Spatial Development Framework (SDF) of Johannesburg has been developed a follow up could consist out of the development of a land readjustment law that is crucial to the development of the Transformative Projects defined by the SDF.

## EMERGENCY PLANNING LAB

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1 month - 1 year

Planning in situations after disaster or conflict focuses usually on emergency relief. Where planning decisions made in such situations become permanent, they can lead to all kinds of social problems further down the road. Moreover, after armed conflicts or natural disasters, when strategic planning and technical expertise is in a more dire need, government structures are often affected, the institutional arrangement are weakened and cannot operate with normality and provide this support. An Emergency Lab is a Temporary Lab deployed in emergency contexts, and combines quick-response and deployment and development of capacities, with a longer term urban development perspective. An Emergency Planning Lab therefore contributes to the progressive strengthening of institutions.

## INSTITUTIONALIZED / PERMANENT PLANNING LAB

2-5 years - permanent

Cities like Barcelona, New York, Stockholm, Guangzhou, Mexico City, Sao Paulo or Rotterdam have their own smaller or larger institutionalized Labs. These are often the Urban Development departments within the local government. These always have a certain independence of the regular Land Management Departments and the departments where permits are reviewed and issued. Having these Labs institutionalized, does not mean that their role is always accepted and agreed upon within the bureaucracy. As stated in the title of this publication, a Planning Lab is per definition an integrative facility.

### From emergency to development in Kalobeyei, Kenya

Due to various conflicts in the region, Kenya has seen the influx of a large amount of refugees in the Kakuma camp in Turkana. However, the camp is already far above its planned capacity, and hosts over 182,000 refugees, which amounts to 15% of Turkana's population. And although as a refugee camp Kakuma falls outside of Kenya's legal city categories, many refugees have already lived there up to 20 years.

The government of Kenya asked UNHCR and UN-Habitat's planning LAB to plan a settlement that bridges this gap from emergency planning to development planning. The Lab has introduced sustainable planning principles, such as walkability, public space, water runoff and agriculture to plan a settlement that can grow into an actual town. In the process, it put a special emphasis on participation and integration with the host community.



Explorations of new settlement types for Kalobeyei © UN-Habitat

Operating within institutions, a lab needs continuous advocacy to convince actors within the organization to be a part of that integration, as part of a team, working on a defined deliverable that can be implemented. Also the UN-Habitat Urban Planning and Design Lab within the Headquarters of Nairobi had to face this fact. Institutionalising an integrative facility takes time and awareness to position and prove its value.

Furthermore the Urban Development departments within institutions have to fight against the powers of day-to-day land management and permit approval. This is often the place where you find high and short-term benefits by selling plots or approve permits for bigger real estate developments. The Planning Lab has per definition the role and responsibility to guide long term development that is beneficial to all in the city. That objective is not always aligned with short term gains on a specific plot. A Temporary Planning Lab could be a quick starter to initiate a longer term institutionalized Lab.

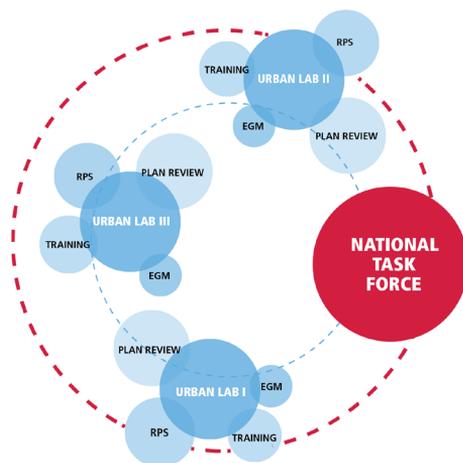


Rapid Planning Studio in Wuzhou, China © UN-Habitat

## PROGRAMS

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In most cases where a structural change of the Urban Planning tools and processes is required, programs are composed out of one or more of the below mentioned activities (e.g. Rapid planning, lab, EGM) but all revolve around the Planning Lab as a cornerstone of operations. Programs can be focused on a specific challenge within the city, but can also be used at a national scale to investigate what needs to be changed within national policies in the planning system to achieve sustainable urban development. International programs can link Planning Labs in cities, in the region, or globally, to create a network of exchange, contextualising a normative approach and creating a community of practice.



National program consisting out of more Planning Labs  
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## RAPID PLANNING STUDIO

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3-5 days

In a well organized and prepared ‘pressure-cooker’ different stakeholders and specialists come together in a facilitated setting to make a spatial plan and define the legal and financial mechanisms to support the implementation of the plan. In three to five days a site or city visit is being conducted, design sessions take place, presentations of relevant departments are being held and stakeholders and decision makers provide feedback. Larger groups are broken down in smaller ones working on the same or specific thematic areas later to be integrated in a plenary session. Preparation of content, materials and facilitation of the Rapid Planning Studio is key to its success. The Rapid Planning Studio is often the start of a longer engagement and the drafting of a work plan for an extensive Planning Lab to elaborate the findings in a participatory process leading to a legally approved document and plan.

Output of the Rapid Planning Studio is a sketch plan and a report, without a legal status, but that can serve as an advise to the leadership or as a document to mobilize people and funds for next steps.

## EXPERT GROUP MEETINGS

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3-5 days

Networking events can be different types of international and multilateral workshops, conferences or meetings. In order to be useful for the setting up of a planning lab, they need to be with a well-defined purpose and action-oriented. One example of a networking event is an Expert Group Meeting (EGM). In an EGM international experts are brought together to discuss and advise on a plan or thematic area of expertise. This could be for example to discuss a large scale urban renewal operation in the city or to discuss thematically on financing public transport infrastructure for example. Although the EGM is a meeting with a high level of experienced experts to contribute to a specific local case, the meeting is not only technical. By bringing in established authorities to discuss and advise the government the EGM can be used to create momentum, political attention and media coverage.

## Fast-track of planning concepts in Wuzhou with Rapid Planning Workshop

Wuzhou plays an important role for water and soil conservation in Xijiang River area, it is vital to safety of drinking water in Guangdong province. Large scale industrial development on the low hill and gentle slope cause a great risk to water resource environment. Wuzhou industry has grown rapidly in recent years, the city is gradually being surrounded by the disordered development of manufacturing industry. Wuzhou as an important port on the Xijiang golden waterway and the trading center of Guangxi province, the development of freight transportation do not correspond with the growth of local industry. The development of service sector in Wuzhou does not correspond with its position as a central city in southeast of Guangxi province.

Wuzhou is famous for its mountains and water and it's the birthplace of Lingnan culture, but those features gradually disappear with a diminished spatial quality. UN-Habitat's Urban Planning Lab collaborated closely with another established urban development agency of a city: Guangzhou Planning Institute. The very compressed trajectory included several Rapid planning Studios in which the main principles for the district plan were set out. The output of these series of studios was detailed and elaborated by GZPI. These compressed collaborations can enhance plans, enhance capacities of already established development agencies based on collective knowledge production and by guidance of international principles.



City of Wuzhou © UN-Habitat

## TRAINING MODULES

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1-3 days, 1-6 months

Planning Labs are a way to conduct learning by doing. By doing a specific urban plan, using a set of normative guidelines and principles according to a specific vision one can increase the learning curve enormously. Anyway to take note of these normative guidelines and principles these learning-by-doing processes around projects should be supported by Training Modules to bring a group of people to the same level of knowledge. In UN-Habitat's Planning Lab methodology, the training modules revolve around the normative frameworks developed in the agency, based on globally conducted research. Besides this, Training Modules include the assessment of best practices relevant to the issue or project at stake.

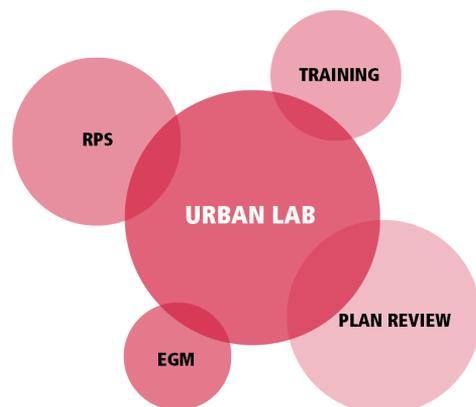
means not only understanding what is being planned, but also what has been implemented on ground, what has been successful and what has failed etc. The need to ground any project or the planning lab in general on the existing institutional and legal mechanisms, has already been elaborated - and assessing what the existing situation actually is, is a necessary preparatory step that serves to test the ground, define what kind of planning lab is most likely to succeed, and clarify where it could be positioned.

## PLAN REVIEW AND ASSESSMENTS

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1 month - 6 months

This step entails assessing the current situation, possibilities and obstacles given in the existing legal framework regarding the urban planning and development in a city, the policies, tools and financial mechanisms already at place. It also entails a review of the urban or metropolitan plans and strategies that have already been adopted or exist as drafts, as well as urban projects that are under way. A review



Supporting tools of the Planning Lab © UN-Habitat

## Expert Group Meeting Urban Regeneration in Mexico City

Most of recent growth in Mexico City has taken place outside the urban core and the city has seen an expulsion of around 100,000 low-income inhabitants per year to peripheral areas. Increased infrastructure spending and negative social consequences have been the result. Urban regeneration is one of the most relevant tools to revert these trends, and can bring back activities to the city centre, by providing affordable housing, working spaces and high-quality urban design.

The UN-Habitat LAB carried out an three day expert group meeting in Mexico City that brought together experts from Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil, Spain and the United States to better understand the application framework and

opportunities of the tools that the city uses for urban regeneration (Strategic Management Areas –AGE, and Cooperative Actuation System-SAC).

EGMs promote peer-to-peer collaboration between cities, while sharing successful tools with peer city managers and planners. In this EGM, the experts identified rules and regulations that limited the urban regeneration in Mexico City. As such, concrete financial, operational and legal recommendations could be made to unlock the potential of urban renewal. In addition, the experts compared the framework and tools applied in Mexico to international best practices, to understand how they could be improved operationally.



Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Urban Renewal, Mexico © UN-Habitat

## Rwanda National Program

In Rwanda, UN-Habitat created a country-wide program that combined local-level capacity building, planning and design exercises and national policy advice. With an urbanisation rate of around 19%, Rwanda is in the midst of an urbanisation process that is growing with 4.5% per year. This growth is expected to be accommodated largely by the capital city, Kigali. In order to reduce the pressure on Kigali and achieve a more balanced urbanisation, UN-Habitat and the National Government of Rwanda developed a planning methodology for strategic economic and physical development for secondary cities. A task force of planners at the National Level was composed that followed thematic Training Modules and Rapid Planning Studios in each of the six cities. Over the course of half a year this groups had learned about the key issues in each of the cities, received training on sustainable development principles in general and applied the knowledge through Rapid Planning Studios in Planned City Extensions in each of the cities. Lessons learned from this capacity building process were used as input for the National Urbanisation Policy (NUP) that has been adopted by the Government of Rwanda.

For two of the six cities a more detailed Temporary Planning Lab was set up. An international

collaboration between UN-Habitat's Urban Planning and Design Lab, trained experts from the Rwanda National Task Force and experts from the Guangzhou Planning Institute developed two Planned City Extensions for the cities for Nyagatare and Rubavu, that will form the base for investment decisions in infrastructure and basic facilities (2016).

The spatial planning exercise was developed parallel to a legal and financial assessment.

Some of the key outcomes of this three pronged approach:

- To implement the developed plans, large scale land readjustment (mainly in the currently unbuilt agriculture land) is needed, and has legal implications.
- Reduction of minimum sizes of plots defined in national rules and regulations is needed in order to develop cities with more efficient densities.
- A rough estimation showed that approximately 30% of the budget to implement the proposed cities extension is available through the current development budgets, of which 10% derives from local taxes.



Rapid planning studio in Rwanda © UN-Habitat



City-wide strategy in Nyagatare © UN-Habitat



In Iran the Lab carried out plan assessments to improve the currently employed models of new-towns such as above © UN-Habitat

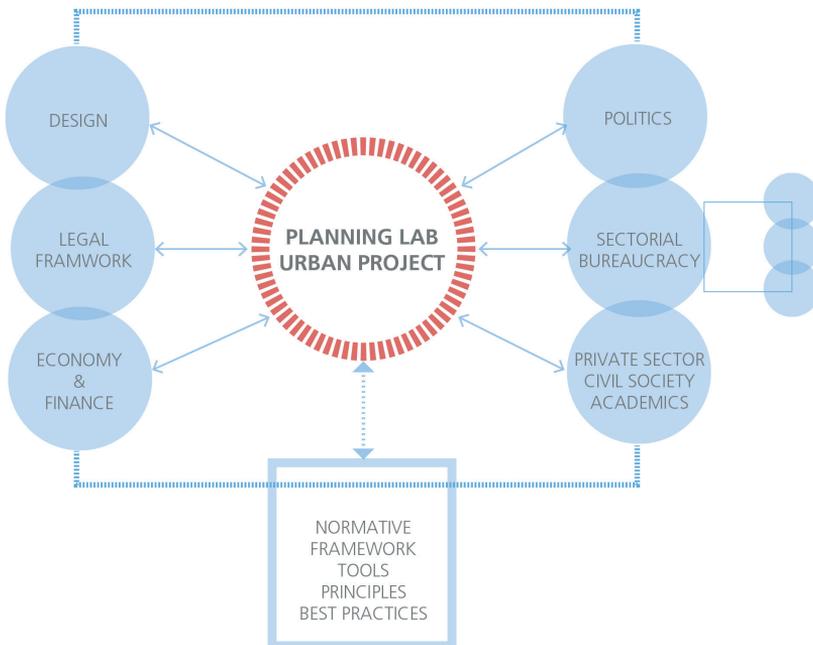
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## PREPARATORY TOOLS AND MAIN DECISIONS

### PREPARATORY TOOLS TO SET-UP A LAB

There are a series of steps that can be conducted to help reach a mature decision on the typology of planning lab needed, based on the conditions, capacities and needs in a city. Two parallel processes of assessment are advised that would help to both estimate the ground situation and fast-track the ideas for the future possibilities, namely: an assessment of the legal, financial and spatial documents of the city/region, and an assessment of the needs and possibilities through 'initiation' short-term supporting interventions. Rapid Planning Studios, Expert Group Meetings and Thematic Training Modules can kick-start the project definition, while the assessments sets the context in which the project is situated. Both the frameworks and the project should be seen as fields to introduce change that are inextricably linked to each other.

Setting up a Planning Lab does not need to be an immediate dive into a major undertaking - rather the concept can be 'tested' and matured through a concentrated event with the aim to accelerate the conceptualization process, and to serve as an expert 'brain-storming' preparing the terrain.



## 1. PROJECT FOCUS AND NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

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From the preparatory steps, the main focus and scope of the planning lab should emerge.

As a principle, the Lab's operation should be organized around projects. The focus of the Lab is fully dependent on contextual conditions and needs. It can be one big project, a series of thematic projects or one smaller pilot project. It could be a city-wide strategic plan, regeneration plan or a green network plan. It could be a post-disaster plan or a series of transformative projects. It could be focusing on specific thematic areas, such as slum upgrading, disaster risk mitigation and urban resilience, urban transport, smart urban projects, affordable housing. It could also be focusing on

specific areas, such as the riverfront, the historic core, the ex-industrial zone, the agricultural belt. It could also be focusing on legal and financial instruments related to planning, or on guidelines and planning framework.

## 2. THE NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

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The design process in a planning lab is led by a certain vision and a normative framework. A vision is a wide objective on what a city wants to become and how it wants to develop, whereas a normative framework or guidelines are more specific directions on how to accomplish this visions through planning, design and process related tools. These can refer to the city form, to the socio-economic aspects of planning, to the inclusiveness of the process etc.

### Multiple local labs to test the system, introduce new frameworks in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi cities are urbanizing fast, and the urban population in Saudi Arabia is estimated to reach 97.6% by 2030. In the last 25 years, Saudi Arabia's urban population has almost tripled. As this process has had an overall negative impact, which includes threatening water resources and high consumption patterns, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and UN-Habitat set-up a major program, Future Saudi Cities, to address these unsustainable urbanization patterns.

The Future Saudi Cities program uses multiple labs at local level to explore and test the current planning system in order to inform at the national

what should be changed to make sustainable urban development work. One of the Lab's key activities is to develop a strategic planning framework for a sustainable urban future while following international standards that are acceptable to the national and local partners. The framework aims to achieve this by, among others, reducing auto-dependence, sprawl, scattered development, extensive road construction and massive outlays on costly infrastructure. The labs introduce in selected cities proposals for densification, connectivity and integration to reduce the increasing privatization of Saudi life, with the current preference of detached housing.

### 3. TIMESPAN

Decide on the duration and permanence of the Lab.

Parallel to the scope of the planning Lab - its duration is at least provisionally agreed upon. The planning lab can therefore be institutionalized (long-term or permanent) or temporary (short-term). Planning processes, including participatory approaches are not done overnight. To come to serious conclusions that

are able, based on arguments and participatory input, to inform decisions and change business as usual takes time. It is good to be realistic about that. In UN-habitat's planning Lab there were roughly Urban Planning Labs of 3-6/6-12/12-24 months with the more successful ones (approved, starting implementation) being the latter categories.

#### Timeline of events:

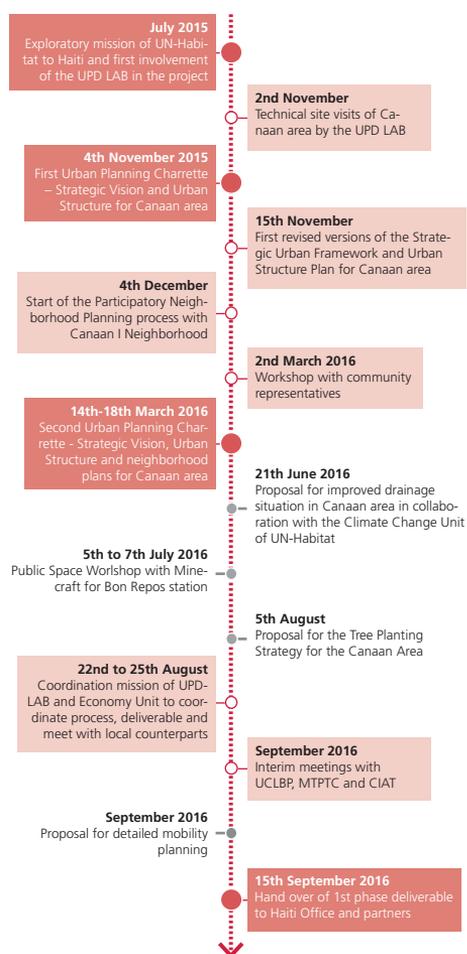
##### Spatial Development Framework Johannesburg

- Main events
- Participatory approaches, workshops & consultations
- Preparations



##### Urban Development Initiative - Canaan, Haiti

- Main events
- Participatory approaches, workshops & consultations
- Preparations



## New Institutions and Regional Space in Afghanistan

In Kabul, UN-Habitat's Planning Lab held a planning studio to give input to a new governance structure. Kabul is a fast growing city of more than 3,5 million residents whose population has increased fourfold since 2001. As majority of this growth has been accommodated in informal settlements, the results are dire: their inhabitants, mainly young and poor, lack most basic urban services. Yet without a functioning governance system, this was impossible to address on an adequate scale. UN-Habitat was involved in a longer trajectory (Kabul Metropolitan Initiative) of developing a regional governance system. This brought for the first time

together different authorities around the table to discuss metropolitan matters. After this installment, a rapid planning studio was held to develop a vision and a metropolitan concept. This concept identified interventions, such as building a central backbone in the city, planned city extensions, and metropolitan water and waste management, and in turn provided concrete input for the regional governance structure.

### 4. INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL PLACEMENT

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After deciding on the basic format and institutional placement of the planning lab, the next step would be to understanding how would this type of planning lab operate within the existing institutional hierarchy and legal system.

#### **Decide how the planning lab fits in the legal system**

The type of actions, scope of work, methodology and jurisdiction of the planning lab could be determined or limited by the existing legal frameworks. If not already done in detail as part of the preparatory process, the national and regional legislation, local policies and guidelines should be thoroughly understood, adjusting the newly instated planning lab and its procedures to the given possibilities, but also taking a critical stance, and exploring gaps and spaces for innovation and optimization of processes.

#### **Decide on institutional hierarchy and main communication channels**

To ensure the smooth functioning of the planning lab - the lines of decision-making and responsibilities between the newly-formed planning lab and the planning agency/other sectors should be clearly set. Generally, the planning lab should be largely a project-driven facility, working on-demand, while the day-to-day tasks remain handled by the planning agency.

## 5. TEAM AND CAPACITY BUILDING

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### **Decide on leadership**

A clear system of leadership, coordination and management needs to be set up for the Planning Lab. Depending on the project focus and local needs, the Lab should have a leader/director that is responsible for the Lab's long-term visions and strategies, intake and distribution of projects and responsibilities, collaboration with other public agencies etc. If the Lab has more than one project, each project should have a coordinator and a dedicated interdisciplinary core team. The coordinator is the focal point that is on top of the project, managing and distributing responsibilities and tasks, ensuring implementation partners, making sure the project runs smoothly, involves all relevant stakeholders and does not get stuck in bureaucratic processes.

### **Decide on core team**

Build a core team, aiming to include interdisciplinary expertise. The team should ideally include people that have already been working in the city administration, as well as people coming from outside with additional knowledge and a different perspective to offer. If there is a lack of experienced staff, this should be addressed with capacity building or hiring new staff. Following the three pronged approach, in addition to planners and urban designers, the team needs legal and economic experts.

### **Decide on main partners**

A planning lab has to establish a strong system of collaboration and mutual respect with the existing departments of the local government, and, depending on the project - with the national and regional governments. Many projects bridge boundaries of jurisdiction and geography, and building sound partnerships paves the way for future implementation.

Moreover, potential partners should be sought outside of the public sector among different groups or institutions with whom mutually beneficial collaborations can be established. Potential partners include academic and research institutions or NGOs that have evidence-based data, research and analytical capacities and accumulated knowledge on the focus topics or areas.

## 6. PARTICIPATION

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Participation is a key feature of the Lab approach, it is an integral element that is not used as an add-on at the end of a process, but as a constant process that offers better input, better data, better-informed and richer discussions and ultimately - an outcome that benefits most people.

### **Decide on the type and time of participatory activities:**

True participation means inclusion and active participation of the citizens and other related stakeholders from the concept idea to the ground implementation of each project. This means that a system for participation has to be set up from the beginning of a Lab initiation,

and not wait until a project is already in the working. This can mean having an open line or dedicated staff where interested individuals or groups can contact the Lab, as well as having a set of possible participatory tools at place to be used in different projects ensuring timely involvement of the affected citizens, community groups, businesses, investors, researchers. A communication and participation strategy should be developed to capture all this.

Decide to which extent the Lab will facilitate all participatory activities.

## **7. MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES**

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The funding of the Lab needs to be planned or anticipated in advance ensuring its long-term sustainability. Cost estimates should be made for initial capital (such as space and equipment), as well as running costs (such as staff salary, operational costs). Some cities may have the funds to invest in the setting up and sustainable work of a Planning Lab, but often there is need for external funding. This can include national funding agencies, international donors and grants, private sector partners etc.

## **8. MEASURING OF SUCCESS, SELF-EVALUATION AND REVISION**

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The sustainability of the Lab depends greatly on its capacity to respond quickly to its problems and improve. The Lab should establish a system of monitoring, evaluation and revision of its own work on a frequent basis. At least once a year, a thorough review of the successful (implemented or improved) projects, issues and problems should be done, including recommendations for immediate action and improvement. Smaller scale informal meetings with a focus on self-evaluation should be held with the entire staff, enabling continuous space for evolution and progress of the Lab through suggestions, brainstorming, criticism and idea sharing.

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# AN EMERGING NETWORK

This publication shines a light on the tools that have been applied by UN-Habitat's Urban Planning and Design Lab in many contexts in various countries. It provides a base - deduced from work in the field in close collaboration with local, regional and national authorities - to further explore collaborations with cities and with partners that are interested to learn from and contribute to this approach.

This publication is an attempt to structure an approach and to provide the tools for others to use. Although UN-Habitat's Urban Planning and Design Lab has had impact in around 30 cities - there is lot of work to be done, and partners are essential in order to have a more global impact. The approach described in this publication does not claim to be the only one, but it aims to define the broad range of actors and tools and the complex dynamics in which urban projects are shaped. Although responses to many urbanization challenges should be faster and with more accurate implementation, one has also to be realistic and take into account that the design process, participation, approval and implementation take serious time. The moment you enter in this complexity it consumes time and energy of the many actors involved.

Therefore it is essential to increase the footprint of Planning Labs by partnering with member states, organizations and professionals that believe in this line of thinking and implementation. By doing this, a community of practice can evolve globally that share a certain approach and that can easily be exchanged and adjusted from one context to another.

The concept of Planning Labs and the elaboration of what a Global Network can consist of has been discussed in an Expert Group Meeting in Barcelona in February 2016 where around 50 experts from all continents came together to discuss and share experiences.

Just some months earlier, in December 2015 the Dutch Creative Industries Fund signed an agreement with UN-Habitat supporting the Global Network of Urban Planning and Design Labs to set up temporary Planning Labs in cities in Myanmar, Mexico, the Philippines, Palestine and Ghana. Now, coming to the Habitat III conference in Quito, these Planning Labs have been already able to make a difference on the ground.

This collaboration led to a second Expert Group Meeting in 2016 at the Venice Architecture Biennale in May 2016 where all teams gathered and a discussion between the 5 teams, the local counterparts, UN-Habitat's Executive Director and the Dutch State architect took place.

This publication is a next step to advance and define this approach to sustainable urban planning through Planning Labs and to see where partners can come in to give support and extend its impact. As such, this publication is an invitation to contribute to this endeavor, to shape its body of applied knowledge and to see how the quality and impact of Planning Labs can improve, as well as how the quantity of collaborations can be multiplied.



Urban Sprawl in Accra © Rogier van den Berg

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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME

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Our aim is to support city, regional and national authorities to implement policies, plans and designs for more compact, better integrated and connected cities that foster equitable sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change.

## **UN-HABITAT | LAB** urban planning and design