De la Tierra el Barrio

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Organization Profile

Organization Name: TEC-IN-HAB and IVH-SMA

Organization Type: Civil society

Website: https://tecinhab.org/

Practice Details

Country(ies): Argentina

City(ies): San Martín de los Andes

Start Year: 2024

Ongoing: Yes

End Year: N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

- Communal & Self-Build Housing
- Housing, Land & Spatial Planning
- Housing Policy, Legislation & Governance

Relevant SDGs:



UN-HABITAT

Problem & Context

In Argentina, the new far-right government is pushing for unprecedented austerity measures, defunding governments at all levels. Housing and infrastructure policies, previously promoted and financed by the nation, have been dismantled. In San Martín de los Andes, a mountain town of 40,000 inhabitants, the deficit reaches 3,048 families, reflecting a structural crisis evidenced by ten housing emergencies declared since 2004. The challenge is how to respond to housing and land access needs in a context of state withdrawal and scarce traditional resources. Is it possible to create conditions for innovation through unconventional resources based on participation, self-management, and public-social co-management?

Solution Developed

In response to the withdrawal of the national government from housing policies, San Martín de los Andes returns to its regulatory precedent: the creation of the Municipal Institute of Housing and Habitat (2012), with a land bank and an Advisory Council composed of social organizations, professional associations, and the Institute. Urban land is mobilized through a land swap, enabling the promotion of participatory public-social planning processes to serve more than 3,000 families with housing deficits, incorporating gender, youth, and sustainability approaches. The Municipal School of Self-Management, provided for in the ordinance but not yet implemented, is activated. With support from the Ibero-American School of Habitat Technologies, the vertical structure is transformed toward intersectoral and interdisciplinary management. The Advisory Council is strengthened, and a territorial research-action team is created. The process generates administrative, legal, and design innovations and mobilizes unconventional resources from families, universities, nurseries, and organizations with a history of self-management.

Implementation

The process unfolds in four phases.

a) Preparation for participation: Legal, administrative, communication, and organizational innovations create the conditions to enable participation.
b) Training in participation: Links with organizations are established, and the interdisciplinary, intersectoral From the Land to the Neighborhood team is formed. Capacity-building begins, progressing from group work to teamwork.
c) Organizational strengthening and coordination: Strategic planning workshops, coordinating team meetings, assemblies, and situated interlearning experiences strengthen organizations, shaping a flexible, open, and adaptive structure.
d) Self- and co-management: Social organizations take an active role, propose strategies, and interact horizontally with the technical team. Innovative legal, administrative, and social proposals emerge, combining conventional and non-conventional resources.

Stakeholders: The process is multi-stakeholder, open, and evolving, involving government, social, academic, technical, administrative, legislative, and political actors, guided by shared goals and collective learning.

In one year (July 2024–present), it has shown effective self-management and coordination. A USD 15,000 investment was at least doubled by non-conventional resources provided by stakeholders.

Enablers & Obstacles

Drivers

a) Political decision: Implement participatory management processes.
b) Regulatory framework: IVH ordinance that recognizes the right to housing and self-management. It includes a land bank and an Advisory Council.
c) Self-Management School: Provided for in the ordinance, but without regulations.
d) Community capacity: The Advisory Council facilitated the convening of social and professional leaders, providing initial training for the process.

Obstacles

a) Restricted resources from national policy to local governments.
b) Limited state capacity: Need for training in participatory management for the IVH team.
c) Institutional disarticulation: Inter-program planning actions were carried out.
d) Limited initial community participation. They did not know each other, and actions were taken to inform, establish relationships with each other, and promote self-management processes.

Results & Impact

Results and Impact Evaluation – July 2025

After one year, an evaluation combined quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative results: Four self-managed urbanization processes reached 324 households (Aitué 200, Chacra 28-24, El Trébol 65, Vecinos Sin Techo 35) plus 200 indirectly in the Intercultural Neighborhood, totaling 524. The From the Land to the Neighborhood team includes 35 direct members and 25 from academia, municipal, and legislative areas, summing 60 active participants. Additionally, 90 TEC-IN-HAB technicians contribute and train in participatory management. Potential reach is 3,048 households with housing needs, and the model is replicable in other municipalities.

Qualitative results: Progress followed a “ladder of participation”: (a) isolated households; (b) initial encounters and access to information; (c) recognition of experiences and networks; (d) collective identity and first decisions; (e) action planning and naming; (f) organizational

strengthening with political, legislative, and social participation; (g) organized households co-managing with government and coordinating diverse resources.

A gender focus prioritized women, youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Local experiences reinforced environmental awareness and intercultural respect.

Replication & Scale Up

It is necessary to analyze the political situation and the prevailing attitude toward participation, the quality of governance, civil society associations, and local regulations. Transforming citizen participation from distrust to co-management requires appropriate technical and methodological support.

We work within a context of pluralism of actors and uncertainty. We do not propose a closed, linear method; rather, for each case, we implement open, flexible, adaptive, and strategic planning with local actors to achieve innovation.

Its sustainability is based on: a) the land bank ordinance enabling mobilization and exchange; b) revenues from green space and fiscal reserve ordinances; c) ordinances promoted by organizations for prepayment of fees allocated to neighborhood urbanization; d) solidarity and non-conventional resources from citizens and organizations. The practice can expand to the microregion and Neuquén Province, and nationally inspires groups promoting a Self-Management Law, empowering women and popular sectors in access to land, housing, and the city.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has informed or been partially integrated into policy discussions, strategies, or pilot-level policy instruments.

The transformation toward participatory management is supported by ordinances and articles, plus a cooperation agreement with TEC-IN-HAB ensuring technical support and capacity building. The Municipal Self-Management School, active under the housing emergency and volunteer efforts of the From the Land to the Neighborhood team, is now advancing toward a municipal ordinance to regulate its operation and secure resources for sustainability.

Lessons & Takeaways

The strategy focused on creating conditions for participation and self-management, strengthening the IVH and creating an intersectoral space for action-research that fosters participatory processes, enabling households to move from passive to self-managed attitudes. To replicate or deepen the experience, more intensive mapping and interprogrammatic planning between departments at different levels are proposed, generating synergies and avoiding overlaps, a key aspect in contexts of resource scarcity.