

Strategic planning proliferation and city aspiration-crafting

Investigating city strategic plans through publications,
contents and triggers

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Abstract

This thesis explores a peculiar phenomenon of urban governance: namely, the recent rise of strategic city planning. Over the last decades, a growing number of cities adopted strategic plans that—following a strikingly similar format and formula—imagine and project the city of the future. I analyse “the future” expressed in strategic planning as a contested arena in the present, facilitating specific urban projects and consolidating certain planning agendas. Based on a new, original database of 373 strategic plans the thesis demonstrates that this urban planning strategy has diffused around the globe since the 1990s. A thematic qualitative analysis of 40 plans then reveals that, regardless of the specific local context, strategic plans promote a similar planning agenda that envisions a city to become both “competitive” and “green.” Finally, the thesis draws on the case of Rio de Janeiro to show that the adoption of strategic planning is instigated by the combination of a variety of triggers, including, a) having Barcelona as a central city-model, b) a strong influence from the “agenda-setting” generated by multilateral organizations (such as UN-Habitat) and, c) its focus on “consensus-creation” bringing together public and private actors.

Resumen

Esta tesis explora un fenómeno peculiar de la gobernanza urbana: a saber, el reciente auge de la planificación urbana estratégica. Durante las últimas décadas, un número creciente de ciudades adoptó planes estratégicos que, siguiendo un formato y una fórmula sorprendentemente similares, imaginan y proyectan la ciudad del futuro. Analizo “el futuro” expresado en la planificación estratégica como un escenario disputado en el presente, facilitando proyectos urbanos concretos y consolidando determinadas agendas

de planificación. Basada en una base de datos original de 373 planes estratégicos, la tesis demuestra que esta estrategia de planificación urbana se ha difundido en todo el mundo desde la década de 1990. Un análisis cualitativo temático de 40 planes revela que, independientemente del contexto local específico, los planes estratégicos promueven una agenda de planificación similar que prevé que una ciudad se vuelva "competitiva" y "verde". Finalmente, la tesis se basa en el caso de Río de Janeiro para mostrar que la adopción de la planificación estratégica es instigada por la combinación de una variedad de factores desencadenantes, entre ellos, a) tener a Barcelona como modelo de ciudad central, b) una fuerte influencia de el “establecimiento de agenda” generado por organizaciones multilaterales (como ONU-Hábitat) y, c) su enfoque en la “creación de consenso” que reúne a actores públicos y privados.

INTRODUCTION

It is possible you have been to Troy without recognising the city. The road from the airport is like many others in the world. It has a superhighway and is often blocked. You leave the airport building which are like space vessels never finished, you pass the packed carparks, the international hotels, a mile or two of barbed wire, broken fields, the last stray cattle, billboards that advertise cars and Coca-Cola, storage tanks, a cement plant, the first shanty town, several giant depots for big stores, ring-road flyovers, working class flats, a part of an ancient city wall, the old boroughs with trees, crammed shopping streets, new golden office blocks, a number of ancient domes and spires, and finally you arrive at the acropolis of wealth. (Berger, 1990:170 as cited in Brenner and Keil, 2006:3)

Cities have gained enormous centrality in today's globalized economy, often depicted as the epicentre of fluxes, connections, transformations and revolutions. The "urban age" narrative (when supposedly more than half of the world's population lives in cities) represents the inseparability of the urban and the global fate (Burdett and Rode, 2011). The complexity of urban challenges faced by cities is tremendous, and the strategies used to take them on are essential for the transformations these territories go through and the associated impacts to urban life in general.

The importance of urban planning and its prevailing consequences to urban transformation signals the relevance of this research in contributing to a better grasp on how cities are being planned around the world. Our findings – hundreds of cities from all around the world, engaging with strategic planning by activating similar planning agendas, therefore constructing replicated urban

future aspirations – demonstrate the significance of better understanding strategic planning’s features, trends and consequences to the urban space, and consequently constructing refined urban planning tools and processes.

Harvey (1996) argues that the 1960s urban management model which he calls “managerialism”, is replaced by “entrepreneurialism” in urban governance in the 1970s and 1980s. For the author, the 1970s global conjuncture, marked by financial and productive crises, provided a fertile structure for the rise of a neoliberal agenda based on privatization, market-driven policies and the decentralization of power scale-wise. Cities are empowered as the new nexus of transnational fluxes of capital.

Within this context a new mind-set arises, often focused on flexibility and competitiveness. The impacts of this new understanding of the urban space and cities in general are noticeable in many areas, and this paper focuses on the spatial restructuring activated by new approaches to urban planning. Not by accident, in the 1990s a new tool for planning is legitimated and starts spreading globally, marking the birth of strategic planning.

This research focuses on future narratives and aspirations embedded in Strategic Planning. The narratives about the city of the future are activated by a constellation of transcalar flows and entangled power cartographies, with real impacts on the present of urban life. Taking into consideration the available resources for this research, conducting a comprehensive account of cities’ aspiration-crafting¹ is a counterproductive approach to the subject. Nonetheless, we suggest that Strategic Planning is a relevant node in this process, and the resulting published plans emanating from this methodology serve as “present materializations” (in the form of documents) of specific

¹ Future aspiration-crafting corresponds to the process of constructing narratives for a privileged future to be pursued as the desired horizon.

moments contained in a broader aspiration-crafting process that can be investigated.

Strategic city planning is a specific methodology for local urban planning, with particular characteristics, such as the consolidation of a future vision for the city and elaboration of strategic pillars that drive local urban governance in order to reach the city's goals. We argue that strategic planning is a relevant methodology worldwide, overcoming its original *raison d'être* as a technical tool, imbuing the published documents with a similar agenda and replicating a strategy for cities to face their urban challenges. That being said, we propose that the proliferation of strategic planning has a central normalizing effect in future aspiration-crafting process in which cities from all around the world are inserted in.

Future narratives are relevant to the way aspirations are crafted and specific horizons are pursued (instead of others). The future narratives contained in strategic plans result in detailed aspired horizons and the strategic pathways that should be taken in order to get there. When a future narrative exposes a roadmap to be taken, inexorably it reduces the potential alternative future aspirations and their related agendas, having important impacts on the way the city of the future is envisioned and what other visualizations are not developed.

An important ideological component of political discourse derives from its representation of the future and the rhetorical functions those representations serve in implicating more immediate material and discursive actions.(...) I am concerned that through their ideological function, dominant political discourses supplant the notion of the future as the site of the possible with a conception of the future as inevitable and, thereby,

undermine the future as a site through which political change can be imagined and, ultimately, realized. (Dunmire, 2012:482)

This research investigates the proliferation effects of Strategic City Planning's over cities' aspiration-crafting, by investigating Strategic Planning documents through publications (in time and space), contents (the main values expressed) and triggers (channels that enable and boost related processes). In other words, strategic planning published documents are the object of study in this research, serving as proxy for seeking a refined understanding of the subject of study: cities' aspiration-crafting.

It's important to notice that independently of published planning or policy documents there will always be a disjuncture between framing and implementation (see Edelman, 1964). The examination of the actual substance and implementation of the policies proposed in the documents is not the aim of the present work. We understand that urban projects can be implemented differently from its original framing and that this "translation process" is not irrelevant. Nonetheless, in this research we focus on the documentary results of a planning agenda being put forward by strategic planning, and we argue that this is a crucial factor, even if still open for changes, for the actual implementation of the proposed urban projects.

The framing of urban planning discourse delimitates the kinds of institutional actions that are imagined as possible. Thus, while there is no "direct translation" of planning documents into (built) urban projects, the planning documents restrict the range of possibilities of what actions can be pursued. In other words, we argue that the discursive framing has an impact in the range of actions made possible in order to deviate from the "official" projects.

In the first chapter we investigate Strategic Planning’s publications around the world by elaborating a typology that indicates a consistent methodology for cataloguing published plans (related to cities) and, therefore, constructing an original database that enables us to map out and expose the global relevance of the proliferation of strategic planning. Consecutively, in the second chapter, we engage with a comparative study of a sample of cities emanating from the original database, conducting thematic qualitative analysis in order to uncover the main trends composing Strategic Planning’s agenda. Finally, in chapter 3, we dive into a case study, combining historical and documentary analysis, in order to identify the main triggers, for this specific context, that enables strategic planning’s proliferation and legitimizes its agenda, suggesting their relevance in broader processes beyond the case study’s scope.

Table 1. Research Summary

Research Questions	Hypothesis	Methodology	Methods
<p>Q1. How has Strategic Planning evolved?</p>	<p>H1. Strategic Planning’s proliferation is global in scale and an ascending trend in time.</p>	<p>Mapping of Strategic Planning's proliferation in space and time</p>	<p>Creation of a global database of catalogued published strategic plans</p>
<p>Q2. What is the planning agenda emanating from Strategic Planning’s published documents?</p>	<p>H2. The proliferation of Strategic Planning constructs a planning agenda with low contextual calibration.</p>	<p>Comparative Study</p>	<p>Thematic content analysis of published strategic plans</p>

<p>Q3. Why do cities adopt strategic planning?</p>	<p>H3. International model-cities, multilateral organizations and consensus creation are central triggers for the proliferation and legitimization of Strategic Planning.</p>	<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Combination of historical and documentary analysis</p>
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In the introductory paragraphs of this chapter we risk the reification of “the city” as a trade-off for a clearer account of the research’s goals (although the conceptualization of “city” and “urbanization” will be explored in detail in the following chapter). That being said, the first step for this research is crafting the theoretical framework in which to operate. We argue that in the urban field of studies the “city” and the “urban” are dynamic conceptualizations that need preliminary adjustment to have a clear theoretical approach to our investigation on Strategic Planning. By providing a brief account of “tradition urban theory” (see Park 1967 [1925], Simmel, 1995 [1903] and, Wirth, 1938) and dialoguing with alternative approaches we situate our research within a specific branch of “critical urban theory” (see Brenner and Schmid, 2012; Calhoun, 2000 and Merrifield, 2014).

This approach unfolds the conceptualization of the city as not only a “category of analysis” for urban theory, open to different conceptualizations by different schools of thought, but also as a “category of practice” (Brubaker, 2013; Waschmuth, 2014), activated on a daily basis by a multitude of actors, and therefore crucial for the understanding of diverse urban narratives and future aspiration-crafting. Urbanization is also understood as a broader process containing dialectical moments of agglomeration and expansion, reaching outside the cities’ traditional jurisdictions and “invading” the “non-urban”

space and, with special focus in this research, future aspirations through urban planning practices.

We relate to this approach by arguing that the future is also impregnated by urbanization processes with present “materializations” (Adam, 2004), such as, for example, in the form of urban planning practices. Thus, we indicate the importance of investigating a specific methodology of city planning with important effects in the way the future of cities is constructed: strategic planning.

Having said that, the first chapter argues that Strategic Planning is a worthwhile study object, and therefore we investigate its relevance worldwide. We examine Strategic Planning documents publications and create an original database, mapping the proliferation of Strategic Planning across time and space to have a better grasp of its shape and magnitude.

To achieve that, we engage with the literature on the main elements that characterize Strategic Planning and use its main insights to craft a typology to identify published strategic plans. By doing that, we indicate a transparent and consistent way of cataloguing publications of strategic plans (related to cities) in our database and separating them from other city planning methodologies.

Since the shape of strategic planning’s proliferation around the world was unknown beforehand, we set up a precise benchmark by which cities would be evaluated. We use the GaWC Global Ranking² for its global prestige and methodological robustness (these topics are further developed in chapter 1) when elaborating the rankings. Also, their ranks place cities in different relevance tiers (from “Alpha++”, the best positions, to “Sufficiency”, the

² <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/gawcworlds.html>

worst spots within the list), allowing us to compare cities by their relative positioning.

The resulting database indicates a dominant tendency of cities in the GaWC Global Ranking engaging with strategic planning in the last three decades. The original database indicates that 83,8% of cities have published city-wide strategic planning documents. Additionally, when analysing ranking tiers, we see a dominating presence of cities with strategic plans in the top tiers (Alpha++, Alpha+, Alpha, Alpha-).

From analysing the data of cities engaging with strategic planning, one central finding is the diffusion of strategic planning's methodology in every continental region, indicating its proliferation worldwide. There is a global ascending trend in publication numbers, with forthcoming plans being registered in every region of the world. In order to "localize" the investigation we zoom into a number of cases of cities, in diverse continental regions and global ranking tiers that engaged with strategic planning, gaining insight from contextual information.

The database also provides us with the cities that never engaged with strategic planning. Carefully studying these cases also highlights interesting trends among cities in different geopolitical, cultural and institutional contexts. It's interesting to emphasise that this examination suggests that even cities without "city-wide" published strategic plans, in many cases, engaged with sectorial strategic plans (e.g. city-centre strategic plan, mobility strategic plan, education strategic plan) or strategic plans in other scales (e.g. national and regional strategic plans).

These findings conclude our first chapter by demonstrating the global relevance of Strategic Planning and how it impacts cities' future aspiration-crafting. Conclusively, the first chapter showcases the spreading of strategic

planning as a methodology, indicating the next investigation stage: what are these plans actually saying?

The second chapter builds upon the idea that Strategic Planning is a relevant planning methodology worldwide, and investigates the qualitative impacts of this methodology on the actual contents of the published plans. While in the first chapter we use a broader scope to the investigation by undertaking a “global” dataset with 373 cities, the same wouldn’t be possible for this stage of the research. To diving into content analysis, we propose a comparative study of 40 cities, selected through a transparent process for sampling the original database (focusing on regional balance, global ranking positioning balance and recent publishing dates).

We argue that a comparative study is better equipped than a case study for this chapter’s goal of exposing narrative trends in the published documents (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, in order to focus on the central values emerging from these documents we opted for thematic qualitative analysis, finding which themes are more widely shared in strategic plans across the sample of cities (Nowell, et.al, 2017).

The data analysis indicates interesting trends in the documents, starting out in the documents’ structure and organization, resulting in very similar sections in every case. A thorough examination of the most important documents sections is conducted, diving into segments related to the “future vision” (where the aspired future for the city is fleshed out) and the “strategic pillars” (where the values that steer the planning process are developed). Finally, we investigate the resulting projects proposed in the documents, assembling them by themes.

Clear findings derive from this investigation, exposing that, in our sample, strategic plans serve as a tool for legitimating an allegedly shared future vision

for the city, with clear steering values that lead the city to this “desired pathway”. By investigating the main themes emerging from the plans and looking for patterns, we argue that cities engaged with strategic planning are developing a similar agenda related to being “competitive” and “green”.

Conclusively, the second chapter exposes trends that indicate a strong normalization of an agenda that is central to the process of aspiration-crafting for cities. The fact that cities from all around the world are using the same methodology (strategic planning) to face their urban challenges is already remarkable, but in this chapter we go one step further and suggest that these cities, by engaging with strategic planning, also develop similar values (“green-competitiveness”) for crafting their future aspirations (future vision) and therefore, projecting very similar pathways (strategic pillars and specific projects) to reach this aspired horizon.

At this moment, having exposed the relevance of strategic planning for its magnitude and qualitative impact to published documents, we investigate the main triggers of its proliferation and planning agenda legitimization. In other words, we are now concerned with the ways strategic planning strengthens “green-competitiveness” all around the globe.

The third chapter, similarly to the first and second, has a scope decision to make. Unlike the first and second chapters, the main triggers of the proliferation and agenda consolidation of strategic planning are dynamic, multidimensional and path-dependent. Therefore, we decide to dive into a case study – empowered by a refined grasp on the proliferation of strategic planning (as investigated in the first chapter) and the qualitative insights on a consolidated planning agenda (as investigated in the second chapter) – in order to identify specific central triggers in this process, and, from then, to examine these triggers and their impact on broader scales.

Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, is chosen as the central subject of study at this point, using a specific approach that combined historical-contextual examination (see Lefebvre, 1970 and Schmid, 2013) with present representations of future aspirations through published strategic plans. Rio de Janeiro was selected firstly for figuring both in the GaWC global ranking database and in the second database for content analysis on chapter two. Rio de Janeiro is also the city with the highest number of publications derived from strategic planning (6 published strategic plans to date). Additionally, by choosing a city outside strategic planning's historical epicentre in the U.S. and Europe we are able to focus on the proliferation characteristics of this process.

The initial contextual analysis directs us to three central triggers that potentialized the engagement with strategic planning, in Rio de Janeiro's case: International models, multilateral agenda-setting and consensus creation. As identified in our investigation, Barcelona is a central actor in this process, explicitly understood as a model to be emulated by Rio de Janeiro. Next, we compare published strategic plans from both cities and examine the impact of Barcelona in other published strategic plans in our database. In summary, we conclude that Barcelona has a strong impact in the proliferation of strategic planning to Rio de Janeiro (and other cities) and in the contents of the planning agenda (green-competition) represented in these documents.

Secondly, our investigation points out to the central role of the United Nations (especially UN-Habitat) in this process, through its clearinghouse-function³ (Parnreiter, 2011) that normalizes best-practices to be followed around the world and normative values to be pursued. UN-Habitat's engagement with the strategic planning process in Rio de Janeiro is investigated and relevant

³ This concept is used in relation to the process of legitimating best-practices by facilitating its conceptualization, implementation and/or proliferations through manuals, reports, papers, workshops, seminars, conferences, courses, funding schemes, etc. (see Parnreiter, 2011).

official documents are examined (i.e. Agenda 2030, 2015 and, The New Urban Agenda, 2016). Once again, we suggest that UN-Habitat is a central trigger in the proliferation of strategic planning to Rio de Janeiro (and other cities) and in the contents of the planning agenda (green-competition) represented in these documents.

Finally, this investigation leads us to the importance of consensus creation for the legitimizing of the proposed future vision and projects in the strategic plans. Strategic planning engagement by cities is, in itself (independently of its quality or outcomes), often related as a comparative advantage for the city, since it aligns the city's future vision with a series of legitimized best-practices from international models (as discussed in this chapter with the first and second examined triggers). That being said, we conclude that participatory schemes and public-private partnerships are central for "consensus creation" and, therefore, another central trigger in the emergence of strategic planning as a new paradigm for city planning and its replicated "legitimized" planning agendas.

In summary, this research aims to understand the effects that the proliferation of Strategic Planning has on the aspiration-crafting of cities, by investigating Strategic Planning documents through its publications, contents and triggers. The publications indicate the shape and magnitude, and therefore the relevance, of Strategic Planning around the world; the content analysis of published documents enables us to grasp the main themes being activated to form a replicated urban agenda for cities engaging with strategic planning and; examining the main triggers for the proliferation and value-system construction in a specific case study empowers this research with novel insights in the local urban planning practices around the world.

By doing so we discovered that strategic planning has indeed been a relevant methodology for planning cities, in every continental region, for the last three decades and with an ascending indication of forthcoming plans to the near future. It's suggested that its impacts are especially important for cities aspiring to climb up global ranking leaders and improve their international perception. Additionally, when examining the contents of the published plans (using thematic document analysis) we suggest that strategic planning overcomes its technical role and imbues the documents with a specific planning agenda based on what we call "green-competitiveness". Through a case study we argue that the proliferation of strategic planning as a methodology have central triggers in the case of Rio de Janeiro that indicate interesting pathways for research and testing in other world regions, these being: the emulation of international models (e.g. Barcelona); the multilateral agenda-setting for normalizing planning agendas translated into best-practices (e.g. UN-Habitat) and; consensus creation related to participatory schemes and public-private partnerships. It's interesting to notice that the main triggers associated to the case of Rio de Janeiro can be identified in similar processes of Strategic Planning proliferation in other world regions.

That being said, this research contributes to the advancement of the urban field of urban studies concerned with critical urban theory, city planning, urban governance, content analysis and urban policy flows. In dialogue with the literature on international diffusion (see Simmons et.al., 2008) and the identified diffusion mechanisms (i.e. learning, socialization, competition and coercion), the present work offers insights related to a broader policy diffusion model in urban planning and the triggers underpinning this process. We argue that the global proliferation of replicated urban agendas and the normalization of a limited set of "best-practices" denotes a strong limitation in engaging with contextual calibrations and local specificities.

Diffusion processes work at several levels and through a variety of linkages, yielding incoherence. Some external elements are easier to copy than others, and many external elements are inconsistent with local practices, requirements, and cost structures. Even more problematic, world cultural models are highly idealized and internally inconsistent, making them in principle impossible to actualize (Meyer et al., 1997:154).

The findings also point out to interesting new research pathways related to strategic planning's relevance (stressed by the global proliferation of strategic planning to every world region, as demonstrated in the first chapter), indicating the importance of a comprehensive examination of its flows around the world, disentangling sub-value-systems with content analysis (uncovered in chapter 2 with the emergence of green-competitiveness as a central attribute of strategic plans) and identifying the main triggers in different contexts (as exemplified in chapter 3 with the case of Rio de Janeiro).

Conclusively, the main achievement of this research is to expose the process in which cities from every world region, with contrasting cultures and political contexts, and in increasing numbers, are selecting the same methodology, a best-practice legitimized, internationally to face urban challenges. Additionally, these cities, knowledgeable or not, activate a planning agenda that results in replicated future aspirations and projects. In other words, this investigation provides us with the notion that engaging with strategic planning is more than using a technical tool, but to engage with a planning agenda with low contextual calibration and with a strong effect in the aspiration-crafting potential of the engaged city.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iii
Introduction.....	v
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Traditional Urban Theory.....	2
1.3. Critical Urban Theory.....	5
1.4. Theoretical Proposal: The Urbanization of the Future.....	9
2. MAPPING CITY STRATEGIC PLANNING'S PROLIFERATION AROUND THE WORLD.....	16
2.1. Introduction.....	16
2.2. Strategic Planning for Cities.....	18
2.3. Designing a Typology for Identifying Strategic Planning.....	20
2.4. Defining a Benchmark for the database with Global City Rankings.....	23
2.5. Constructing an Original Database.....	26
2.6. Data Analysis.....	28
2.7. Zooming-In.....	37
2.8. Conclusion.....	45
3. GREEN COMPETITION: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING.....	49
3.1. Introduction.....	49
3.2. Data Collection and Analysis.....	52

3.3. Future Vision Analysis.....	60
3.4. Strategic Pillars Analysis.....	64
3.5. Articulating the “competitive” and “green” city.....	70
3.6. Conclusion.....	81
4. STRATEGIC PLANNING’S PROLIFERATION TRIGGERS: A CASE STUDY OF RIO DE JANEIRO.....	85
4.1. Introduction.....	85
4.2. Strategic Planning in Rio de Janeiro.....	89
4.3. Trigger 1: International Models.....	97
a) Comparing Published Strategic Plans in Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro...	101
4.4. Trigger 2: Multilateral Agenda-Setting.....	106
a) UN-Habitat and the normalization of Strategic Planning in a global urban agenda.....	109
4.5. Trigger 3: Consensus Creation.....	113
a) Consensus creation through participatory schemes and public-private partnerships.....	116
4.6. Conclusion.....	124
5. CONCLUSION.....	129
Bibliography.....	139

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Introduction

The 20th century is marked by extreme urban changes, the growth of cities, global-scale connections, and deep social inequalities. The urban field of studies is inherently conflictual as well as dynamic, composed of heterogeneous approaches to the “urban question” (Castells, 1977). For the development of the present work, concerned with the proliferation of city strategic planning around the world and its qualitative meaning to cities’ aspirations-crafting, it’s central to dive into this discussion and indicate the theoretical framework that steers our methodological decisions.

The theoretical framework’s construction for this research is based on a specific critical stream of urban theory, being developed by the “Urban theory lab (Harvard-GSD)⁴”, the “Future Cities Laboratory (ETH Zurich)⁵”, and their collaborators around the globe. Critical urban theory allows us to grapple with the dynamic relations activated by urbanizing processes such as the proliferation of strategic planning and its related planning agenda.

This research aims to articulate the dynamic conceptualization of urbanization provided by the aforementioned streams of urban critical theory with the analysis of “urban future aspirations”. We argue that this symbolic layer can be explored as an additional dimension of urbanizing, reaching processes that are often not included in the study of urban transformations, governance and policy.

In order to situate this theoretical endeavour and elucidate its effects in our approach to the research design, it’s important to engage with the

⁴ <http://www.urbantheorylab.net/>

⁵ <https://fcl.ethz.ch/>

conceptualizations of “city” and “urbanization” and their impact on our approach to the “urban future” as a relevant concept for this research. That being said, we advance by positioning the present theoretical framework in relation to traditional and critical urban theory, consecutively we propose our take on “urban future aspirations” and its effects on the research design.

1.2.Traditional Urban Theory

The Chicago School is one of the most important western academic institutions in the urban field since the 1920s, dedicated to urban sociology and a leading voice in the conceptualization of urban life. The study of the “urban” by the Chicago School is centred in American large-scale industrial cities. The traditional notion of “city” is inherited mainly from the works of important members of the Chicago School, such as Robert Ezra Park, Ernest Watson Burgess and Louis Wirth.

A recurrent theme of the urban sociology developed in Chicago School is how to harmonically integrate society since it's constituted by diverse, heterogeneous and competitive people. In this context the Chicago School prominently produces the notion of “human ecology”, where urban life is studied and understood as a distinctive form of sociability.

The urban field of studies is assembled by different schools of thought and research approaches engaging, one way or the other, with the “urban question”, contending with the complexity of the urban world. Despite the plurality of methodologies, it is possible to notice a recurrent naturalization of the “city” as a stable concept, unchallenged and discrete (Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer, 2009).

In 2008 UN-Habitat famously declared that we now live in the “urban age”⁶, given the drastic growth in urban population. From this conception results the notion that we live now in the Urban Era because more than half of the population lives in cities. This proposition is problematic, since it presupposes a concept of city that is ahistorical and centred in the demographical aspect of spatial settlements⁷.

The conceptualization of “urbanization” has similar theoretical attributes to the ones discussed so far. The idea that an urban space is a self-sufficient system is a prevalent approach in the urban field of studies. The sociologist Kingsley Davis (1973) made a paradigmatic conceptualization of the definition of urbanization, represented as the result of the expansion of the population in cities in relation to the total of the national population ($U = P_c/P_t$ [where U = urbanization, P_c = city’s population, P_t = total population]). This kind of definition is still institutionalized by systems of data collection used by global organizations.

Urbanization is usually depicted and imagined strictly related to population and density. Nonetheless, it is important to notice that even if the “non-urban” zones don’t have population density, social fabric or infrastructural equipment that are often associated with cities, they are essential and strategic to the flows of resources, energy, nutrients, water, labour force, logistics, communication, and residual waste. Currently these areas are produced, built, planned and re-

⁶ UN-HABITAT report: Harmonious Cities 2008/2009

⁷ There are empirical barriers that should not be dismissed, such as the inconsistent criteria for measuring the urban space in different locations. The population threshold for cities is a good example since it ranges from 200 to 50,000 for UN member states, creating a huge disparity in the classifications. On top of that, there are multiple layers of discrepant categorizations regarding density, infrastructure, socioeconomic and administrative factors.

planned through large scale territorial projects that aim to support the expansion and growth of urban agglomerations.

The rhythms of development of these areas are increasingly more connected to the urban centres, specially through the social division of labour, commodification processes, enclosure and socioecological degradation, resulting in a scenario of dispossession and mass relocation. Brenner and Schmid (2012) argue that what we call “urban” is no longer a well-delineated reality and the process of urbanization is marked by multiscalar processes that produce unequal outcomes in specific locations.

The urban is a collective project—it is produced through collective action, negotiation, imagination, experimentation and struggle. The urban society is thus never an achieved condition, but offers an open horizon in relation to which concrete struggles over the urban are waged. It is through such struggles, ultimately, that any viable new urban epistemology will be forged. (Brenner and Schmid, 2012:178)

That being said, it is important to understand that every research in the urban field of studies, even the more pragmatic or quantitative, relies on an epistemological background that naturalizes the “urban” as an empirical object that consecutively can be investigated as a finished reality. The present research is not different, our decision is not to avoid theoretical embeddedness, but to be as much aware as possible of its effects. This approach can be noticed in our investigation of the proliferation of strategic plans as discursive tools activating specific planning agendas related to urbanization, and not the comparison of cities as discrete objects of study.

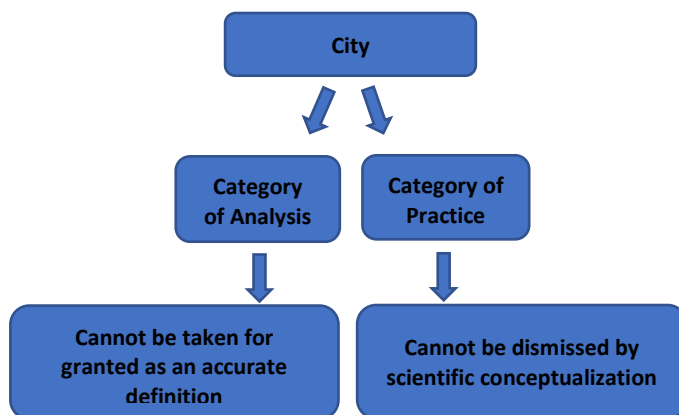
1.3.Critical Urban Theory

It is crucial for urban theorists to seek new approaches to tackle the central dilemma in critical urban theory: how to reconcile the explosion of the city as a “spatial formation” with the tenacity of the city as a “theoretical concept”? Wachsmuth (2014) explains that while the traditional notion of “city” does not suffice to grasp the complexity of current spatial formations, it has become an “ideal-type”⁸ in Weberian terms. In other words, the concept of city has drifted away from an accurate “analytical description” and closer to an “ideological representation”.

We find ourselves in a paradox marked by the fact that either updating the concept of city as a category of analysis or simply disregarding it as an outdated concept seem very counterproductive choices that should be avoided. Wachsmuth (2014) suggests that the city is understood both as a “category of practice”, a representation of the urbanization process, and a “category of analysis”, an attempt to describe urban agglomerations. This conceptual movement makes it possible to highlight the specificities of the daily life notions, developed and activated by a variety of urban narratives, in contrast with the scientific-academic notions that are developed by experts.

⁸ Ideal type is referred in this context as the conceptual tool developed by Max Weber: an analytical abstraction that is used by the researcher as a reference point, providing an operative approach to comparative studies.

Diagram 1: Category of Analysis vs. Category of Practice

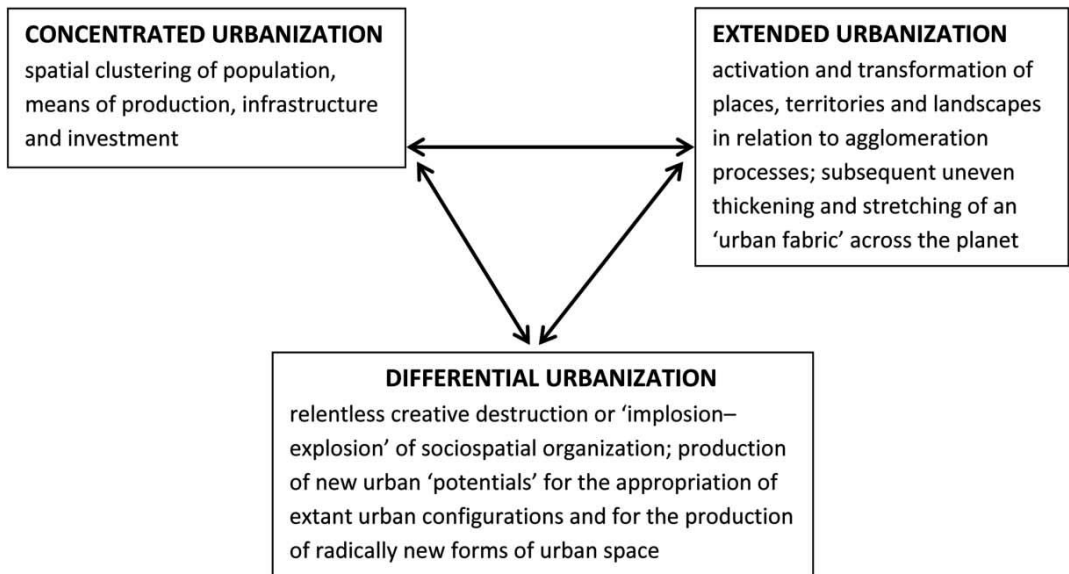


This is an interesting pathway since it exposes the conceptualization of the “city” as an active ingredient of urban representation and challenges its presupposed neutrality. The opacity of the concept of city conceals and reproduces the power relations that structures the built-environment, consecutively critical urban theory strives to unveil its contradictions that are often crystallized in social imagination.

It is important to avoid the trap of either creating and recreating new concepts of cities that “fit” into new narratives of urbanization, or abandoning the traditional concept of city. This approach suggests that the city is an ideological representation of the urbanization process.

Brenner and Schmid’s (2012) challenge the common practice in the urban field of describing territorial settlements and categorizing spatial units (e.g. city, urban, rural, suburb, town), suggesting that the unequal processes of urbanization can be understood through three dialectally related moments: concentrated, extended and differential urbanization. It’s important to notice that these moments only exist separately in their theoretical framework for explanatory purposes, but are, in reality, inseparable.

Diagram 2: Urbanization process by “moment”



Brenner and Schmid (2015:170)

“Concentrated urbanization” in this framework is connected to the “moment of agglomeration”, which is generally understood as “cities” or “urban”. Brenner (2013) explains that it does not mean that the city does not exist, but that however fundamental the agglomeration moment is not the centre of the urbanization process. The effects of concentrated urbanization reach far beyond traditional conceptions of “urban space” and administrative borders, while at the same time the agglomeration moment is structured by multiscalar processes.

“Extended urbanization” is connected to the “expansion moment”, where operational landscapes are shaped and reshaped. Places that are often identified as non-urban are strongly structured by extended urbanization, being operationalized and thus promoting the circulation of commodities,

people, and information that are crucial for contemporary social, political and economic dynamics.

“Differential urbanization” is related to the idea of creative destruction. Harvey (1985) explains that capital constantly produces a built-environment that enables its own circulation, which unescapably is destroyed and recreated while aiming to find fixes in space and time to displace crises that habitually surface. The relentless motion of capital circulation and the forceful openings of new rounds accumulation mark the differential moment of urbanization. Built environments, discursive formations, symbolic appropriations, institutional arrangements and regulatory patterns are constantly reshaped and creatively recreated by this process.

The Urban Theory Lab proposes the development of research projects that expose the processes of urbanization that are often dismissed in the urban field: ships’ transoceanic routes, transcontinental roads and railroad networks, global communication infrastructures, alpine touristic areas, agro-industrial zones, and even the atmosphere.

The above-mentioned “urbanization moments” are operationalized both in concrete materializations and by symbolic, regulatory and political practices, resulting in specific urban narratives. Igniting “urbanization” as a multidimensional process is a crucial conceptual manoeuvre for the theoretical positioning of the present research. So far, in this section, we’ve indicated the main theoretical baselines of this research, highlighting central conceptualizations in the broader urban theory debates. At this moment, it’s important to flesh out the relevant effects of this theoretical choices to the research.

1.4.Theoretical Proposal: The Urbanization of the future

Building upon the idea that urbanization processes encompass more than the city-centric tradition of urban agglomerations and population density – reaching territories that are usually excluded from “urban-cartographies” – we propose to analyse symbolic layers of operational landscapes of urbanization: urban future aspirations. In other words, this work argues that projecting the city of the future has a central role in the legitimacy of present urban transformations, and proposes the relocation of the future as an operational landscape of unequal processes of urbanization.

Semiotic studies have also engaged with the future appropriation in political discourses. Dunmire (2012) argues that images of the future are structuring and structured by political discourse. Future discourses often empower specific future projects despite other visions. The author analyses specific linguistic and conceptual features of political discourses that propel their future vision to imbricate their project within common sense, legitimizing their narrative as a natural outcome of the description of reality.

Prospects of the urban future are plural and contradictory but they are often concerned with trends that range from population growth, waste collection systems, energy, food and water to informality, climate change and global connections⁹. The future of cities (and of humankind) is often depicted either in a horrific dystopian way – where extreme poverty, pollution and violence haunt the social destiny and defies mainstream urban governance – or by

⁹ The 2007 Urban Age Conference in Mumbai named “Governing Urban Futures” called attention to the challenges of urban governance all around the world due to radical urban transformations.

romanticized perceptions – linked to emergent economies and innovative governance.

Appadurai (2013) explains that imagination and future projections are not neutral phenomena, natural or technocratic disclosures, but products of social practice, as the author calls it, “future as a cultural fact”. The understanding of future as a cultural fact implies that the relations between human imagination, anticipation and aspiration shape specific visualizations of “future”.

Aspiration for a good life entails more than a future static ideal but also current practices in order to get to this point. That means the future is, at the same time, structuring and structured by social practices. Each cultural system and specific contexts have peculiar ways of addressing these issues and producing understandings of the relations between “now” and “then” in multiple ways and by different groups, and their recognition is essential (Appadurai, 2013).

Throughout history the vision of the desirable city changed according to context, from a city capable of enduring invasion or enhancing political debates, to cities concerned with disease, poverty and pollution or resilient to wars and catastrophes. Nowadays, dealing with a consumption-based lifestyle, deep inequalities and insecurity are common trends in our imagination of important characteristics of a city (Amin, 2006). The idea of the Greek *polis* seems to be replaced by a commodified urbanism where the city has become a nexus of interconnected political, economic and institutional networks (Vainer, 2010).

This research does not intend to wrestle exhaustively with the multiple processes that shape the future, but to relocate the future as a contested arena in the present, facilitating specific projects and consolidating certain power formations. “The future” is not a stable concept that can be applied optimally, but an ongoing and ever-changing project. It can be used as a political

discourse in different ways, can be assimilated in different cultures in divergent fashions, and can be theoretically approached by plural fields of thought.

We argue that strategic city planning is a specific representation of space, legitimized by “official” municipal political powers, with a strong role in the conceptualization of what the urban space means and what the future of the city should look like. In other words, the urbanization processes are not only composed of the built-environment and measurable outcomes of spatial transformation, but are also constituted of symbolic struggles for defining the urban space itself, its aspired horizons and electing the pathways to be taken to get there.

This work aims to develop Adam’s (2004) proposal of the “future as a real occurrence in the present” that can only be grasped by its present manifestations. We are interested in identifying discursive strategies related to urban transformation specifically through city planning. Urban planning is understood as more than a static technical approach to urban transformation, but rather the systematization of a future vision for specific processes of urbanization. The aspired urban future is, therefore, investigated through city planning practices. We suggest that when a city engages in a specific planning process it manifests a specific narrative of how the city of the future should look like. Consequently, this research doesn’t aim to study the future as in the traditional sense of “urban transformation consequences”, but its present manifestation materialized in “ink and paper” in the pages of a city plan.

In the first chapter we explore a specific approach to urban planning (strategic city planning) and explore its relevance around the world as a new paradigmatic way of producing urban future narratives that travel and proliferate around the world. The proliferation of strategic planning globally

is key for this research since it indicates a common urban future narrative, a methodology (or mind-set) to deal with the complex urbanization reality that cities are inscribed in.

We claim that urbanization processes operationalize the future through city planning and that strategic city planning results in specific future aspiration. Therefore, in this research we start by exploring the global relevance of this planning methodology, identifying where and when they were published in the last three decades. It is important to stress that in this theoretical framework the publication of a strategic plan in itself is understood as the culmination and legitimization of a specific aspired future, despite its concrete outcomes in the urban space.

The second and third chapters zoom into a thematic comparative study and a case study in order to grasp the specific ways strategic city planning impacts in cities' aspiration-crafting around the world. There is a growing number of relevant comparative investigations in the urban field and most of them tend to construct their methodology through a handful of case studies, where a common research model is the focus on specific cities, and compare them with other spatial settlements. While this tendency is positive for its capability of identifying specific processes, its main trade-off is the challenge to wrestle with the transcalar dimension of unequal processes of urbanization in a broader perspective.

Schmidt (2014) explains that the implications of the different processes of urbanization in localities must be explored through systematic comparative studies, but, nonetheless, it is crucial to face the challenge of conducting comparative studies while taking into consideration the need of constructing approaches that at the same time grasp general urbanization tendencies and stress the specific local processes.

Facing these broad trends in the urban field provides an important moment to develop a dynamic approach to urban studies that is not only descriptive of the new urban forms, but that is sensible to the mechanisms that activate and reproduce the processes of unequal urbanization. Consequently, in the second chapter we focus on a comparative study of 40 strategic plans (related to 40 different cities), using their published plans to undertake documentary and qualitative thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998), in order to expose the main trends across our database (King, 2004) as well as the main values driving cities around the world to engage with strategic city planning.

The third chapter dives into a case study, focusing on the future aspirations of Rio de Janeiro. We approach this case study by exploring the proposal made by Schmid (2013) of a combination of “diachronic-synchronic” analysis. Historical (“diachronic”) analysis pinpoints the moments that defined the urban culture that is inscribed in collective memory, reconstructing the decision strings of development and the production of a historical cartography of the power formations and conflictual fields. This “vertical” approach does not aim to reconstruct the history of a city, but to understand how this history is made present in current processes and how it influences future projections. In our investigation, we use the published strategic plans as triggering moments for this case study, serving as proxy for the “official” city future aspiration (which is, in turn, confronted with alternative aspirations).

Consecutively it is also crucial to develop a “horizontal”, synchronic analysis which is concerned with the actual situation of the territory, indicating the connections between regions and the multiple urbanization problems. Urbanization implies the materialization of global tendencies in local contexts. The shapes and impacts of this materialization depend on local specificities, meaning that urbanization is not a homogenizing process, but a differential

process. Schmidt (2013) explains that it is not enough to examine urban forms, it is also important to insert its local *problematique* into a broader process of urbanization and unequal rhythms. In our investigation we follow this approach by identifying the main triggers of strategic planning's proliferation to and from Rio de Janeiro, using insights from the past chapters, and identifying key processes propelling the mindset of strategic city planning.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework that drives this research is based on a specific branch of critical urban theory, accounting for the different dialectical moments of urbanization processes, and proposes a novel approach to the study of urban aspiration-crafting as operationalized landscapes. The "urban aspiration-crafting" is investigated through its "materialization" in the present, using strategic city planning as the object of study. The research rationale starts with the investigation of the global proliferation of strategic planning, followed by a comparative thematic analysis and finally, using the insights collected in the course of this study, dives into a case study, aiming for a broad-to-narrow progression that exposes multi-scalar trends.

2. MAPPING CITY STRATEGIC PLANNING'S PROLIFERATION AROUND THE WORLD

2.1.Introduction

This chapter aims to expose the relevance of Strategic Planning globally while achieving a refined grasp over its shape and magnitude in space and time, by investigating the publication of strategic plans. Strategic Planning is understood as a specific materialization of urban aspiration-crafting, actively influencing how the urban space is understood, what the future should look like and how to get there, therefore the investigation of the published documents related to strategic planning processes is central for this research. We start out by engaging with the debate related to strategic planning's main characteristics, using insights from the literature and our own content analysis of a sample of documents, we construct a typology for cataloguing strategic plans (related to cities) and create an original database.

In order to have a transparent and consistent method for cataloguing documents we use the GaWC Global Ranking as a benchmark for investigating each city in its list. This specific global ranking was selected for its international relevance, robust methods and city-placing methodology. The resulting original database enables us to examine the shape and magnitude of the proliferation of strategic planning (in space and time) and dive into relevant cases that suggest interesting trends. That being said, it's important to firstly explore historical trends related to strategic planning.

Since the 1990s local powers have more frequently opted to approach urban planning through a specific methodology: strategic city planning. Strategic planning manages the formulation of goals and implementation of projects,

analysing the conjuncture and defining actions. It is often based on the idea of producing a diagnosis of the current situation, defining a future vision for the city and creating a strategy to optimally reach this goal (Albrechts, 2003).

Almost three decades after Barcelona's first Strategic Plan in 1990, there is scarce systematic effort in tracking the cities around the world that engaged with strategic planning. An important share of related studies (Burgess and Carmona, 2009; Parnreiter, 2011; Clark, 2013) and multilateral organisations' reports (UN-Habitat, 2004; UCLG, 2010) argue that we are currently witnessing a paradigm shift in urban planning for cities in the direction of strategic planning. Nonetheless, the indications around this subject are usually speculative and not based on evidence emerging from data related to the proliferation of strategic planning.

This chapter fills the gap in the literature related to strategic planning proliferation¹⁰ around the globe. We approach this challenge by constructing an original database of cities involved with strategic planning and consecutively mapping the alleged paradigmatic change in city-planning around the globe.

We tackle this problem through the creation of a global database of cities engaged with strategic planning, using public documents, specialized literature, news articles and official published plans. The mapping of cities – from all around the world, deciding to publish strategic plans to deal with their urban challenges – offers a new form of interaction with urban planning, providing different ways of visualizing and investigating the subject.

In this chapter we argue that strategic planning processes are centred around providing a future vision for the city, drawing a clear strategic pathway to get

¹⁰ Notice that we use the term “proliferation” [of strategic planning] throughout the text in order to express “strategic planning’s fast growth in numbers”.

there and producing alleged popular consensus around the project. The global proliferation of strategic planning is a remarkable phenomenon not only for what it means for city planning in general but specially because it indicates a big risk of replicated aspiration fluxes for cities around the world, homogenising the perception around current urban challenges and the ways to overcome them.

In other words, when the same methodology for dealing with urban challenges (city strategic planning) is used by different cities around the world, an underlying set of values is legitimated as best-practices. The proliferation of this specific methodology (and mind-set) for city planning indicates an interesting research horizon related to “future aspiration crafting” and urbanization processes.

2.2.Strategic Planning for Cities

Originated in the United States, strategic planning was related to military tactics and war, consecutively developed at Harvard Business School as a management strategy. In this context, the private and military sectors were strongly related, and warfare expressed substantial inversions in the country’s economy, mainly through technological and intellectual resources.

In the 1950s, strategic planning as a concept had spread to the private sector. The symbolic moment of this relation was when the Ford Motor Company hired a group of strategists that had acted in World War II (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 1998). The notion of strategy in companies gained visibility with Alfred Chandler’s book “Strategy and Structure”, in 1962 (Drucker, 1962). Another crucial intellectual work for the adoption of this concept is “Corporate

Strategy” (Ansoff, 1965), that systematized the process of strategic planning for companies.

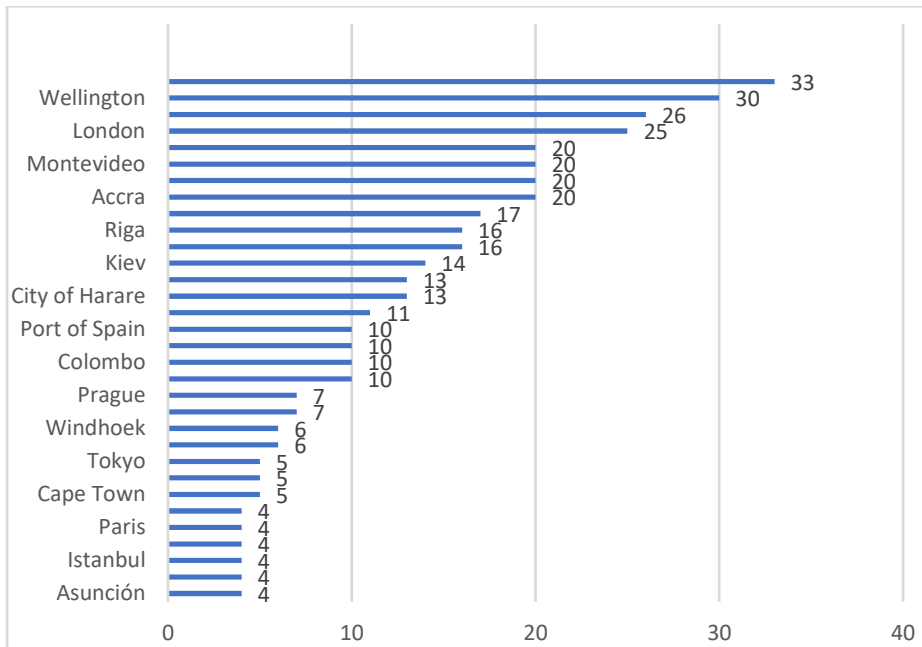
It was in the 1990s when strategic planning consolidates as a methodology for the public sector, focused on urban governability, with the integration of different agents around a single strategy of action to the city (Santacana, 1998), becoming internationally known especially through the perceived success of Barcelona’s strategic planning in 1990.

This methodological process for city planning is often grounded in four stages. Firstly, by defining the vision for the city and assembling key actors and decision makers from the public and private sectors – usually through workshops, public events, thematic groups, technical commissions, municipal staff, and public participation (Friend and Hickling, 1987, Healey, 1997). Consecutively, designing objectives and strategies by taking into account the environment and identifying strengths and weaknesses – often through SWOT analysis, debates and plenaries (Bryson and Roering, 1988, Kaufman and Jacobs, 1987).

The next step is usually defining programs and projects – through workshops, interviews, institutional and organizational lobby and marketing. Subsequently, the next stage consists of the submission of the document itself, presentations, public events, public consultation and technical evaluation. Finally, by creating monitoring, follow-up, and review arrangements (Faludi and Korthals, 1994, Poister and Streib, 1999).

A crucial stage of strategic planning is the documentation and communication of the strategy to be employed, “materializing” in the publication of the strategic document. The plans refer to a future period that might encompass years or decades and usually includes further reassessment, updates and monitoring methods.

Table 1. Plan horizon in years



In summary, Strategic Planning is not only a method but also an approach or mindset to deal with dynamic situations. It is often understood as a process without an end, a relentless cycle of contextual analysis, strategic lines definition, project implementation and results monitoring. It is designed to be a tool that undermines the allegedly negative effects of most types of political disruption and potentializes resource allocation (Novais, 2003).

2.3.Designing a Typology for Identifying Strategic Planning

In order to create an original database of cities that engaged with strategic plans it is crucial to first set clear rules that define what planning experience is characterized as an involvement with strategic planning. Strategic plans can

have different shapes and forms, titles and nomenclatures, making it imperative to systematize what is understood in this research as a strategic plan and where to draw the line on what is not. Therefore, the need to create a typology that will guide our understanding of strategic planning in this investigation.

It is important to clarify a central element of our typology: the documents that are self-presented (by in-text mentions) as strategic plans. For the purposes of database construction, we do not evaluate how accurate the documents are when claiming to be strategic plans. We argue that for our research objectives the enactment of strategic planning (Ramirez, 2012) should not be disregarded, but understood as an interesting phenomenon with practical political consequences. In other words, every document that refers to its planning process as strategic planning is included in the database.

The examination of the elements that characterize strategic planning is not set in stone in specialized literature. Albrechts (2003) offers valuable parameters for cataloguing city strategic plans that are explored in our investigations of the published documents: a) “selectiveness” (prioritizing specific projects over others); b) “relational and inclusive approach” (engaging with popular participation); c) “Integrative guidelines” (seeking for cooperative governance schemes); d) “visioning tendency” (providing a future horizon to be pursued), and e) “action oriented” (focused on project implementation).

The next step for crafting a refined typology for strategic plans was the examination of a set of initial published plans that are notorious in the literature¹¹ and the identification of general trends and common language. The investigated strategic plans contain broadly similar elements, such as “future

¹¹ Published plans from: Barcelona, Bilbao, Buenos Aires, London, Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Rome and Tokyo.

vision sections”, “public engagement strategies” and “demarcated strategic lines”. The general structure of the documents confirms the literature indications already discussed in this section. By combining the literature review and our own inductive examination of the published plans, the criterium to add cities to the database are as follows:

1) CITY PLANS NAMED “STRATEGIC PLANS” OR SIMILAR;

2) CITY PLANS THAT IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS STRATEGIC PLANS IN THE TEXT.

IF NEITHER OF THESE WERE TRUE, THE CITY PLAN IS ONLY ADDED TO THE DATASET IF ALL OF THE SUBSEQUENT CRITERIA WERE MET:

A) CITY PLANS CONTAINING A “FUTURE VISION” SECTION OR SIMILAR

- SETTING ABSTRACT ASPIRATIONS AND INDICATION OF A HORIZON TO BE PURSUED

B) CITY PLANS CONTAINING A “STRATEGIC LINES” SECTION OR SIMILAR

- PROPOSING THE ELEMENTS AND VALUES THAT STEER THE WHOLE DOCUMENT

C) CITY PLANS CONTAINING “ACTIONS AND GOALS” OR SIMILAR

- INDICATING PRIORITIES AND SPECIFIC ACTIONS TO BE UNDERTAKEN

D) CITY PLANS ACTIVATING CONSENSUS OVER GENERAL VALUES

- GENERATING ENGAGEMENT SCHEMES WITH DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

The resulting typology guides the database creation and provides this research with a consistent methodology for including each city to the database. Selecting the cities for the database is done through individual and thorough inspection of related official documents.

2.4. Defining a Benchmark for the database with Global City Rankings

The shape and extent of the proliferation of strategic plans around the world were unknown previous to data collection. Consequently, in order to grasp the magnitude of what is regarded in the specialized literature as a paradigmatic shift in city planning, a database of cities from all around the world was created using a reference point: the GaWC Global Ranking (2018). Global city rankings provide snapshots of global power positions (through their own criteria) and can be understood as gauging devices for the international landscape related to the perception of cities' relevance.

There are many global rankings (e.g. Global Economic Power Index, Global Power City Index, Global Cities Index, The Wealth Report), and when comparing the final lists of cities, a low variation in the results is observable, meaning that a select group of cities seem to outperform the others across different methodologies for ranking creation. The recently published GaWC Global Ranking (2018) was chosen as the benchmark for creating the database especially for its structure and classification. The methodology for

constructing this global ranking is based on cities' connectivity, which is measured by mapping firms' locations and relative importance (e.g., headquarters scoring "5" and lower level offices scoring less).

We understand that the GaWC presents a robust¹² study of firms' location as a proxy for cities' overall connectivity (interlocking network model) and, therefore, global relevance is an approach with interesting advantages when compared to other ranking methodologies that focus on a handful of performance indicators. Additionally, the GaWC provides interesting historical data since there are seven rankings published between 2000 and 2018. By using this ranking, we can assess a picture of cities' connections globally and use it as an indication of the relevance of the cities chosen for constructing our own database of cities with or without strategic plans.

The GaWC methodology is also an interesting framework for this research, since it places cities not only based on their overall position but also grouping them in relevance (connectivity) tiers, where "Alpha++" is the top tier and "Sufficiency" is the lowest. This structure enables us to investigate the trends not only in the overall position of cities but also between relevance tiers.

Table 2. Tiers of Relevance

Alpha++	Clearly more integrated than all other cities and constitute their own high level of integration
Alpha+	Other highly integrated cities that complement Alpha++ cities, largely filling in advanced service needs for the Pacific Asia

¹² See Louis and Taylor (2011) for a robustness assessment of the GaWC methodology (bulletin 368)

Alpha & Alpha -	Very important world cities that link major economic regions and states into the world economy
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Beta	All these are important world cities that are instrumental in linking their region or state into the world economy
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Gamma	All these can be world cities linking smaller regions or states into the world economy, or important world cities whose major global capacity is not in advanced producer services
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Sufficiency of services	These are cities that are not world cities as defined here but they have sufficient services so as not to be overly dependent on world cities.
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Adapted with the information provided at: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/gawcworlds.html>

By choosing the GaWC ranking as our benchmark for constructing an original global database of cities engaging with strategic planning, we are able to propose a clear and up-to-date baseline of “globally relevant” cities to be investigated in this research. This ranking captures an interesting sample of cities from all continental regions, with different socio-political and cultural traits, diverse economic arrangements and institutional landscapes. Nonetheless, these cities also share a number of qualities that could explain they co-existence in this ranking. That being said, this research does not claim statistical significance or strives for all-encompassing claims based on this sample of cities.

2.5. Constructing an Original Global Database

We examined the 373 cities in the GaWC 2018 ranking, inspecting if they have engaged, at any point in time, with any stage of strategic planning, guided by the typology developed in the last section. The investigation is based on official documents provided by the cities' official websites, such as their available planning documentation. The resulting database showcases a suggestive indication of strategic planning's proliferation around the globe. From the original total of 373 cities, 311 (83,8% of the GaWC cities list) have engaged in strategic planning, serving as an insinuation of the scale of this process if an exhaustive investigation were to be undertaken.

Uneven accessibility to official plans is the main limitation of this database. While in some cases it is easy to get hold of the official, published strategic plans or indications of engagement with different stages of the strategic planning process, in other instances it can be impracticable for a wide array of issues related to its availability and accessibility: unavailable documentation, language barriers, bureaucratic obstructions or active covering practices in different points in time¹³. In other words, some of the cities in the "strategic planning not found" grouping of this database might have engaged in strategic planning processes that were not uncovered in this research, which means that our data collection can err to a more conservative figure when assessing the proliferation of strategic planning, but not the other way around.

¹³ Strategic planning is often understood as an important achievement for current local political actors. In many cases it creates competitive dynamics between local actors, resulting in the over-promotion of a strategic plan developed by the political coalition and/or the under-promotion of other plans developed by the political opposition. Taking this into account we decided not to gather more than one strategic plan per city for the database (even if some of the cities have more than one published strategic plan in the last decades).

Table 3. Cities with Published Strategic Plans (N = 311)

YEAR OF PUBLICATION	N	%
1990-1999	17	5%
2000-2009	64	21%
2010-2018	210	68%
Forthcoming	20	6%
Total Plans	311	100%
REGIONS		
Oceania	11	4%
Africa	27	9%
Asia	69	22%
Europe	103	33%
America	101	32%
North America	70	69%
Latin America	31	44%
Total Countries	115	
Capitals	92	80%

The resulting database is composed of 311 cities, from 115 different countries (92, or 80%, of which are country capitals) spread over all continental regions,

thus denoting considerable representation worldwide¹⁴. The publication dates cover the last three decades with a high increase in numbers in the last decade and positive indications for forthcoming plans in the future. These 311 cities represent 83,8% of the total cities investigated in the GaWC Global Rank (2018), suggesting a high incidence in positive results for strategic planning in our sample.

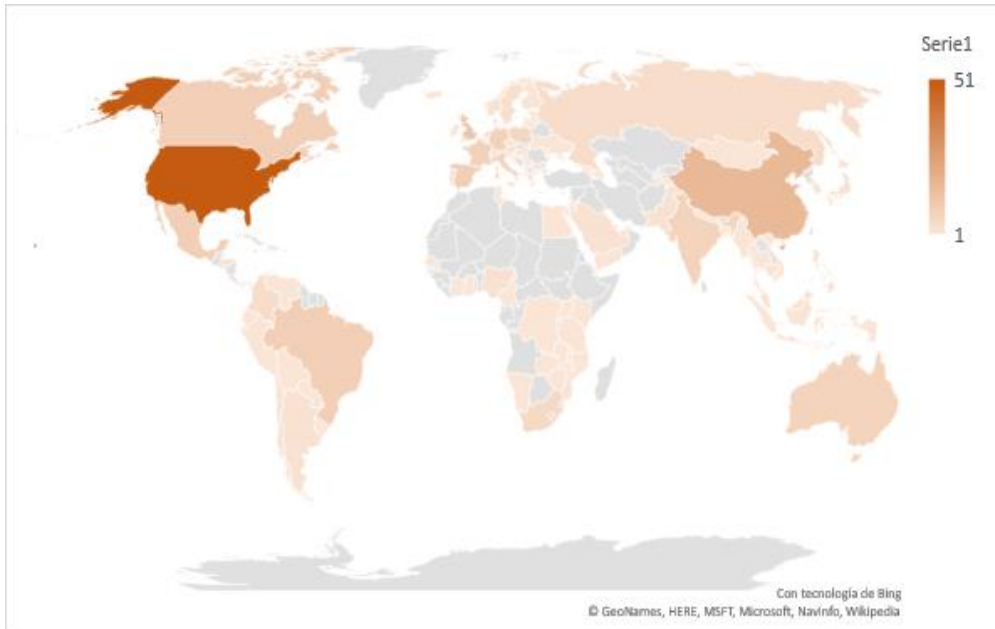
2.6.Data Analysis

In this section we explore the dataset of cities in the GaWC Global Rank (2018) that engaged or not in strategic planning, providing a refined grasp on the shape and scale of the proliferation process of this specific methodology for city planning. We argue that the trends found in this sample of cities provide us with relevant insights for advancing our knowledge regarding strategic planning.

A significant number of cities from all over the world, as shown in the database, is engaging in strategic planning processes. Taking into account the absolute numbers, its progression in every world region since the 1990s, and the future indications it is fair to assume that strategic planning is regarded globally as a crucial methodology for city spatial planning (see graph 1).

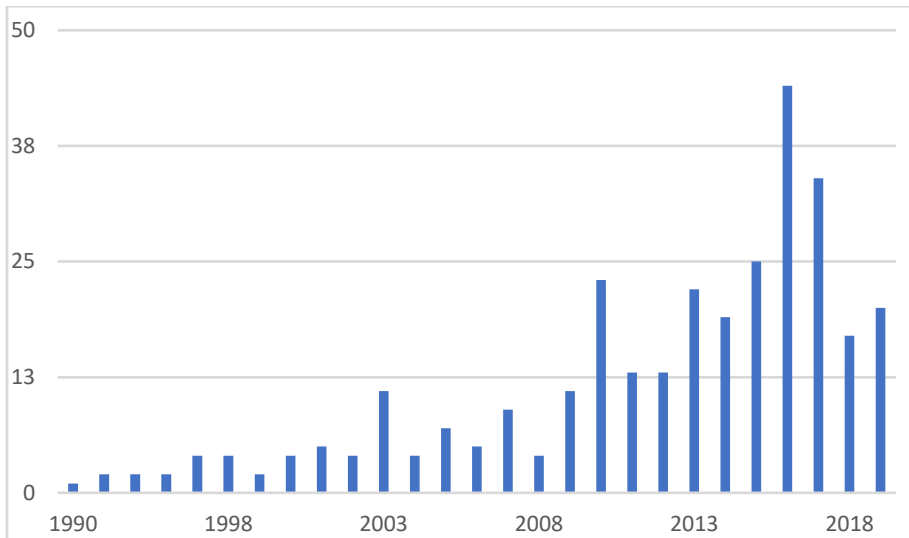
¹⁴ Oceania's low numbers can be explained by its urban population's overall low relative representation; only 1% of the world's urban population in 2010 and a projection for the same 1% in 2050 (available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/234994/worlds-urban-population/>). Asian and African lower numbers in relation to their substantive urban population express the above-mentioned barriers for data collection and/or a smaller (but still meaningful) penetration of strategic planning in these regions. Nonetheless, the proliferation of strategic planning to every continental region is noteworthy.

Chart 1. Cities per country



An examination of the evolution of occurrences of cities engaged with strategic planning throughout time indicates that strategic planning shows a persistent evolution in the proliferation of cases in the last decades (see chart 1). The historical patterns can be summarized in four blocks: a) first cases of strategic plans published in the 1990s, with a slight ascendant trend in the first decade, b) a relevant take off in the variance of published plans from the 2010s onwards, c) highest number of published documents in 2016 and d) consistent mounting trend in 2017, 2018 and with forthcoming indications.

Chart 2: Strategic Plans per Year

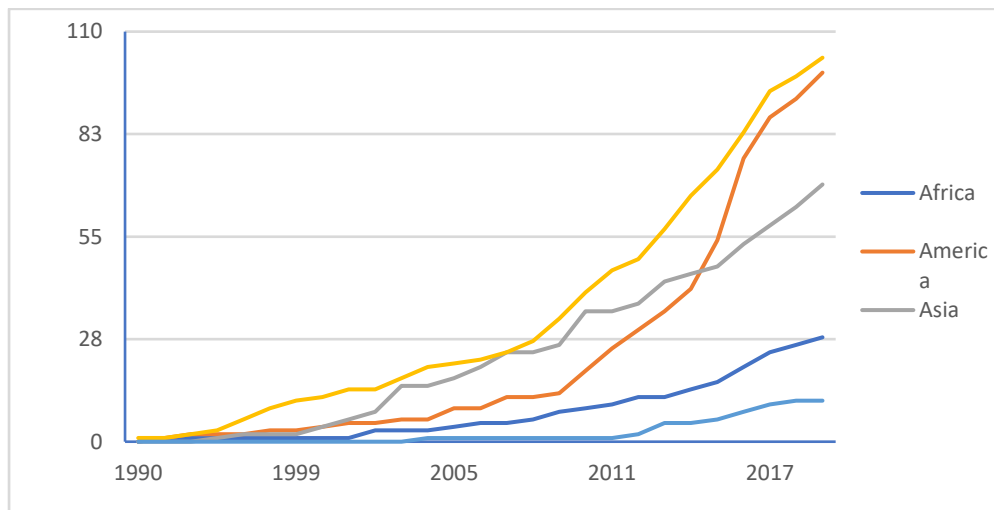


It is thought-provoking to attest the regional differences and similarities when crossing regional and temporal factors (see chart 2). Strategic planning is an ascending trend across the board, but with different regional intensities. Europe is the first continental region with a published strategic plan (Barcelona, 1990), and in 1995 all regions, except for Oceania, have published strategic plans. In 2004 Oceania had its first strategic plan published by Canberra (Australia). It is also interesting to notice that forthcoming indications of strategic plans being published are positive in all regions.

Until 2013 Europe and Asia lead as the first and second regions with most published strategic plans, but in 2015 America surpasses Asia, and in the most recent years America has very similar numbers to Europe's (99 published plans in America, compared to the 103 published documents in Europe). In the last 5 years of collected data (2014-2018) America is the region with the most published strategic plans (58 documents), around 59% of its total recorded documents in the last 3 decades, and Europe is the second region with the most

published documents, with 37 plans (accounting for 36% of the total published documents in the region).

Chart 3: Cumulative Strategic Plans per Region per Year

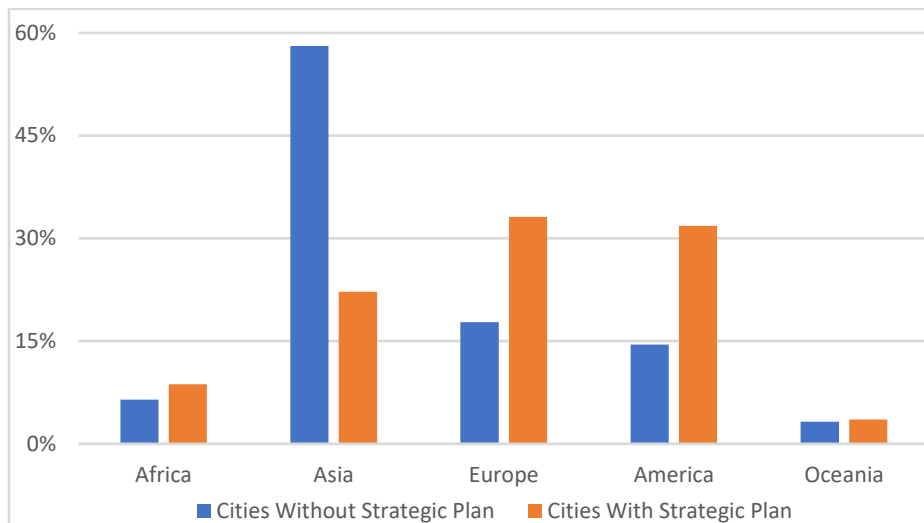


The 2010s are a significant turning point for a higher proliferation rate of strategic plans in every world region. An important segment of the literature related to strategic planning published in the 1990s and 2000s did not predict the increasing level of proliferation observed in the following decade. Therefore, this finding highlights the importance of further research on this “new wave” of strategic planning and the mechanisms of global proliferation that enables this new paradigm for city planning.

Setting the GaWC as a benchmark for our database provides not only a sample of cities that engaged with strategic planning, but also the cities present in the ranking without strategic plans. These 62 cases without strategic plans are constituted by cities from all over the world, from every continental region and with diverse characteristics. Nonetheless, interesting patterns arise when

comparing the cities with strategic planning and the cities without strategic planning (see chart 3).

Chart 4: Percentage of cities by continental region

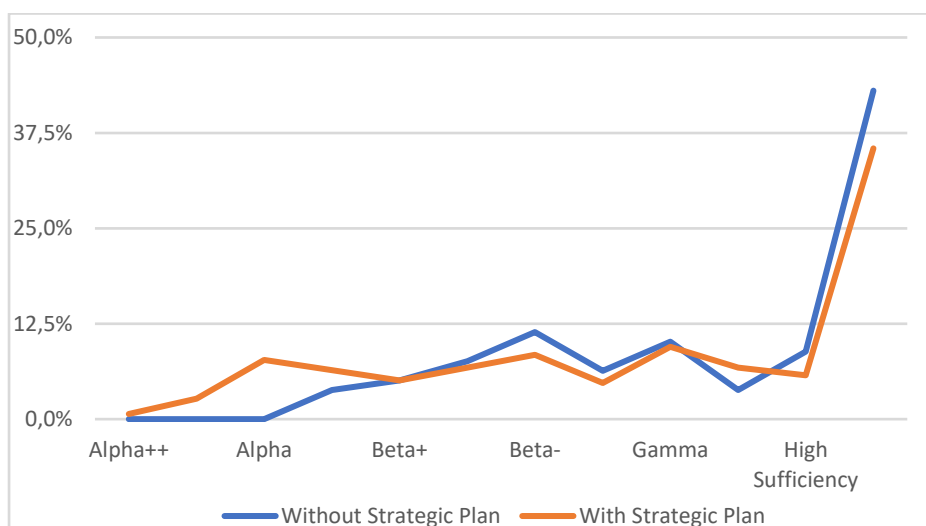


The chart shows the proportion of cities with and without strategic planning in every world region: in other words, it showcases how the cities without strategic plan in the sample (82) are distributed across regions and how the plans with strategic plan in the sample (311) are distributed across regions. One can note that how Asia has a strong effect in the data as the region with the lowest level of penetration in the sample (65,7% of the total Asian cities in the sample have strategic plans). On the other hand, America plays an important role, with the highest penetration in the sample (91,6% of the total American cities in the sample have strategic plans).

By comparing the positioning of cities with and without strategic planning in the GaWC Global Ranking (2018) we can notice important trends in the data's distribution (see chart 4). If we examine the sub-samples of cities with and

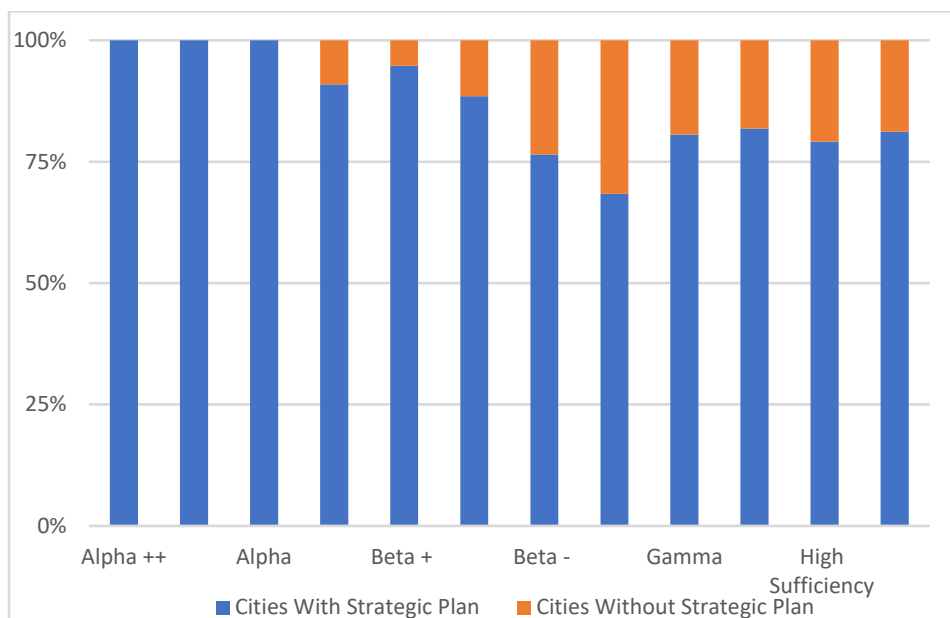
without strategic plans separately and calculate their composition in each ranking tier, the overall distribution of these two sub-samples is similar (taking into account the absolute numeric difference) with one exception: The Alpha ranking tiers.

Chart 5: Composition of cities with and without strategic plan in the ranking tiers



It is observable how the sub-sample of cities without strategic plans has a 0% value attributed to the Alpha++, Alpha+ and Alpha ranking tiers. The first tier with cities without strategic plans is the Alpha- tier (from the 22 cities in this tier, only 2 cities don't have strategic plans). That being said, we proceed by analysing the direct composition of ranking tiers in order to have a better grasp of the importance of strategic plans in our sample (see chart 5).

Chart 6: Composition of Ranking Tiers

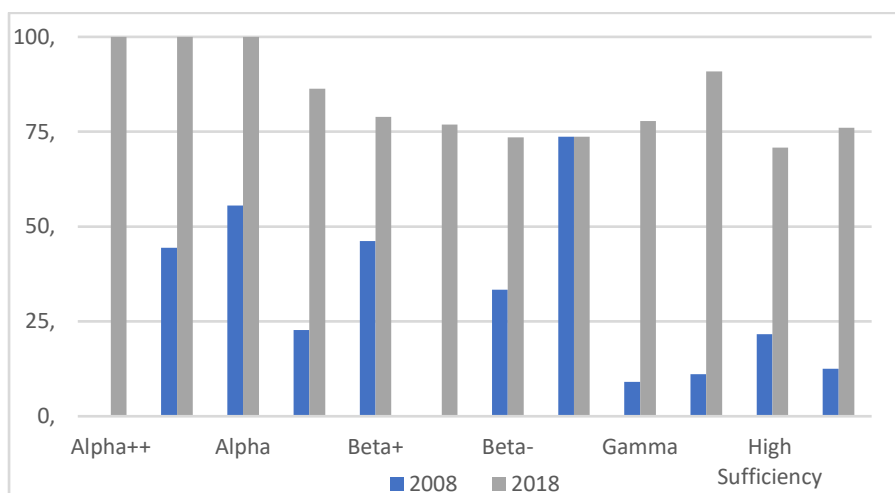


It is noticeable that the four highest ranking tiers are dominated by cities with strategic plans (53 out of the total 55 cities). These results suggest that strategic plans effects in cities wishing to move up in global rankings, and specially penetrating the Alpha tiers, is a relevant research pathway to be extended.

An interesting analytical perspective can be explored by comparing the evolution of the GaWC results from the 2008 report to the newest report, from 2018. In 2008 the GaWC Global Ranking was comprised of 246 cities in total, from which only 50 (20,5%) had engaged with strategic plan by the time it was published (notice that 168 cities will engage in strategic planning in the future, comprising another 68.8% of the cities). In contrast, 10 years later the GaWC Global Ranking 2018 contains 373 cities in total, from which 311 (83,3%) engaged in strategic planning at some point. The following chart is a

visualization of the percentage of cities with strategic plans from the total number of cities in each global ranking tier, in 2008 and 2018.

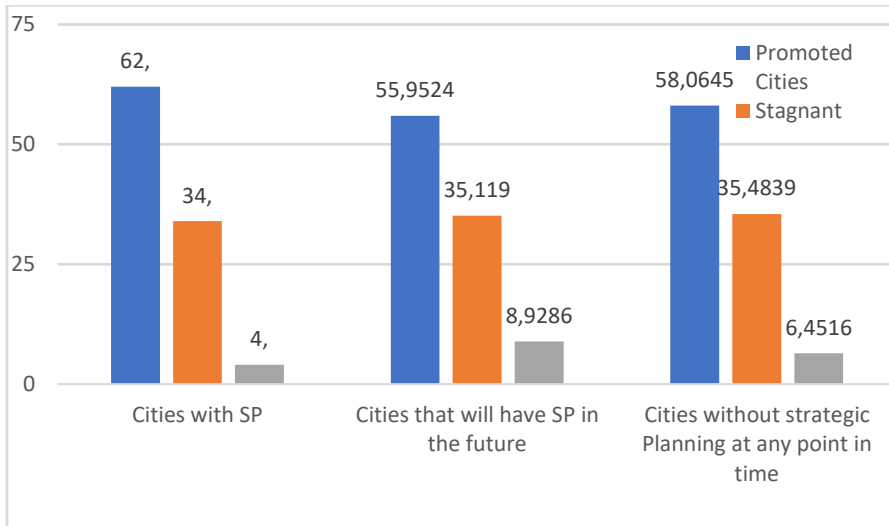
Chart 7: Percentage of Cities with Strategic Plans by Tier



This comparison indicates a strong expansion of the number of cities engaged with strategic planning ranked in the top global tiers. From the total cities present in the newest ranking that did not figure in 2008 (and were therefore “promoted” in their international power perception) 103 of them (78,6%) have strategic plans, suggesting, once again, the relevance of strategic planning for climbing up global rankings.

When comparing the specific tiers to which cities were ranked in 2008 and their current ones in 2018 some trends emerged (see chart 7). We categorize cities as: a) “cities with strategic plans”; b) “cities that will have strategic plans in the future”; and c) “cities without strategic plans at any point in time”. Consecutively, we explored whether each group had different effects in the cities being “promoted”, “demoted” or “stagnant” in the global ranking tiers from 2008 to 2018

Chart 8: Cities' rank fluctuation



If a relevant positive correlation between “newcomer” cities in the global ranking and their engagement with strategic planning was noticed previously in this section (78,6%), the same is not true for the oscillation to different tiers for cities already in the global ranking. As shown above, cities already engaged in strategic planning in 2008, cities that engaged in strategic planning afterwards, and cities that never did have similar results in their “promotion” and “demotion” frequencies.

The data indicates a strong correspondence in cities with strategic plans in the global rankings (83,3% in 2018) and in cities penetrating the global rankings after being absent (78,6%). If the city is already powerful enough for being placed in global rankings the impact of strategic planning for its ranking promotions or demotions is still unclear. On the other hand, if the city aspires to be in global rankings in the first place, strategic planning appears to play an important role.

In summary, a large-scale comparative study of the cities with and without strategic plans cannot grasp the nuances that predict different planning behaviours. We argue that strategic planning permeates every continental region, broad regional profile, city size, political context and institutional landscape, making it impossible to disentangle the factors that lead a city to adopt strategic planning without an in-depth case study.

2.7.Zooming-In

An exhaustive assessment of the cities' planning trajectories is not the objective of this investigation, but the database of cities with and without strategic plan, constructed in this chapter indicate interesting insights on urbanization processes around the globe connected to strategic planning.

The concept of “global cities” is a prominent approach in the investigation of urban development and it is fair to assume its importance in urban governance around the world, where cities strive for their identification as internationally relevant territories. Sassen (1991) famously coined the concept of global cities, specifically referring to London, New York and Tokyo as power nodes in the globalization era. The author highlights these cities' importance as global control centres, materialized through a dense cluster of specialized service activities (from finance, banking and accounting to law, consulting and insurance). Robinson (2002) explains that the “global city” is a normative ideal, a regulating fiction that impacts the everyday life of cities by providing a presupposed goal that must be reached if a certain urban project is followed.

In 2001, data from the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) research network at Loughborough University showed London to be the pre-eminent 21st century node in the world for advanced business services - the number one global city (Pain, 2009:1)

London and New York are the top cities in the 2018 GaWC ranking, placed alone in the Alpha++ tier (Tokyo is placed in the Alpha+ tier). It is not a surprise to verify that these cities have published strategic plans. London had its first published plan in 2004 (being updated in 2008), a second publication in 2011 and the most recent version in 2016. In this 441-page long strategic document the main urban challenges and strategic pathways for the city are explored in detail.

The London Plan is: the overall strategic plan for London, setting out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London over the next 20–25 years. (The London Plan, 2016:2)

Castells (1996) argues that the conceptualization of global cities cannot be understood only in its competitive dimension, but should explore other characteristics of inter-city relations, producing flows and constituting multifaceted networks. This approach is interesting for grasping the urban planning processes associated with the cities in our database. The case of Alpha+ cities is an interesting example of the nuanced peculiar context of city networks.

The key finding of the 2008 GaWC global ranking, as explained by Taylor et. al. (2009), is the predominance of western Pacific Rim cities in the top-ranking tiers. In 2018 the results indicate that this is a continuous tendency, with the placement of Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai in the Alpha+ tier (all of them have published strategic plans).

The HK2030 Study will aim to contrive a strategy that is driven by a vision – a vision that makes Hong Kong a better place in which to live and work, under the overarching goal for sustainable development – a city that could rightfully assume the title of “Asia’s world city”. (Hong Kong 2030, 2007:3)

Even if these cities are primary competitors for global attraction of investments and direct contenders for the highest places in global rankings, Lai (2009) explains that their relation is better understood as “functional coordination”. Through qualitative research the author argues that these three cities position themselves in relation to each other's weaknesses and create distinctive international brands that can be understood as not only competitive, but also synergic.

My interview respondents clearly saw distinctive roles for each city, identifying Beijing as a ‘political centre’, Shanghai as a ‘business centre’ and Hong Kong as an ‘offshore financial centre’ that stems from different historical, social and cultural contexts and institutional environments. (Lai, 2009:2)

It is also important to highlight the emergence of cities in the “developing world” climbing up the global ranking tiers. A study of their specific urban planning processes would require in-depth case studies, but at this moment it is interesting to note the City Development Strategies (CDS) initiatives, “a form of strategic planning advocated by the World Bank (Didier et. al. p. 5. 2017). As Rasoolimanesh et. al. (2011) explains, cities networks and multilateral organizations (e.g. World Bank, UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance and the Asian Development Bank) are strong proponents of CDS (specially through funding schemes).

Johannesburg (placed in the Alpha- tier) and Cape Town (Beta tier) have their published City Development Strategies. Cape Town’s published document (2012) has strong explicit references to the United Nations (more specifically UN-Habitat) and conforms a detailed long-term strategic plan for the city. In the case of Johannesburg’s “Joburg 2030 Strategy”, the vision of a world class city is noticeable, focusing on economic development and competitiveness.

Strategic planning is also prominent in post-soviet cities, even if these countries usually deal with distinct strategical barriers originated from their centralized planning inheritance. A telling example of the results that a comprehensive investigation could unveil is the case of Russia: in 2014, a Federal Law on Strategic Planning was adopted, making it compulsory at regional and local levels, with important clues that around 200 cities already attempted its implementation.

Western Europe provides a distinctive institutional environment for strategic spatial planning, particularly given the ideological acceptance of public intervention for the common good. (Tsenkova, 2007:3)

In our database we can identify post-soviet cities like Moscow (placed in the Alpha tier), Prague (Alpha- tier), Budapest (Alpha- tier), Sofia (Beta tier), Riga (Gamma+ tier), Saint Petersburg (Gamma tier), Tallinn (Gamma tier), Tbilisi (Gamma tier) and Yerevan (Sufficiency tier). Riga's strategic plan (2014), for example, provides a structured long-term vision for the city and clear strategic pillars for its development.

The Strategy is a planning document for long-term territory development of Riga municipality, which includes a vision, strategic objectives, spatial development perspective, and development priorities of the municipality's long-term development. (Riga 2030, 2014:11)

Another important insight provided by the database created in this chapter is the high penetration level of strategic planning in American cities. Confirming this tendency, Poister and Strelb's (1999) investigation surveyed 1247 local representatives (from cities with populations of 25,000 or more) in the USA, from which 225 responded with indications of positive strategic planning engagement (in different steps of the process)¹⁵. In our database we can identify American cities in almost every ranking tiers: Alpha ++ (New York),

¹⁵ Our research refrains from using this data for further qualitative analysis for two reasons: 1) the list of cities that answered the survey is not provided, making the verification process unfeasible; 2) Poister and Strelbs's (1999) research design does not engage with published strategic plans, therefore we don't have the ability to check the relation between the responses in the survey and concrete planning practices.

Alpha (Los Angeles and Chicago), Alpha- (San Francisco), Beta+ (Boston, Dallas and Atlanta), Beta (Philadelphia and Minneapolis), Beta- (San Jose and Seattle, among others), Gamma+ (Cleveland and Detroit), Gamma (Phoenix and Austin among others), Gamma- (Orlando and Milwaukee, among others), High Sufficiency (Hartford and Raleigh, among others) and Sufficiency (Palo Alto and Memphis, among others).

New York's strategic plan (2014) seems attuned to the city's top position in the GaWC rankings:

We will fight for New York to retain and enhance its status as a global leader—in commerce, culture, trade, innovation, sustainability, climate resiliency, and more. We will ensure that New York will always be a place where people can realize their dreams on the world's biggest stage, as generations have done in the past, and that everyone has the opportunity to succeed. (One New York, 2015:7)

Latin America is often understood as the first region to “import” the idea of strategic planning (Rio de Janeiro published its first strategic plan in 1996). The Global Report on Human Settlements (UN-Habitat, 2009) is composed of eight regional studies and the one on Latin America (Irazábal, 2009) examines strategic planning's rising relevance, calling attention to Barcelona as a model for “good practices” in many different territories with perceived similar challenges. Nonetheless, the author states that “despite their similarities, these urban challenges are always context-specific” (Irazábal, p.7, 2009) and later on concludes that “ (...) most of these models fall short of addressing socio-spatial equity concerns, a particularly urgent need in the region” (Irazábal, p.23, 2009).

In our database there is a strong representativeness of cities in Latin America with strategic plans (30 in total), the best positioned being Sao Paulo, Mexico City and Buenos Aires (all in the Alpha tier). Montevideo is an interesting case of a city with a published strategic plan that climbed up from its original position in 2008 (Beta- tier) to a better one in 2018 (Beta tier).

El proyecto Montevideo 2030 parte de un reconocimiento crítico de los datos de la realidad, coyunturas y situaciones concretas, identificando los procesos estructurales que dan cuenta de las transformaciones de la sociedad y del territorio y que son indicios de posibles trayectorias. (Proyecto Montevideo 2030, 2010:9)

So far in this section we have examined cities from around the globe with published strategic plans. Nonetheless, cities in our database without strategic plans also provide interesting insights for this research. It wouldn't be operational to dive into each one of the cases and seek comprehensive explanations, but some patterns are noticeable.

Luxembourg (Alpha- tier), San Salvador (Beta- tier), Guatemala City (Gamma+ tier), Islamabad (Gamma tier), Astana (Sufficiency tier) and Baghdad (Sufficiency tier), for example, share the engagement with national strategic plans rather than local ones. Chengdu (Beta+ tier) is a similar case, having a provincial strategic plan (Sichuan's Strategic Plan) but not a local one. Vientiane's (Sufficiency tier) case is peculiar for its insertion in the World Food Programme, mostly tackling hunger through the Laos national strategic plan.

Osaka and Denver are also interesting cases for their lack of a published city strategic plan while having many strategic approaches for city planning. “Osaka City Government Economic Strategy Bureau” details its main management challenges and core strategies going forward (e.g. attracting people, goods, and investments from around the world and creating new value). “Community Planning and Development”, in Denver’s case, is the official webpage section that redirects the user to specific planning initiatives: Comprehensive Plan 2040, Blueprint Denver, Denver’s Strategic Parking Plan, among many others.

Nicosia’s case is also relatable to the trend of cities without their own citywide strategic plan but with transversal strategic planning engagements (in 2019, Cyprus’ Ministry of Transport announced an “Integrated Mobility Plan” for the city). Similarly, Nantes also published in 2015 its sectorial strategic plan on “becoming a reference port for energy and ecological transition”. Dortmund (Sufficiency tier) is an interesting example for its “inverted” scale in publishing a strategic plan for its city centre but not for the city as whole.

Conclusively, cities without strategic plans are not necessarily using other planning methodologies, but just applying in different ways depending on their own contexts (i.e. institutional landscapes, scale, size, etc.) It is noticeable that the proliferation of strategic planning goes beyond its methodological role, which is evidenced by the cases of cities in our database without published citywide plans but connected to strategic planning as a mindset for urban governance.

In this section we argued that strategic planning is a central planning methodology and mindset around the globe, especially for cities concerned with their global positioning. Our exploration of the proliferation of strategic planning in the last three decades, using the GaWC global ranking as a

benchmark for building the database, indicates a strong penetration in every world region, with a positive expectation for published documents in the following years.

2.8.Conclusion

The goal of this chapter is to investigate the proliferation of strategic planning, exploring its global relevance in time and space. We argue that “aspiration crafting” is a crucial dimension in understanding the complex processes of urbanization. In this chapter, the creation of an original database of cities engaging with strategic planning and the consecutive data-analysis enabled us to have a refined grasp of the shape and scale of the proliferation of strategic planning. As exposed in this work, cities around the world under uneven processes of urbanization are compelled to be part of particular circuits of urban planning knowledge. Despite the complexity of the processes that mediate urban policy transfers and the demanding task of tracing the actors involved in them, strategic planning proliferated across borders, reaching cities from all around the globe, and is a remarkable feature (as a methodology and mindset) of contemporary city planning.

This chapter’s investigation resonates with the work of Lefebvre (1970) on the dynamic relation on the expansion of urban practices, institutions, infrastructures and built environments that are projected in the “non-urban” reality, connecting local and regional economies to transnational fluxes of commodities, labour and capital. We argue that this investigation adds to this discussion the globalization of city planning practices, by exposing the proliferation of strategic planning around the world. Soja and Kanai (2007) explain that contemporary urbanization processes are marked by the double-movement of “urbanization reaching everywhere” and “everywhere reaching

the city”, which is also complementary to our research goal to explore the dialectic relations between future aspiration fluxes that are shared and appropriated across cities.

The present research points out to new horizons of research in the field of urban planning, especially in focusing on textual analysis of published planning documents. It is important to explore the impact of strategic planning “as a methodology” for city planning in the actual contents of the published plans. Are there relevant patterns in the results around the world? How similar or dissimilar are the published documents? Do they recommend replicated strategic pathways or do they account for contextual differences? Investigating the proliferation of strategic planning, not only as a mindset, like it was done in the present section, but also as a city project for its future aspirations, through published official documents, has the potential to expose interesting trends in urban transformation around the globe.

Future visions are contested, shaped and reshaped by different power formations and the impacts of these struggles are felt in the present, in the materialization of specific political projects and spatial transformation. Imagining, planning and projecting the city of the future is much more than a creative exercise, it is joining a symbolic battlefield. Planning a city is more than a technical procedure, it involves producing future aspirations, prioritizing specific pathways over others, empowering groups and suppressing voices. Strategic planning is not a neutral tool for planning cities, but an active enabler of specific processes in its own account.

Conclusively, this chapter findings indicate that Strategic Planning has been a relevant methodology for city planning for the last three decades and with ascending rates in every continental region, penetrating in completely diverse contexts and cultures. Additionally, this investigation exposed the importance

of strategic planning as a mindset even for cities without published “city-wide” strategic plans, but engaging with sectorial, regional and national strategic plans.

3. GREEN COMPETITION: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

3.1. Introduction

As exposed in the first chapter, strategic planning is a relevant planning methodology around the world, and in this chapter, we dive into the document's contents in order to tackle its effects in constructing a planning agenda that impacts cities' aspiration-crafting processes. In this investigation, the published strategic plans are regarded as "present manifestations of future narratives" (Adam, 2004) of the cities' aspirations, specific channels for crafting a narrative for what should be done to face current urban challenges and what horizons are to be pursued.

Strategic planning is often investigated through case studies (see Arantes et.al., 2011; Fernandes, 2008; González S, 2010; Kipfer and Keil, 2002; Wu, 2007), concerned with the planning process and the actors involved, and generally using process tracing as the go-to methodology¹⁶. We argue that there is a need for another analytical scale to be explored with the development of comparative studies.

Rapoport's et. al. (2019) recent work provides an interesting approach to understanding strategic planning around the world through a comparative study, by conducting content analysis on a survey with expert respondents from over 202 cities. From their dataset analysis, the authors discuss the main perceived challenges cities face around the globe. The present research takes

¹⁶ The few documentary studies on this field focus on discursive analysis. Vaara et. al. (2010), for example, conducted an examination of the power effects of strategic planning by using critical discourse analysis on a case study.

a different approach by focusing not on the perceptions of survey respondents but on the actual published planning documents.

We understand that both approaches are synergic, focusing in different dimensions of a dialectic process of ongoing (re)construction of political discourses and actions. Nonetheless, we argue that it's critical to take into account and investigate the textual results of the planning process, after all construction stages (debates, conferences, speeches, interviews, surveys, public consultation, etc.) of the documents are concluded and a final version is published to be used as a planning tool, affecting public policies and urban future imaginaries. In short, we contribute to the field of studies by exploring the actual contents of strategic plans, directly examining the published documents.

The chosen method for this study is thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) through an inductive data-driven approach. Nowell, et.al (2017) explain that thematic analysis can be considered a method in itself, striving for "identifying, analysing, organizing, describing and reporting themes found within a dataset" (p.2). Thematic analysis is powerful in order to pursue a "detailed yet complex" account of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006), identifying central features of the dataset and exposing patterns (King, 2004) by following transparent procedures.

This approach provides relevant insights for a refined understanding of the textual results of strategic planning process into published planning documents. Additionally, we argue that exposing thematic patterns and trends across cities in a comparative study has the potential for strengthening the research on the field of planning, especially by understanding the outcomes of the published plans to urban transformation.

This chapter aims to expose the qualitative impact of Strategic Planning's methodology for the published documents' contents, overcoming its alleged role as a technical tool for local planning and imbuing the documents with a specific value-system. In order to do so, we build a dataset, which is a sample of the original database created in the first chapter. Data analysis is undertaken in order to examine central trends across documents. We start out by identifying similarities in the documents' structural organization. Consequently, we are able to focus on the most relevant sections across documents, namely: future vision section and strategic pillars section¹⁷.

Finally, we discuss the main findings of the data analysis and suggest that central themes are dominant in strategic planning's "materialization" into published documents. The findings expose thematic patterns in published strategic plans. The data analysis indicates important similarities between plans: the documents' organization and structure on most plans have a section related to the "future vision" of the city and a section proposing "strategic pillars" that serve as guidelines to reach the aspired future. The analysis of these two sections indicate a dominant thematic similarity across documents pointing to urban futures concerned with "green-competition".

Additionally, we examine the articulation of two dominant concepts in the plans, "Green City" and "Competitive City", and create a typology of the documents in the sample that engages in similar ways to "green-competition". The main documentary patterns exposed by these typologies are: a) competitiveness as the main driver of the plan; b) international status as the main driver of plan; c) sustainable development as the main driver of the plan;

¹⁷ These sections are usual ways of structuring strategic plans, similar to book chapters. Therefore, this investigation simply isolates one or the other for in-depth examination of their contents related to "future vision" or "strategic pillars". Consecutively we compare the emerging trends in both sections.

d) sustainability and competitiveness have similar relevance in the plan as the main drivers; and e) no main driver clearly propels the plan. In short, these findings unveil a consistent replication of broader concepts related to the aspired future of the cities, general strategic pathways to reach these futures and “concrete” projects to be activated as triggers for these pathways.

The present work sheds light on substantive indications that the published strategic plans agree on global normative values while, at the same time, provide little contextual calibration to their own peculiar urban backgrounds. Conclusively, strategic planning is not only proliferating globally as a methodology for city planning, but as a powerful normalizing tool on cities’ overall aspirations and specific strategies to reach their aspired future, legitimizing a set of values that are often connected to “inter-city green-competition”.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The examination of published strategic plans is undertaken by using a sample of 40 cities¹⁸. This sample is composed in relation to the original database of 311 cities produced in the first chapter. The criteria for composing the sample was to create specific parameters to be followed and consecutively to select those which fill the requisites, expanding the original database if necessary. The resulting criteria for the sample creation are:

¹⁸ Accra, Asunción, Barcelona, Berlin, Bogota, Budapest, Cairo, Canberra, Cape Town, Caracas, City of Harare, Colombo, Dar Es Salaam, Hong Kong, Houston, Istanbul, Kampala, Karachi, Kiev, Lima, London, Macao, Melbourne, Montevideo, New Delhi, New York, Ottawa, Paris, Port of Spain, Prague, Quito, Reykjavik, Riga, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, Vienna, Wellington, Windhoek, Yangon and Zagreb. All of the documents in the sample are available online on official municipal sources.

1) DOCUMENTS ACCESSIBILITY

- AIMING FOR CONSISTENCY RELATED TO THE DOCUMENT'S FORMAT (I.E. PDF) AND LANGUAGE (I.E. ENGLISH, SPANISH, ITALIAN, CATALAN OR PORTUGUESE), ALLOWING THE RESEARCHER TO USE CONSISTENT EXAMINATION TECHNIQUES

2) CITIES FROM EVERY WORLD REGION (SO WE ARE ABLE ACCOUNT FOR REGIONAL DIFFERENCES)

- THE NUMBER OF CITIES FROM EVERY REGION IS SET IN RELATION WITH THE ORIGINAL DATABASE FREQUENCIES (OVERSAMPLED IN OCEANIA FOR MINIMUM REPRESENTATIVENESS)

3) MOST RECENT PUBLISHED PLANS

- AIMING FOR RELATIVE CONSISTENCY IN THE GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL CONJUNCTURE

B) GLOBAL RELEVANCE (BASED ON THEIR GLOBAL RANKING TIER)

- PRIORITY WAS GIVEN TO ACHIEVE A RELATIVE BALANCE IN EVERY GLOBAL RANK TIERS (I.E. ALPHA, BETA, GAMMA AND SUFFICIENCY)

The resulting sample used in this chapter's investigation fulfils our main goals proposed in the selecting criteria. The sample is composed of 40 cities from all around the world and placed every global ranking tier (as in the GaWC Global Rank 2018). 32 out of the 40 cities (80%) are country capitals and the publishing dates of the documents are concentrated within the time period between 2010 and 2018.

Table 1: Sample Overview

YEAR OF PUBLICATION	N	%
1990-1999	1	2.5
2000-2009	9	22.5
2010-2018	30	75.0
REGIONS		
Africa	8	20.0
Asia	8	20.0
America	10	25.0
Europe	11	27.5
Oceania	3	7.5
Capitals	32	80
GLOBAL RANK		
Alpha	14	35

Beta	12	30
Gamma	9	22.5
Sufficiency	5	12.5

The plans are habitually produced by the municipal government, often coordinated by a planning secretary and third-party consultants, and promote diverse channels for engaging the private-sector and civil society. In this sample the years' horizon the strategic plans expect to encompass range from 4 years (e.g. Istanbul, Bogota and Paris) to 33 years (i.e. Melbourne), and the average time range is of around 12 years.

In order to dive into the qualitative analysis of the published documents we focused on familiarizing with the documents (Braun and Clarke, 2006), conducting a first round of in-depth examination of the documents¹⁹. Consecutively, rounds of textual qualitative analysis were conducted, while looking for the main themes and sub-themes in the documents²⁰.

In order to identify the main patterns of the published strategic plans of our sample of cities we chose an analytical pathway consisting of a document section analysis. By doing so, we look for organizational similarities across the plans, shedding light on patterns in the procedures taken by planners and

¹⁹ All the documents were imported to a qualitative data analysis software (NVivo 12), aiming for a consistent way of managing the raw data, creating codes, visualizing and organizing the data into groups, identifying patterns and formulating themes.

²⁰ Coding rounds were done with minimum language adjustments applied to a sub-sample of cities, creating a provisional coding template guide for the coding of the full sample (King, 2004). Additionally, inter-coded stability was also trialed by re-coding a random sub-set of 10% of the raw data and comparing the coding results with the first round of coding (an 80%+ consistency target was reached).

their textual “materialization” in the documents. Consecutively, we dive into the most relevant sections of the plans, exposing core values and conceptualizations that will steer the urban development of these cities.

Every strategic plan (or any textual document, for that matter) has a specific document organization scheme, a way of editing its chapters, specific formatting, images, charts and figure choices, a way of exposing crucial information and acknowledging the project participants, among many other textual elements. The way these documents are organized is important for the present investigation, since it has the potential to indicate how the relevant information is being transmitted and what are the central features of strategic plans. The investigation’s first step is to examine how all the documents are structured²¹ and compare them.

By examining each document, we are able to expose patterns related the sections. We argue that, in many cases, even if the section’s titles have small textual differences, they engage with similar discussions and activate similar values. That being said, we elaborated “umbrella-terms” to account for these patterns.

²¹ The examination was done by reading through every document and coding the documents’ sections into inductively created nodes and performing a matrix coding query (i.e. comparing the results of every document in the sample).

Table 2. Documents' Sections

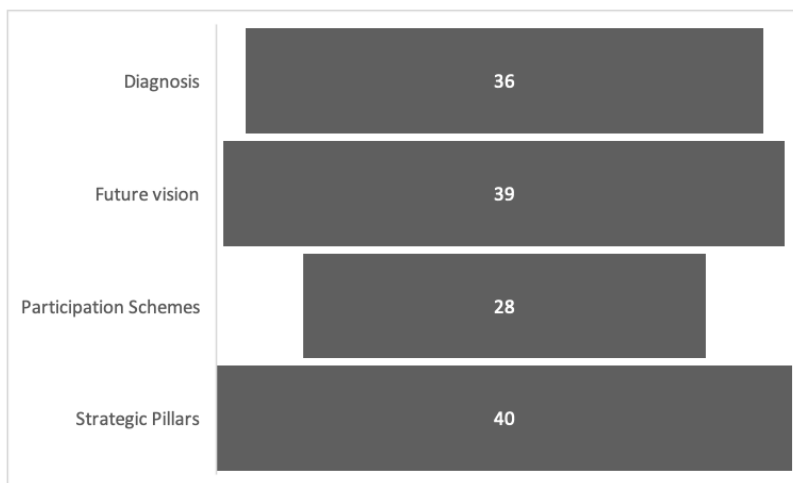
City	Future Vision Sections	Strategic Pillars Sections
Accra	Vision Statement	Strategic Goals
Asuncion	NA	Objetivos Estratégicos
Barcelona	Visió 2020	Proposta Estratègica (reptes y mesures)
Berlin	Vision	Strategies
Bogota	Visiones	Pilares y Ejes Transversales
Budapest	Vision	Goals of the Urban Development Concept
Cairo	Vision	Vision Pillars
Canberra	The Vision	Strategic Themes
Cape Town	The Five Pillars for the Future	Strategic Focus Areas
Caracas	Visión Compartida	Líneas Estratégicas
City of Harare	Shared Vision	Corporate Objectives
Colombo	Vision Mission	Strategic Responses
Dar Es Salaam	Development Planning Framework (guiding future growth)	Strategies
Hong Kong	A Vision for The Future	Planning Strategies
Houston	Vision	Goals
Istanbul	Vision	Strategic Goals
Kampala	Mission, Vision and Core Values	Strategic Objectives
Karachi	Guiding Principles	Strategic Development Plan Components
Kiev	Vision and Mission of the City	Strategic development goals until 2025
Lima	Visión de Futuro al 2030	Objetivos estratégicos, indicadores y metas
London	Strategic Vision	Strategic Objectives
Macao	Vision and Target	Development Strategies
Melbourne	The Vision for Melbourne	Principles
Montevideo	Montevideo 2030	Estrategias
New Delhi	Vision	Strategies for Development
New York	Vision	Supporting Initiatives
Ottawa	Vision	Strategic Priorities
Paris	Collective Vision	Major Objectives
Port of Spain	Vision	Goals
Prague	Strategic Vision	Strategic Goals
Quito	Visión de Quito	Políticas
Reykjavik	Future Vision	Main Objectives
Riga	Future Vision	City Development Pillars
Rio de Janeiro	Os alores, a visão e a missão	Metas Estratégicas
Tokyo	Course to the future	Strategies
Vienna	Vision for the Future	Strategy Areas
Wellington	A Vision fo Wellington	Four Goals for Wellington
Windhoek	Vision Statement	Strategic Objectives
Yangon	Development Vision	Urban Strategies
Zagreb	The vision of the City of Zagreb	Strategic Goals

Table 2 illustrates the process of connecting documents' sections into umbrella terms (in this case, "Future Vision and Strategic Pillars"), combining sections

with textual differences but similar contents. The aggregation of these sections into umbrella-terms is done primarily through content analysis of the whole section, and not only in the similarities of the titles of the sections. In other words, most documents have sections approaching similar themes and activating similar values.

We are able to identify important patterns in the way the documents' sections are organized: a) all of the cities, but one (Asunción), have sections outlining the proposed “future vision” for the city (the main horizon to be pursued for the city); b) all documents have sections outlining the “strategic pillars” (sometimes called strategic goals, strategic themes or strategic values) steering the strategic plan pathways; c) 36 documents out of 40 have sections outlining a “diagnosis” (current conjuncture, background information about the city, SWOT analysis, and others); and d) 28 out of 40 documents outline specific “participation schemes” with the planning process. The usual sequence of these sections is as follows: diagnosis > future vision > participation schemes > strategic pillars. The resulting visualization of the “typical” strategic plan structure, based on the section analysis of our sample, is as follows:

Chart 1: Document Sections by number of published plans (N=40)



We can identify a common rhetorical logic throughout the document's organization: a "diagnosis" of the city setting up the groundwork to be dealt with, usually leading to the proposal of "strategic pathways" to reach a specific "future vision" (which is sometimes constructed through "participatory schemes"). Although the "diagnosis" and "participation schemes" section can lead to interesting examination pathways, it is mainly on the "future vision" and "strategic pillars" sections that the core values that drive the plans are laid out, and therefore where our present analysis will focus on.

This examination suggests a relevant trend in the organizational distribution of the documents, showcasing a similar perception of the main themes to be addressed by city-planning practices in cities from all around the world. In other words, we argue that identifying these patterns in the document's sections exposes the importance of elaborating a future vision for the city to be followed and main strategic pillars to be prioritized. That being said, we focus our analysis on these sections in order to understand how these themes are approached.

3.3. Future Vision Analysis

The “future vision” section of the published plans is a central element for our present investigation. In most documents, this is the moment when the future aspirations for the city is laid out for the first time, conceptualizing what values should be pursued and why that will be positive for the citizens. It is relevant to identify the main trends emerging from this specific document section, because it provides the core values that will generate the “strategic pillars” that will steer the main projects to be developed in the city.

The goal of the present analysis is to compare how cities textually represent their future aspirations in this section of the documents. We start by conducting an inductive content analysis identifying relevant textual fragments related to how each strategic plan approaches the city’s future vision. The goal is to identify the main concepts that emerge from the documents and subsequently to group them into broader themes that illustrate the cities aspirations. This process consists in identifying textual fragments that activate similar values (sub-themes) that can be connected to the same broad themes (umbrella concepts).

Table 3. Process of connecting textual fragments to umbrella concepts²²

Textual Fragments	Sub-Themes	Umbrella Concepts
"Competitiveness" (Prague, 2009)	Competitiveness/Attraction of Investments	Competitive City
"Based on the City's Competitive Advantages" (Wellington, 2011)		
"Make a City Attractive" (Vienna, 2000)	Attraction of Investments	
"Productive city that attracts investments" (Melbourne, 2017)		
"Preservation of city's greenery" (Kiev, 2011)	Environmental Protection/Efficiency	Green City
"Environmental Protection and Sustainable Management of natural resources" (Zagreb, 2009)		
"City of Green" (Yangon, 2014)	General Sustainable Statements	
"Sustain and Improve the environment" (Colombo, 2000)		
"World Class City Status" (City of Harare, 2012)	General International References Statements	Global City
"Recognised throughout the world" (Canberra, 2008)		
"Enhance the quality of life" (Windhoek, 2017)	Quality of Life	Humane City
"Highest Quality of Life" (London, 2016)		
"Transparent, Responsive Governance" (New Delhi, 2006)	Efficiency	

²² The table showcases part of the process focused on some examples of textual fragments, sub-themes and umbrella concepts. In total, 17 sub-themes were identified under the top 5 most frequent umbrella concepts. The complete investigation process is composed of 36 umbrella concepts.

"Efficient Management" (Accra, 1991)		Well-Governed City
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This analysis provides us with a clearer vision of how cities construct their narratives about the futures they want to pursue, exposing interesting patterns in their choices. The resulting most frequent “future vision” themes (umbrella concepts) the cities are activating are the “Competitive City” (37 out of 40 documents) and the “Green City” (30 out of 40 documents)²³. The following most frequent future vision conceptualizations are the “Humane City” (19 out of 40 documents); “Global City” (17 out of 40 documents), and “Well-Governed City” (11 out of 40 documents).

A good example of a future vision connected to different umbrella concepts comes from Cairo’s strategic plan (2012). In this document, the “future vision” section is divided in three layers: “Social Justice”, “Economic Competitiveness” and “Environmental Friendliness”. These layers are further detailed in the document and, in our understanding, are connected to the umbrella concepts of “Humane City”, “Competitive City” and “Green City”.

[Environmental Friendliness] The GC [Grand Cairo] will push forward the wheel of economic development to achieve social justice and availability of local opportunities for all. Moreover, reducing air pollution, attention to water quality and the need to provide green

²³ Notice that we separate these two conceptualizations of the city for analytical purposes, in the documents these elements are not mutually exclusive, by the contrary most city plans are a combination of both.

spaces as well as the efficiency of natural resources management, especially water, are among the issues that will have high priority in making all relevant decisions. (Cairo, 2012:59)

The “global city” umbrella concept is composed of values related to cities concerned with their international perception, global positioning, and aspirations of serving as reference for its excellence in something. Bogota’s strategic planning (2016) is an interesting example of a future vision pushing values connected to what we understand by “Global city”. In this case, it’s possible to notice that there are many values being activated, but being an “international reference” is a central aspiration.

[visión para 2038] En el V centenario de su fundación (1538) Bogotá se consolida como referente internacional de ciudad creativa, incluyente y sostenible, en donde sus habitantes alcanzan el desarrollo pleno de su potencial humano y constituyen una ciudad feliz. (Bogota, 2016:45)

The umbrella concept related to the “Well-Governed City” is related to governance, public management, and efficiency. Kiev's strategic plan (2011) is a clear example. In this case, the city’s “future vision” is constructed by answering the question: “What will the city of the future look like?”. The answer is divided into 6 pathways, one of which states that the city will be “clear, having a transparent system of governance” (Kiev, 2011:7).

This examination exposes the central relevance given to the “Competitive City” and the “Green City”, among the “future visions” that are most frequently activated in the documents. At this moment, we proceed by

crossing the “future vision” data with the GaWC global city ranking tiers. As a result, there is strong consistency in distributions in each tier. In other words, cities with different global relevance status show similar results to their pursued “future vision”. Another analytical pathway was examined by adjusting for regional differences and once again the results were consistent, and the frequency distributions in each world region are, one more time, similar.²⁴

The findings of the examination of future visions being put forward by 40 different cities suggest relevant trends in regard to the central values being used. The indications that similar attributes are present in almost every plan, pointing towards a really similar future horizon being pursued by different cities from all around the globe, call our attention to the powerful effects strategic planning has on the construction of replicated worldviews that legitimize a specific planning agenda.

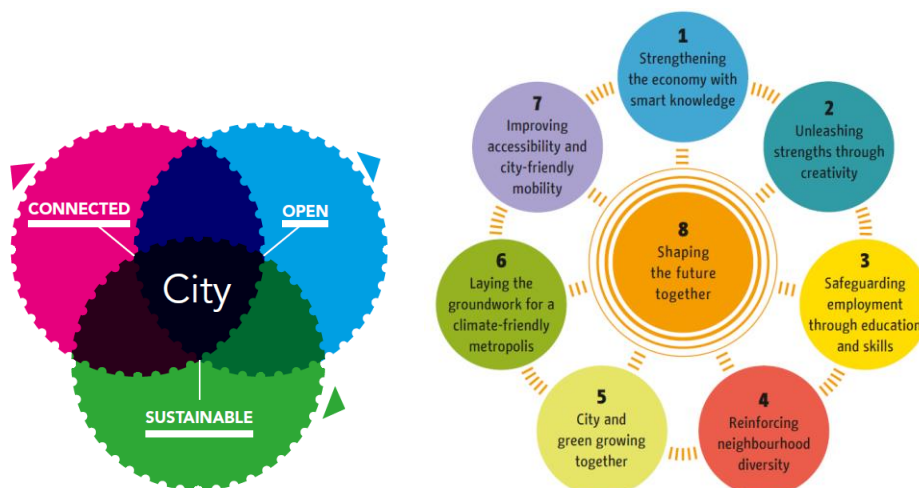
3.4. Strategic Pillars Analysis

At this stage of the investigation, it is crucial to dive into the “strategic pillars” sections of the document and look for trends connected to the previous findings on the “future vision” sections. The “strategic pillars” are central because it’s often on this section of the documents that more abstract future aspirations are translated into more specific pathways for achieving goals and

²⁴ Although this section takes on a different direction, the analysis adjusting for city rankings and world regions indicate interesting analytical pathways. For example, “beta cities” seem to be more concerned with “quality of life”; Africa has lower frequencies on more abstract nodes such as “quality of life” and higher frequencies on concrete topics such as “security”; America has a higher frequency on “Participation” than the rest. But, due to sample size, this exercise is meant to expose general trends that serve as initial clues that guide us to the next analytical step, rather than being used to draw conclusions about continental regions and ranking tiers.

proposing concrete projects. City strategic plans usually propose 3 to 8 strategic pillars representing the pathways to be taken. These pillars are connected to broader values that are usually detailed in a later section of the plans.

Figure 2. Examples of Strategic Pillars (Paris and Berlin)



Paris Strategic Plan, 2016 and Berlin Strategic Plan, 2013.

In order to have a refined understanding on how the documents organize their main strategic drivers for pursuing a specific future aspiration we conduct an analytical process similar to that of the last section, examining all the documents and identifying emerging recurrent strategic pillars across cities, refining the topics into umbrella concepts and sub-themes. By doing so, it's possible to identify important trends in “strategic pillars” across the sample.

Table 4. Process of connecting textual fragments to umbrella concepts²⁵

Textual Fragments	Sub-Themes	Umbrella Concepts
"Competitive Economy" (Zagreb, 2009)	Competitiveness	Competitive City
"Economic base and Competitive International City" (Reykjavik, 2010)		
"Productiva y Emprendedora" (Caracas, 2011)	Broad Economic Development Statements	
"Strong, Dynamic Economy" (Canberra, 2008)		
"Innovative Business location" (Vienna, 2000)	Innovation	
"Innovations and Competitive Clusters" (Kiev, 2011)		

The most frequent umbrella-concepts indicated in the strategic plans, in accordance with the previous findings of this paper, are: “Competitive City” (39 out of 40) and “Green City” (37 out of 40). There is a wide array of narratives constructed in the documents, but the in-depth content analysis of every document engaging with these umbrella concepts enables us to condensate what would be the typical way of approaching the strategic pillars related to the “Competitive City” as follows: inserting the city in a competitive arena where it is crucial to invest in knowledge/innovation, taking into account

²⁵ The table showcases part of the process focused on some examples of textual fragments and sub-themes related to the umbrella concept “Competitive City”. The complete investigation process is composed of 50 umbrella concepts.

the industry and its transformations, and creating and enabling an environment for investments, in order to reach the goal of economic prosperity.

Figure 4: Zagreb’s strategic pillar related to the “Competitive City”

STRATEGIC GOALS	PRIORITIES	MEASURES	STAKEHOLDER
C1. COMPETITIVE ECONOMY	C1.P1 DEVELOPMENT OF AN INCENTIVE-BASED ENTREPRENEURIAL ENVIRONMENT	C1.P1-M1 STRENGTHENING THE BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE	CITY OFFICE FOR ECONOMY, LABOUR AND ENTERPRISES
		C1.P1-M2 DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL CLUSTERS	CITY OFFICE FOR ECONOMY, LABOUR AND ENTERPRISES
		C1.P1-M3 DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE FAVOURABLE FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED COMPANIES AND BUSINESSES	CITY OFFICE FOR ECONOMY, LABOUR AND ENTERPRISES
		C1.P1-M4 INCENTIVES FOR DEVELOPING EDUCATION FOR ENTREPRENEURS	CITY OFFICE FOR ECONOMY, LABOUR AND ENTERPRISES
	C1.P2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECONOMY BASED ON KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATIONS AND QUALITY OF PROVIDED GOODS AND SERVICES	C1.P2-M1 STRENGTHENING TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE	CITY OFFICE FOR ECONOMY, LABOUR AND ENTERPRISES
		C1.P2-M2 DEVELOPMENT OF BIO-SCIENCES, APPLICATION AND COMMERCIALISATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY	BIO-CENTRE: BUSINESS INNOVATION AGENCY BICRO CCTM: CHILDREN'S* HOSPITAL SREBRNJAK CIVK: FACULTY OF VETERINARY SCIENCE
		C1.P2-M3 ENCOURAGING CREATIVE INDUSTRIES	CITY OFFICE FOR ECONOMY, LABOUR AND ENTERPRISES
		C1.P2-M4 DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM	GRADSKI URED ZA GOSPODARSTVO, RAD I PODUZETNIŠTVO
		C1.P2-M5 DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL-FOOD PRODUCTION	CITY OFFICE FOR AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Zagreb strategic plan 2009, p. 28.

When the “Green City” is the central theme of a strategic pillar, it’s often related to the efficient use of resources and the preservation of natural spaces in order to pursue a sustainable future. An interesting example is the strategic plan developed in Paris (2016) with a pillar dedicated to “The Sustainable City”, which is concerned with energy transition, sustainable development,

nature in the city, environmentally friendly mobility, responsible recycling and resiliency.

The following most frequent strategic pillars’ umbrella-concepts activated are: “Urban Mobility” (16 out of 40), “Safety” (13 out of 40) and “Education” (12 out of 40). Houston (2015), for example, activates “strategic pillars” with related values to the three aforementioned concepts, by constructing goals such as “affordable, multi-modal transportation network”, “safe, secure community” and “quality learning opportunities from early childhood onward” (Houston, 2015:4).

It’s also interesting to notice the conceptual transformations between the “future vision” and the “strategic pillars” sections. In other words, how these broader values for the cities’ futures are translated into concrete pathways that steer the planning document.

Table 5: Comparison of “future vision” and “strategic pillars” of the same cities

City	Future Vision	Strategic Pillar
Cairo (2012)	"Quality of urban, economic, social and environmental condition"	"Economic Competitiveness"
Montevideo (2010)	"Territorio de oportunidades asociadas a la innovación"	"Competitiveness and Productivity"
Quito (2015)	"Desarrollo Sostenible"	"Desarrollo Económico, Productivo y Competitividad"

Reykjavik (2010)	"Creative and Dynamic Commercial Activities"	"Economic base and Competitive International City"
Tokyo (2016)	"Sustainable that continues to generate growth"	"Smart City - International Competition between cities"

In Table 5 we visualize examples of cities with future vision conceptualizations based on broader terms that were translated into more specific strategic pillars. It's important to notice that in most cases the translations are directed to "competitiveness", indicating the relevance of the "Competitive City" as the most important value being put forward in the documents. In other words, these cases illustrate "future visions" that bring together different values but end up resulting in "strategic pillars", clearly focusing on competitiveness-driven values.

Following the same investigation procedure from the last section ("future vision"), we examined the articulations between the different GaWC global city ranking tiers, the different world regions and "strategic pillars" main themes. The results, once again, show strong consistency in the values put forward by cities in every rank tier and world region concerning their "strategic pillars"²⁶.

²⁶ The data indicates interesting trends concerning world regions (e.g. Europe has high rates of interest in "cultural heritage", America has the lowest result for "health care" and Asia has the highest numbers for "social services") and global rankings ("Alpha" cities have the highest numbers for "public spaces" in the documents and "Sufficiency" cities have a high concern with "safety").

Conclusively, we argue that this investigation exposes a planning agenda being legitimized through published strategic plans. The patterns emerging from the documents' "future vision" section and "strategic pillars" section indicate a relevant protagonism of attributes connected to the city being "competitive [with economic growth]" and "green [being sustainable]". At this point, it is pertinent to dive further into the documents in order to have a better understanding of what it actually means to be "competitive" and "green" at the same time, and how these two broad conceptualizations intersect in their textual contexts.

3.5. Articulating the "competitive" and "green" city

In order to advance our understanding in regard to these articulations, we mapped the instances in which the same textual statements could be used for arguing for a "competitive" or a "green" city, resulting in the inductive emergence of connections between the two categories from the actual documents. The outcome of this examination was a high articulation between "competitive" and "green" cities²⁷ in respect to "sustainable development", "competitiveness" and "[the city as an] "international reference".

In the investigation of the "future vision" sections, the "Competitive City" and the "Green City" were exposed as the most frequent values activated across all plans, indicating a high interest in these concepts during the formulation of urban future aspirations. At this moment, we investigate how these concepts intersect. When revisiting the documents and focusing on analysing these two

²⁷ The co-coding between "competitive" and "green" city happened in 13 stances, being the thickest articulation in our sample (followed by the connection between "competitive" and "global" city with 6 co-coding stances).

themes it is possible to indicate important trends in its conceptual development:

Table 6: Themes comparison in the “future vision” sections of the documents

Competitive City		Green City	
Sub-Themes	Textual Example	Sub-Themes	Textual Example
General statements on economic development	“diversity of economy (...)”	General statements on sustainability	"Sustain and improve the environment (...)"
International reference on economic development	“leader in the economy (...)”	International reference on sustainability	"Leading city tackling climate change (...)"
Sustainable development	“sustainable economic development (...)”	Sustainable development	"Environmentally sustainable growth (...)"
Competition/attraction of investments	“based on the city’s competitive advantages (...)”	Environmental Protection/Efficiency	“Preservation of city’s greenery (...)”
Innovation	“facilitating traditional and creative entrepreneurship (...)”		

It is noticeable how the “Competitive city” and the “Green city” themes suggest similar general values to be pursued by the strategic plans. Relevant connections between these conceptualizations emerge, for example, in the “sustainable development” sub-theme. This can be expected because of the

natural multiple meanings unfolding from the concept of sustainable development, connecting economic and environmental sub-themes in many different ways. It's clear that the primary way of connecting the "Competitive City" and the "Green City" is by activating "sustainable development" as a central value for the cities' "future vision".

Another interesting example is the "international reference" sub-theme. Being recognized globally presupposes excellence in a certain field of urban governance. In many cases, cities that construct this future narrative connect their international relevance with concepts related to "competitiveness" and "sustainability". Therefore, the broader themes related to "Global Cities" are often related to the "Competitive City" and the "Green City" as well. In our sample, every time (17 out of 17) a city used concepts related to the "Global City", it also used concepts related to the "Competitive City", and in around 82% of the cases (14 out of 17) it also used concepts related to both the "Competitive City" and the "Green City".

In the investigation of the "strategic pillars" sections, the "Competitive City" and the "Green City" are, once again, the most frequent activated umbrella concepts across the sample. By visualizing the emerging sub-themes, we can identify how the broader conceptualization of the "competitive" and "green" cities in the "future vision" section progressively becomes more specific strategic pathways in the "strategic pillars" sections.

Table 7: Themes comparison in the “strategic pillars” sections of the documents

Competitive City		Green City	
Sub-Themes	Textual Example	Sub-Themes	Textual Example
General Statements on economic development	"economic prosperity"	General Statements on sustainability	“Environmental Friendliness”
Competitiveness	"Competitive city"	Conservation/Protection	"Preserve natural spaces"
Enabling Environment	"Conducive investment environment"	Efficiency	"Efficient use of resources"
Sustainable Development	"Sustainable Growth and Development”	Sustainable Development	“Environmentally Sustainable Growth and Development”

Often the “strategic pillars” are more concrete (narrower) pathways related to the “future vision” broader values. The “Competitive City” is more focused on values related to “competitiveness”, “economic development”, “enabling environment”, “knowledge”, “industry” and “regulation”. Meanwhile, the “Green City” is concerned with “sustainability”, “conservation” and “efficiency”. Nonetheless, as expected, it’s still possible to identify a strong connection between the sub-theme related to “sustainable development”.

At this moment it’s crucial to further delve into the connections between the “Competitive City” and the “Green City” by engaging with a contextual

analysis of the main occurrences in which these two themes were activated²⁸. An in-depth analysis of the articulations between these concepts and the concrete projects being proposed by the documents resulted in the typification of the five most recurrent city profiles. This scheme is constructed by connecting the strategic plans in respect to their general values and resulting concrete projects.

Table 8: Strategic Plans Typification

Pathways	Sub-Pathways	Cases
1) Competitiveness is the driver of the city's future	a) Sustainable development is used as proxy to competitiveness	Cape Town, 2012, Windhoek, 2017
	b) Sustainable Development potentializes the city's competitiveness through specific environmental-friendly projects	Cairo, 2012; Kiev, 2011; Lima, 2016; Prague, 2009; Quito, 2015; Houston, 2015; Wellington, 2011
2) International status is the driver of the city's future	a) Environmental sustainability as a positive competitive differential for the city's international status with no concrete projects	Barcelona, 2010
	b) Environmental sustainability potentializes the city's international status through specific environmental-friendly projects	Berlin, 2013; Bogota, 2016; Canberra 2008; Istanbul, 2010; City of Harare, 2012
3) Sustainable Development is the driver of the city's future	a) Environmental sustainability is the main feature of the document as a value and with concrete projects	Hong Kong, 2007; Dar es Salam, 2004

²⁸ We used Nvivo to conduct a “node-connection” query that resulted in a matrix of themes (economic development and sustainability) and their related concepts (coded in the same textual fragment).

<p>4) Sustainability and competitiveness have similar relevance in the document</p>	<p>a) Both values are connected to concrete projects</p>	<p>Accra, 1991; Kampala, 2014; Karachi, 2007; London, 2016; Melbourne, 2017; Montevideo, 2010; New Delhi, 2006; New York, 2014; Paris, 2016; Reykjavik, 2010; Riga, 2014; Rio de Janeiro, 2017; Vienna, 2000; Zagreb, 2009; Colombo, 2000; Ottawa, 2015; Port of Spain, 2010; Tokyo, 2016.</p>
<p>5: No clear main driver in the document</p>	<p>a) Sustainable development as a hollow term</p>	<p>Macao, 2016; Caracas, 2011</p>

Overall, this typification identified 5 dominant pathways through which strategic plans connect the “Competitive City” and the “Green City”, integrating other sub-themes to the broad narrative. These pathways (first column) showcase the main conceptual drivers of the document, which branch out to sub-pathways that indicate how specific concepts are constructed. Each pathway unfolds into noticeable dominant general values and resulting concrete projects proposed across documents.

The first identified pathway (“competitiveness is the driver of the city’s future”) was observed in 9 cases and is characterized by the dominance of “competitiveness” over every other aspects of the plan. It is noticeable how it branches out to two sub-pathways (“a” and “b”) that connect with sustainability as a broad conceptualization, often without any practical meaning outside its relation to competitiveness. It’s important to notice that in the case of both “sub-pathways” the plans don’t propose substantive concrete projects for the city, suggesting a disproportionate concern with the discursive power of “competitiveness” and “sustainable development” over actual urban projects.

A typical plan in this pathway envisions competitiveness as the main goal for the city, encouraging strategic pillars related to competition, growth, efficiency, conservation, climate change, resiliency and smart cities. Finally, the typical plan proposes very few concrete projects to deal with the city's challenges. Prague's Strategic Plan (2009) is an example of sustainable development being directly related to a concrete project concerned with the city's attraction of tourists without much further elaboration.

Secondly, we identified, in 6 cases a pathway in which the city's global status is the main driver of the city's future aspirations. In this case, two sub-pathways can also be observed ("a" and "b"), one connecting sustainability to its role to potentialize the city's competitiveness (resulting in no concrete projects), and the other connecting sustainability to its role in contributing to the city's international status, resulting in concrete projects related to resource efficiency, water, energy and waste management, urban mobility, conservation, and the creation of green zones.

The typical plan in this pathway envisions the city's international positioning as the main goal (identifying sustainability as a synergic value), encouraging strategic pillars related to competition, growth, efficiency, climate change and smart cities. Berlin's Strategic Plan (2013) is an interesting example of sustainable development being connected to the city's international positioning.

Berlin uses its position as a capital city to set trends and directions for sustainable development in Germany and Europe, assuming its role as an international benchmark for dealing with the challenges facing cities around the globe. (Berlin Strategy, 2013:22)

Barcelona's plan is a unique case of a document in which sustainability and competitiveness are always connected to the major imperative for the city: becoming an international reference. Even though Barcelona is alone in this typification category, it is important to expose this variance of strategic planning, characterized by emphasizing competitiveness and sustainability in order to optimize the city's international positioning.

Barcelona must be a world-wide reference city in the field of urban policies that prioritize the variables of efficiency of the energetic resources and the reduction of the contaminating effects. [Free translation] (Barcelona Visió 2020, 2010:31)

The third pathway, with only 2 cases, is characterized by strategic plans that are centred around the notion of sustainability - conceptually and concretely - through specific proposals (i.e. related to land usage and urban mobility). A typical plan in this pathway envisions sustainable development as the main goal, encouraging strategic pillars related to sustainability, and proposes concrete projects concerned with land usage and urban mobility. Hong Kong's strategic plan (2007) is a strong example of a document focused on sustainable development, from its vision, "a city that is proud of its outstanding achievements for sustainable development" (p.15), to concrete projects that go as far as discussing the pros and cons of limiting its population:

While this may be a lucid proposition, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to establish a population limit. Population capacity is affected by the interplay of many factors, including the amount of resources the community

is prepared to afford, and how well our development is managed. Examples elsewhere show that smaller populations do not necessarily imply more sustainable development if the populations are spread across more extensive geographical areas. (Hong Kong 2030 planning vision and strategy, 2007:100)

Observed in 18 cities, the fourth pathway is the most frequent one, and it's based on the shared leadership of competitiveness and sustainability, both activating related conceptualizations (e.g. sustainable growth, attractiveness) and concrete project proposals (e.g. conservation, adaptability). The numerous cases for this pathway could indicate the need to create another sub-pathway, but through in-depth analysis of each document we argue that they belong to the same pathway, serving as evidence of the dominance of this type of document's structure across the sample.

A typical plan in this pathway envisions sustainability and economic growth as the main goals, encouraging strategic pillars related to sustainable growth, attractiveness, efficiency, climate change and resilient cities. Finally, the typical plan proposes concrete projects concerned with urban mobility, resources management and the creation of green zones. An example of this kind of shared relevance to different themes is the strategic plan of the city of Wellington.

The vision for Wellington is underpinned by four city goals. These goals are based on the city's competitive advantages – our highly skilled and innovative population; our strong 'eco-city' performance; our

position as New Zealand's capital connected culturally and socially to the world; and our compact city form. (Wellington Towards 2040, 2011:3)

The final pathway, observed in just two cities, is characterized by a lack of clarity regarding its conceptualization, general values and the absence of resulting concrete projects. In both cases there is no clear main driver in the document and the general values are related to sustainable environment, competitiveness, smart city and conservation without any follow-up in project proposals. A typical plan in this pathway envisions sustainable development as the main goal (as a broad value, without any detailing of its meaning for the city), producing strategic pillars with unclear directions and no proposals for concrete projects.

It is possible to notice a relevant manifestation of similar general values in every pathway in the typology: competitiveness, economic growth, attraction, international reference, climate change, conservation, efficiency, resilient city and smart city. We can also identify the main related projects (by theme): resource efficiency; water, energy and waste management; urban mobility; conservation; green zones; adaptability and land use.

Two relevant recurring themes throughout the strategic plans are “smart cities” and “resilient cities”. Today, more than ever, these two conceptualizations of the urban space are gaining traction and proliferate all around the world, with many projects and city networks being formed around these ideas. The “100 Resilient Cities (100RC)” project²⁹, for example, aims at developing a resilient

²⁹ <https://www.100resilientcities.org/>

framework³⁰ for city planning that supports a global network of cities. This network is composed of 100 cities from all around the world. This endeavour disseminates tools that evaluate the cities' resilience and promote the elaboration of a resilience strategy³¹ for them.

Smart Cities, often understood as the articulation of technology and local governance, is also on the rise and seems like the new trend for important cities all around the world³². The “smart” variation of urbanism also seems to carry a similar mind-set to the investigated strategic plans:

It promises to empower urban planning by turning the city into a nexus of real-time data on every aspect of how the city (and its inhabitants) function and optimize urban infrastructure by slapping sensors everywhere and connecting it all together into a centralized network. It promises to thrive under conditions of fiscal austerity and fierce competition by importing entrepreneurialism into city hall (Sadowski, 2019:5).

In summary, the present investigation exposes the main textual results of the “competitive green city” being often pursued by strategic plans all around the world. These plans are not only similar in their methodology and structure, they also replicate a handful of values that drive these cities' future aspirations and concrete project proposals. This paper investigates how strategic planning,

³⁰ urban resilience is “the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience” (Rockefeller Foundation, 2015)

³¹ Unsurprisingly, these strategy documents are very similar (methodologically, structurally and in mind-set) to the strategic plans analyzed in this paper.

³² The 2019 Smart City Expo in Barcelona brought together more than 1000 panelists and representatives from more than 700 cities.

as a supposedly technical methodology, ends up filtering a similar mind-set that “materializes” textually in cities’ planning documents, resulting in a replicated planning agenda.

This analysis provided us with a calibrated grasp over the tendency of strategic planning generating future aspirations for cities that are centred around the idea of a “competitive city” – one that attracts investments – and a “green city” – that protects the environment efficiently – that are, at the same time, international references concerned with sustainable development.

3.6. Conclusion

Despite the discursive elaboration of strategic planning as a process that focuses on the city’s differential qualities, providing a custom roadmap to achieve the city’s aspired future, the present investigation exposed how it mainly materializes textually into similar plans with replicated planning agendas. Strategic planning is more of a “green-competition” tool than the alleged “socially consensual strive for a better urban future”.

Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, and Karachi, in Pakistan, both cities in our database, have a grim similarity concerning their urban violence rates. In both cases security is an overwhelming problem for their inhabitants³³. Interestingly enough, in both cities’ most recent strategic plans there are no future vision elements concerning becoming less violent or more secure cities. Plus, there are no strategic pillars related to these topics. It does not mean that “violence” or “security” are not present at all in the text, but it indicates that these topics

³³ In the latest Numbeo Crime Index (2019 mid-year), Rio de Janeiro is placed 10th and Karachi 71st globally (available at: <https://www.numbeo.com/crime/rankings.jsp>)

are not central to the conceptualization of the cities' future aspirations and the main strategic drivers to get there.

Another thing the two cities' strategic plans have in common is the centrality given to becoming a competitive and sustainable city in the future, both in the "future vision" and in the "strategic pillars" sections of the documents. This observation brings light to a trend in the published strategic plans investigated in this article: general global values being replicated with low contextual calibration. The examination of the connections between the green city and the competitive city resulted in the typification of 5 pathways taken by the studied cities in developing their strategic plan, showcasing a reduced capability of cities in originally dealing with their urban challenges.

This thematic investigation of published strategic plans from cities all over the world exposes the replication of similar textual structures that are characterized by future aspirations of competitive and green cities, encouraged by strategic pathways related to economic growth and sustainability; and, finally, proposing a short array of concrete projects that connect these values. In other words, the normative values (expressed by the future visions) conducting the plans are almost identical in every case. General strategic prioritizations (expressed by the strategic pillars) steering the cities' actions follow this tendency and do not vary a lot, and the concrete projects emerging from these values and prioritizations also reproduce only a handful of urban interventions.

If the first chapter examined the global proliferation of strategic planning as a methodology for planning cities, this chapter analysed the resulting textual patterns in the published documents, producing important findings for the field of urban studies. We suggest that the global proliferation of strategic planning is also the replication of a planning agenda based on "green-competitiveness".

The insights provided by examining strategic planning's proliferation and documentation have the potential to empower case studies of cities with a refined grasp on the complex processes interwoven in city planning, identifying the key triggers to the proliferation of strategic planning and the legitimization of its agenda.

4. STRATEGIC PLANNING'S PROLIFERATION TRIGGERS: A CASE STUDY OF RIO DE JANEIRO

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter we investigate prominent triggers in the proliferation of strategic planning and in the legitimization of its agenda in the case of the city of Rio de Janeiro. We argue that the triggers analysed in this chapter are interwoven, but display analytically distinct processes that help to explain the proliferation and consolidation of strategic planning's agenda in a single case study.

Single-case studies, as suggested in the first and second chapters, cannot provide this research with generalisable findings. Nonetheless, we argue that there are important lessons to be learned from a case study, focusing on a particular political, social and cultural context in order to explore the main triggers in the implementation and replication of strategic planning, especially in the case of a city consistently engaged with strategic planning for the past three decades.

The case study approach enables us to combine different methods, such as documentary analysis and historical analysis, in order to grasp complex processes, conflicts and power dynamics in action in one particular case (Cuba and Lincoln, 2002). In this chapter, the case study's purpose is mainly exploratory, concerned with broad planning processes and emerging trends in a social system. We argue that after a global approach to investigating strategic planning's proliferation in 373 cities (with 311 confirmed cases) in the first chapter, and a comparative study between 40 published documents in the

second chapter, this research has a lot to gain by applying the insights acquired in the previous sections to a case study.

For the case study selection, we looked for a city that is present both in the original database for global proliferation and in the second chapter's comparative study database sample, because that means that the city's published strategic plan's content was already analysed and broadly compared to other cities. Besides, Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, is our selected case study for different reasons: a) among the studied cities, Rio de Janeiro has one of the highest number of published strategic plans to date (1996, 2004, 2009, 2013, 2016 and 2017); b) since Rio de Janeiro is a city in South America, it has the potential to reveal interesting processes of planning proliferation outside the historical epicentres of Strategic Planning (Europe and North America), and c) there are still important contributions to be made to the literature on Rio de Janeiro's strategic planning practices, especially to the post-2010 period.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework's section, our investigation method focuses on a "diachronic-synchronic" approach (Schmidt, 2013), where the historical trajectories and the current context are examined and articulated in order to grasp future projections of the city. In order to do so we use the published strategic plans as "present materializations of the projected futures of the city" (Adam, 2004). These projections aren't alone in the political arena, and are confronted systematically by opposing views. Nevertheless, the published documents serve this research as the "official" narrative being promoted in Rio de Janeiro by the political power formations at a specific moment.

This chapter is focused with understanding why cities produce nearly replicated planning agendas, in other words, why do cities (i.e. local power coalitions) behave so similarly. At this moment it's important to allude to the

importance of “new institutionalism” approach to understanding organizational isomorphism³⁴ and the mechanisms that lead organizations (in the broad sense) to adopt similar policies and practices. Some of the mechanisms associated with institutional isomorphic change (i.e. coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism) are also observable in the case of Rio de Janeiro in relation to strategic planning.

We begin this case study by examining the strategic planning process in Rio de Janeiro, showing a strong similarity in the values emerging from documents (closely related to our previous findings of a strong emphasis in green-competitiveness). Interesting research has been done in Rio de Janeiro concerning its planning processes (Fernandes, 2008; Sánchez, 2009; and Vainer, 2010), but in the present research we open up a relevant investigation horizon by switching the focus from specific actors in each historical moment to what we call “strategic planning triggers”, related to broader processes that can be observed as consistent trends in the past three decades of strategic planning practice in Rio de Janeiro and indicate important lessons for strategic planning in general. These triggers explain the consistent reproduction of strategic planning as a tool for city planning in Rio de Janeiro and the recurring “aspiration value-system” being put forward in the published documents. Even if in the case of Rio de Janeiro’s investigation in this chapter the triggers are related to specific actors, the choice for focusing on processes rather than actors enables us to look for findings with the potential to be tested elsewhere.

We start with the importance of an international model to be emulated (i.e. Barcelona) by Rio de Janeiro and its broader effects in other cities. We undertake this examination by a historical account of this process, identifying

³⁴ Powell (2000) argues that organizations facing uncertainty and limitations often engage with structural, cultural and output homogenization processes.

relevant political actors, and comparing published strategic plans in Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona. It's important to notice that we focus this investigation on the process of "international models' emulation" in relation to Rio de Janeiro's case study, rather than solely on actors promoting Barcelona as the role model.

The next investigated trigger is the "multilateral agenda-setting" exerted by multilateral organizations (i.e. UN-Habitat) in order to consolidate a specific agenda and legitimize its contents as globally relevant best-practices. Once again, this examination is based on a historical account and identification of political factors, followed by analysing published documents by the UN-Habitat (i.e. Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda).

Lastly, we focus on the consensus creation processes that are relevant in the legitimization of strategic planning with the general public. These processes impact the consolidation of this methodology as best practice related to city green-competitiveness. We argue that consensus creation processes are often implemented through participatory schemes and public-private partnerships.

In this chapter we argue that the proliferation of strategic planning to Rio de Janeiro and its textual materialization in documents dominated by the conceptualization of green-competition, is carried out by: a) having Barcelona as an international city-model, b) a strong influence from the "multilateral agenda-setting" exerted by multilateral organizations (such as UN-Habitat) and, c) the utility of strategic planning for legitimizing a planning agenda through consensus creation.

The focus of this investigation is not on the important task of identifying the dynamics between actors, who wins and who loses, in each step of the way of strategic planning in Rio de Janeiro. Alternatively, in this research we propose to reveal the main processes underlying the adoption of strategic planning in

Rio de Janeiro in the 1990s and its replication until, at least, 2017. By doing so we expose the discursive infrastructure legitimizing the perceived importance of this planning methodology for cities in this case study, hopefully suggesting important lessons to be further developed in other contexts.

4.2. Strategic Planning in Rio de Janeiro

Part of the specialized literature (see Borja and Castells, 1997; Capel, 2005; Vainer, 2010, among others) approaches strategic planning as a neoliberal turn in city planning, infusing cities with a renewed capability for interlocal competition in order to attract transnational investors. In this sense, strategic planning is a competitive tool in itself, signalling to the world the city's desire to contend in the "global race for investments" (Harvey, 1996). The influence of strategic planning is not confined to its effective implementation results but extended to a broader symbolic perception of good urban governance. We argue that strategic city planning should be understood not only as a technical planning tool (for cities) but as a competitive apparatus (between cities) per se.

Powell (2000) suggests that an important mechanism for institutional isomorphic change is "coercive isomorphism" which is related to external pressures (either formal and informal) linked to cultural expectations. Although these pressures can be exerted by explicit force, it can also take the more implicit persuasion forms. In this case, we argue that the external pressure from interlocal competitiveness employs a coercive force to local power coalitions in the direction of homogeneous approaches of dealing with their urban challenges.

In that sense, city planning in general is not only a technical tool emerging from planners' textbooks, but an active by-product of a prevalent approach to political-economy knowledge. We suggest that the values underpinning global inter-city competition require calibrated urbanization processes that are facilitated by specific urban governance tools, such as strategic planning.

After globalization, the construction of a future project for the city uses strategic planning as a tool for directing the actions aiming to implement socio-economic transformations and provide the municipal administrations with the best instruments for management. (Rio de Janeiro's 2004 Strategic Plan, 2004:11)

This excerpt from Rio de Janeiro's 2004 Strategic plan demonstrates the legitimacy given to strategic plans in relation to globalization. We can find this debate in the related literature, usually articulating neoliberalism, inter-local competition for the attraction of highly mobile transnational capital and the requirement of a revised urban planning practice that is synergic to this reality (Kipfer and Keil, 2002).

Cities immersed in this dynamic are often compelled to be competitive, well-coordinated and cohesive around a structured long-term agenda (Friedmann, 2004, Swyngedouw et al, 2002). The result is a swing from comprehensive urban planning (characteristic of the Fordist context) towards "entrepreneurial" planning around the 1980s (Wu, 2007), and a more strategic approach to planning became trendy in Europe in the 1990s at different scales (Pascual and Esteve, 1997, Pugliese and Spaziante, 2003).

(...) the experience of Western market economies does not suggest that a more market-oriented economy and neoliberal governance reduces the requirement for city planning. Instead, the system of city planning is reoriented in the course of the changing political economic environment. (Wu, 2007:380).

Peck and Tickell (2008) argue that neoliberalism establishes not only a market-driven policy project, but also the metrics of policy assessment by establishing specific notions of “efficiency” and “fairness”, producing specific guidelines for policymaking and streams of perceived best practices. In this context, David Harvey (2010) argues that on the one hand cities that develop their own strategic plans gain comparative advantages, and on the other hand cities are pressured to not fall into disadvantage by not having their own strategic plans, resulting in a coercive scheme that energizes the proliferation of strategic planning around the globe.

The connections between interlocal-competition processes and strategic planning are present in the published documents here investigated, steering the future visions proposed for cities. Therefore, spatial planning cannot be understood solely as a technical tool, but also as a political project. The ideological gravitation towards an assumed necessity of impregnating cities with competitiveness opens up an opportunity for new urban planning methodological pathways and enables the rising relevance of strategic planning.

While the Washington Consensus and the structural adjustments, both in central and peripheric countries, reconfigured national economies, a readjustment and new urban consensus was imposed. In place of modern planning – comprehensive, strongly marked by the State’s direct action [such as in zoning] – a competitive planning, intended to be flexible, market friendly and market oriented. (Vainer, 2010:3)

In “Planes Estratégicos y Proyectos Metropolitanos”, Borja and Castells (1997-B) explain that the complex globalized conjuncture must be confronted by restructuring political agendas and the city’s communication with other scales (regional, national and global). In that sense, it is allegedly important to create a city project connected to a global project, engaging with the development of competitive projects and economic activities, promoting its international image and showing a transparent, business-friendly, environment.

In the words of Jordi Borja, “in a city nothing is what it is, but what it promotes, what it attracts, what it provokes and transforms. Integral performance is only possible when decentralized management is combined with the existence of a global project. Whatever the scale.” (Rio de Janeiro’s Strategic Plan, 2017:19)

The socio-economic context in which Rio de Janeiro was inserted in the 1990s enabled strategic planning to emerge as a central tool for urban governance. In the 1990s, Rio de Janeiro faced a critical moment characterized by alarming levels of poverty, high rates of criminality and deteriorating public services

and urban spaces. With a discourse based on regaining national protagonism and energizing the image of city as a “wonderful city”, a conservative turn gained momentum in Rio de Janeiro, mainly with the election of Cesar Maia (1992) as the city’s mayor and his role in forming a cohesive coalition around the municipal power. Another important actor in this context is Luiz Paulo Conde, the city’s then urbanism secretary, strongly favouring the idea of a crucial need to revert the “urban crisis” through a competitive activation of specific large-scale urban projects.

The conservative electorate supported my candidacy and amongst them I’m unbeatable. I’m going to show that it is possible to be transformative from the right wing (Cesar Maia, *Jornal do Brasil*. 10/02/1995).

In addition, the 1992 Summit Conference on Sustainable Development on the Earth (ECO 92) promoted by the United Nations and hosted by Rio de Janeiro, was a central moment for the city as a globally relevant location. Following this opportunity, Cesar Maia and Luiz Paulo Conde were central to the development of the first strategic plan in Rio de Janeiro.

Rio de Janeiro’s first strategic plan was a direct result of the partnership between the municipal power, the trade association (ACRJ) and the industry federation (FIRJAN). Additionally, the strategic planning process was designed by a hired Catalan consultancy: Grupo Tecnologías Urbanas de Barcelona S.A (TUBSA). In order to help supporting the strategic planning process, the Maintenance Consortium was created, composed of 46 companies (e.g. real-estate firms, hotels associations, contractors, banks, etc.). In 1996, the first Strategic Plan of Rio de Janeiro was published.

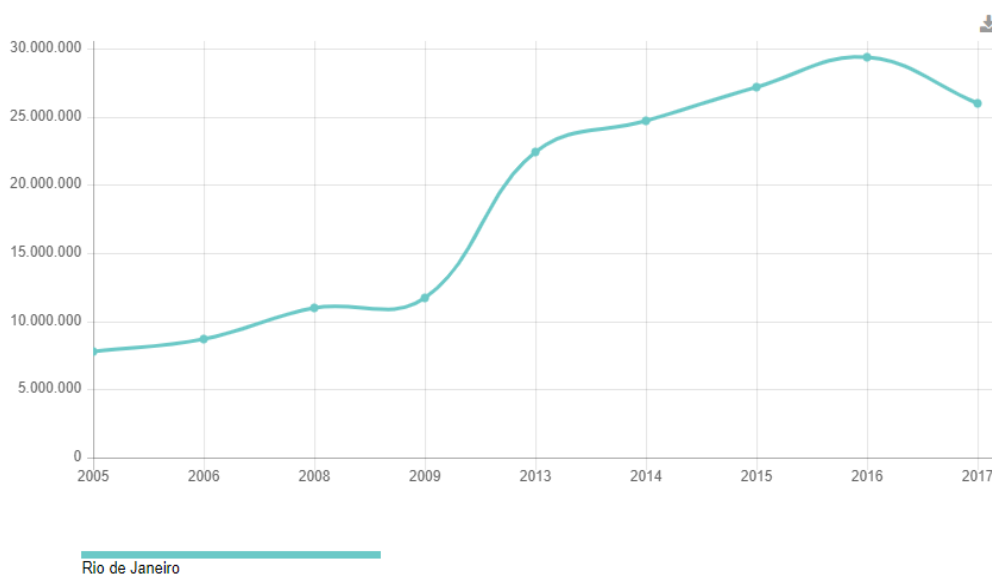
After this first experience in 1996, another five strategic plans were published (in 2004, 2009, 2012, 2016 and 2017). In 2001, the “City’s Statute”, a crucial legal accomplishment for social movements, is established through federal law n.10.257, which regulates the 1988’s Federal Constitution chapter regarding urban policies (articles 182 and 183). This legal apparatus provides juridical support for urban planning, consolidating the power of municipalities and providing new tools for intervention within city’s territories. This statute is marked by opening spaces for participatory management processes in the cities, democratic access to urban land and housing, decentralizing and democratization of urban planning in the formulation of public policies. Despite its potential for alternative democratic planning processes, in Rio de Janeiro’s case this tool was obfuscated by strategic planning.

From the 1990s until today, Rio de Janeiro has been in the spotlight for different reasons. The city had the opportunity to strengthen its branding and positioning internationally as a relevant player among global cities (ranked in the 2018 GaWC Global Ranking in the “Beta” tier), attracting investments and creating opportunities for hosting mega-events.

The period between 2010 and 2016 is probably the one the city gained the most visibility. Rio de Janeiro hosted the World Urban Forum (2010), the World Economic Forum on Latin America (2011), the Rio+20 conference (2012), the FIFA Confederation Cup (2013), the World Youth Day (2013), the FIFA World Cup (2014) and the Olympic Games (2016). Therefore, Rio de Janeiro experienced a special moment throughout the last decade, when the city benefitted from a historic volume of investments, global relevance, project legitimacy and media coverage.

Figure 1: Budget revenues from 2005 to 2017

Receitas orçamentárias realizadas (Unidade: R\$ x1000)



(Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia Estatística, IBGE. Available at: <https://www.ibge.gov.br/>)

In preparation for the 2016 Olympic Games, two strategic plans were published (2009 and 2013). Both documents focus on the incoming mega-events, its impacts and projected legacies. Also, both documents bear the same title: “Post-2016: A more competitive and integrated Rio”.

Nonetheless, the post-Olympic review of the planning process is a controversial subject. Urbanization and housing projects, for example, were central to the 2013 strategic plan, having received the most investments among all areas, as specified in the plan’s budget (Rio de Janeiro’s 2013 Strategic Plan, p.36). However, the housing crisis in Rio de Janeiro is, to this day, a central theme of contention.

Figure 2. “The Economist” covers from 2009 and 2016 side by side



(available at: <https://www.economist.com/>)

After the Olympics, two more strategic plans were published, in 2016 and 2017. The first one was characterized by a strong emphasis in public participation and marked the end of Eduardo Paes' term as mayor of the city. Soon after the new mayor's term started (Marcelo Crivella), a new strategic plan was published, disregarding the recent municipal effort with strategic planning. The methodology of the planning process is almost identical, and the results are fundamentally the same, displaying the symbolic importance for the current administration of having a strategic plan published with their name on it.

In a 21-year period, from 1996 to 2017, Rio de Janeiro published 6 strategic plans, led by different local political power compositions. In the last chapters we exposed the commanding role of values connected to green-competition in

strategic plans. At this moment, we argue that rather than focusing on specific processes in the making of each one of the 6 published plans, we are concerned with identifying pervasive triggers in the replication of strategic planning as the chosen technical tool for city planning, and the recurrence of green-competitiveness as the central “aspiration value-system” being put forward in these documents.

In the case of Rio de Janeiro, we can identify three central triggers: international models, multilateral agenda-setting and consensus creation. It is important to understand that the dialectic relation between these triggers (that structure - and are structured by - each other) is only examined separately for analytical reasons. We argue that these triggers have particular effects in the replication of strategic planning as a technical tool and to the recurrence of its planning agenda, regarding both processes in a relational dynamic that cannot be isolated and measured.

4.3. Trigger 1: International Models

Rio de Janeiro’s political leaders were generally explicit in electing Barcelona as a model. Barcelona is probably the biggest example of a city-model in strategic planning literature, with innumerable published articles on its modus operandum (see Borja and Castells 1996, Burbank and Heying 2001, Capel 2005 and González 2010). In this section we examine the influence of the “Barcelona model” and how Rio de Janeiro and other cities have sought to replicate it due to its perceived success. An interesting take on this process steams from the concept of “mimetic isomorphism” (see Powell, 2000), and the idea that imitation is often employed in uncertain and complex contexts.

Organizations tend to model themselves after similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful. The ubiquity of certain kinds of structural arrangements can more likely be credited to the universality of mimetic processes than to any concrete evidence that the adopted models enhance efficiency. (Powell, 2000:152)

“Barcelona’s 2000 Strategic Plan”, from 1990, is a relevant example of a project focused on the radical transformations that the city would go through, being socio-spatially redesigned and hosting the 1992 Olympics. The pre-Olympic period was marked by the development of strategic plans that reassessed Barcelona’s conjuncture, reassigned priorities and reformulated goals (Fernandes, 2008).

When Barcelona was chosen to host the Olympics, optimizing resources, governmental organization, management and improving the services to citizens were priorities detailed in its strategic plan. Another important aspect was to design policies that improved investments in the city in the aftermath of the Olympic Games, by constructing a stable conjuncture, investing in urban infrastructure and positioning Barcelona as a regional force (Amendola, 2002).

The Catalan model of urban governance is characterized by the strong influence of technicians (architects and engineers), the partnership between private and public actors, and consensus (Capel, 2005). The search for a consensus has outcomes that are not limited to the methodology of the plan itself, and is also meant to create a shared understanding of what model of future city should be pursued and the challenges need to be confronted to get there.

An interesting take from the understanding of Barcelona as a model for urban governance comes from the idea of knowledge-production, the influence of scholars, scientists, professionals or, in a broader sense, “experts”. Novais (2003) explains that Catalan experts developed intellectual work that translates the strategic approach from companies to the public sector. Borja and Castells are important intellectual agents in the development of the strategic planning framework. ‘Local y global’ (Borja and Castells, 1997) is a book initially prepared for the Habitat II conference (Istanbul, 1996), with international reach and strong influence as a consolidated perspective of the globalized world. Borja and Castells propose a perspective through which local governments and cities are the central actors in the history of urban societies, emphasizing the idea that strategic planning is the optimal tool to account for a complex globalized reality.

That being said, it is important to attest that local political leaders, planners, consultants and civil society groups are vastly drawn to learning from “successful” cities, fabricating a process of policy tourism that potentializes the diffusion of perceived best practices, like strategic planning (González, 2010). In this sense, Parnreiter (2011) indicates Barcelona as a “transnational consensus”, and calculates that from 2000 to 2008 at least one foreign delegation was visiting the city per working day, totalling around 4,000 “policy tourists” per year.

A number of mechanisms, networks, public and private actors (consultancies) are relevant for the transfer and diffusion of policies (e.g. UCLG, UN-Habitat, Metropolis, 100 RC, C40, PwC, McKinsey&Company, etc.), promoting and legitimizing best practices. Barcelona is a strong actor in different cities’ networks, such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)³⁵. This

³⁵ <https://www.uclg.org/en/organisation/about>

network has a globally-relevant impact in the diffusion of a set of best practices for urban governance, especially strategic planning. The UCLG, headquartered in Barcelona, is composed of more than 1000 members, with a specific committee dedicated to strategic planning, and close articulation with multilateral organisations, such as the World Bank and UN-Habitat. It also publishes papers with a guide-like structure that explicitly recommends strategic planning.

The Iberoamerican Center of Strategic Urban Development (CIDEU), created by Barcelona's authorities, explicitly aims to "promote and apply Urban Strategic Planning processes to organize sustainable development" (CIDEU, 2017). The CIDEU is a good example of a city network that generates a strong proliferation of a "Barcelona-based" model of strategic planning, reaching over one hundred city members, providing a data bank and virtual learning tools, even an interactive system called "Strategic Plan Online"³⁶.

Since the perceived success of Barcelona, many other localities went through similar processes. Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, is a good example of a city explicitly trying to reproduce Barcelona's achievements. In May of 1993, a seminar called "Rio Barcelona Urban Strategies" was celebrated in Rio de Janeiro, with the attendance of important Catalan experts, such as Jordi Borja. In 2010, with the Olympic perspective for Rio de Janeiro in 2016, Jordi Borja was invited to another, similar seminar.

(...) recibí una invitación para participar en un Seminario Rio-Barcelona en el 2010. El prefeito (jefe de gobierno de

³⁶ <https://www.segib.org/programa/centro-iberoamericano-de-desarrollo-estrategico-urbano-cideu/>

la ciudad), recién elegido proclamaba que el proyecto de Rio se inspiraba en el de Barcelona. En el encuentro asistieron Pascual Maragall (el alcalde de Barcelona que promovió y presidió los JJOO de 1992) y algunos de los principales responsables de los Juegos. (UOC Blog, 2015³⁷)

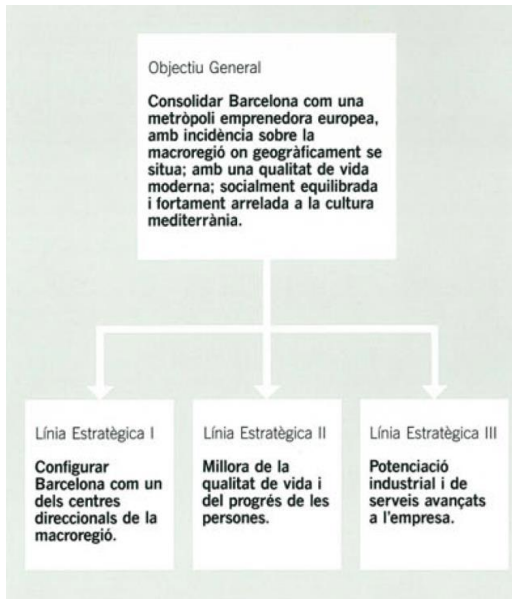
We argue that “international models”, in this case Barcelona, are important triggers to the proliferation of strategic planning and the legitimization of its planning agenda based on green-competitiveness. In order to further understand the connections between the “Barcelona Model” and Rio de Janeiro’s experience with strategic planning, we dive into documentary analysis.

a) Comparing Published Strategic Plans in Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro

Barcelona published 6 strategic plans from 1990 to 2010, and a new plan is on the verge of being released (“Strategic Plan 2030”). In this case, the plans offer a metropolitan scope since 2003 with “The First Barcelona Metropolitan Strategic Plan”. The core values permeating the planning process in the Catalan capital are not different from the patterns found in the past chapters. There is remarkable priority given to competitiveness and sustainability as core values for the city’s future aspirations.

³⁷ Available at: <http://ciudad.blogs.uoc.edu/rio-2016-el-negocio-urbano-o-sin-pan-ni-circo/>.

Figure 3: PEMB General goal and strategic lines



Source: Pla Estratègic Econòmic I Social Barcelona 2000, 1990

Since the first strategic plan, Barcelona and its related expertise were central in the framing of city planning processes in Rio de Janeiro. From this excerpt from Rio de Janeiro's Strategic Plan (2012), one can catch a glimpse of the impact Barcelona's experience with strategic planning has over Rio de Janeiro's aspirations and perceived best-practices:

We've learned with Barcelona's example that, when hosting the Olympic Games, the public power must decide if the city will serve the event or the event will serve the city. We opted, with all certainty, for the second pathway (Rio de Janeiro's Strategic Plan, 2013:229)

Rio de Janeiro’s strategic planning processes are strongly inspired by the Catalan experience, as often declared by important political leaders in seminars, talks and interviews. That being said, it’s important to examine if this process also “materializes” in the published documents. Therefore, we engage in content analysis, comparing the central values activated in Barcelona’s strategic plan, published in 2010, and Rio de Janeiro’s strategic plan, published in 2013. These plans were chosen for the comparison because of their publication dates proximity. In this case, we can assess how the most recently published strategic plan in Barcelona affected the next plan to be published in Rio de Janeiro.

Table 1. Central values in both cities’ strategic plans

	Rio de Janeiro	Barcelona
Competitiveness	Contribute to the formation of a highly competitive business environment and to sustainable economic growth. p.30	(...) the AMB has to face six challenges, directly related to the competitive capacity of its territory and its companies , which will require a commitment to the green economy. p.30
Sustainability	Recognition of Rio as a benchmark in sustainability , prepared for climate change (...). p.174	The Barcelona Metropolitan Area must become a real laboratory for developing and implementing actions for sustainability in the face of climate change , within the framework of the competences that cities have in this field. p. 30

International Recognition	Recognized for hosting major events and hosting decision-making forums for issues of global sustainability and economic development in emerging countries. p.15	To position the AMB as a reference in the new global framework: greater presence in the countries that lead the world and the capital of the Mediterranean p. 30
Global Positioning	Improvement of Rio de Janeiro's position in the business ranking p.185	Consolidating the external position and the internalization of our economy p.23
Branding	Strengthening the Rio brand in relation to sustainability and global leadership on the topic, and global leadership on the topic (...) p. 176	The brand is an important instrument to enhance the competitiveness of a territory and the strengthening of its economic sectors. p.54

It is possible to notice the similarities between these two documents, especially when developing their narrative on the most important challenges to be faced by these cities. The influence of Barcelona's ideas in the 2013 strategic plan published in Rio de Janeiro are remarkable. The values driving both documents are "competitiveness", "sustainability" and "[becoming an] international reference".

It's also interesting to notice the strong emphasis in locating the city as a global reference in certain fields (often related to green-competitiveness) and the importance of the consolidation of the city as a globally recognizable brand. As explained in the previous chapter, these broader values translate into similar strategic lines and concrete projects.

Barcelona is a model for strategic planning, not only to Rio de Janeiro, but to other cities. The content analysis of published strategic plans allows us to identify a relevant rhetorical trend: the indication of other examples of “successful” cities that serve as legitimacy evidence for the strategic plan. Most plans indicate their own set of city models that serve as inspiration, and it is possible to recognize the most frequently-cited cases when comparing documents.

In examining the database of 311 cities with published plans (used in chapter 1) it’s possible to notice interesting patterns. Paris, for example, is the city more often mentioned in strategic plans of other cities (96 times), suggesting a significant influence in urban planning. Only an in-depth case study could provide an exhaustive explanation to this phenomenon, but it can be argued that one of the factors emanates from the historical influence of French cities, especially in the beginning of the 20th century, through the work on large-scale projects of Haussmann and Le Corbusier.

London and New York are also unequivocally two of the most powerful cities in the world, placing consistently in the higher global ranking tiers. London was cited in 50 other documents, while New York figures in 46. Their influence in the formulation of the planning activities of other cities can be explained by several factors. We suggest that it can be partly and simply explained by the logic of “aiming for the top” from other cities. Barcelona is probably the biggest example of a city-model in strategic planning literature, and is the fourth most cited city in published strategic plans (36 documents).

Rio de Janeiro is mentioned in several other published documents, in strategic plans from other important cities in Brazil (e.g. Salvador, São Luis and Belo Horizonte), as well as capitals in Latin America (e.g. Bogota, Lima, Panama and Mexico City), European cities (e.g. Athens and Prague), Asian cities (e.g.

Hong Kong, Mumbai and Ulaanbaatar) and American cities (e.g. San Francisco). If on one hand Rio de Janeiro is not an obvious model to learn from or to emulate, on the other it was one of the first cities to have its first published strategic plan. Similar “dynamic importation schemes”, undertaken by influence of international model cities, occurred in many other places around the world, attesting to the power of a fabricated transnational consensus over broad urban agendas and specific urban projects.

The case study of Rio de Janeiro indicates the importance of a model city to the legitimization of a specific set of values in the crafting of an urban future aspiration. Additionally, the importance of cities such as Barcelona, Paris, London and New York to other cities developing their own strategic plans is noticeable. We can learn from the content analysis of published strategic plans that “successful stories” are often activated in-text, as a way of legitimizing the construction of the plan.

4.4. Trigger 2: Multilateral Agenda-Setting

Best-practices don’t just disseminate across borders unilaterally and unalterably (Gilardi, 2011), they are part of a dynamic transformative process, with peculiar outcomes, depending on its interlocutors, transmitters and receivers, specific contexts and moments in time (McCann, 2011). This proliferation is composed of distinct discursive layers, symbolic properties, interest groups and calibration strategies that can vary from case to case and create linkages with distinct actors (Parnreiter, 2011).

Globally-renowned organizations can exert influence power by suggesting best practices, creating funding schemes, building city networks and producing a specific normalized language for approaching urban challenges,

among many other things (Parnreiter, 2011). Specific multilateral organizations and city networks engender an agenda, setting power by legitimating models for urban governance via reports, awards and conference locations (Goldman, 2011), translating and repackaging local enterprises into replicable best practices around the world.

In this section we argue that specific multilateral organizations have a strong effect in the promotion of a global urban agenda that legitimizes strategic planning as a central methodology for city planning. The “multilateral agenda-setting” is a crucial trigger for understanding the proliferation and replication of strategic planning in this case study, and serves as an interesting indication of a broader trend globally.

Rio de Janeiro is part of a variety of city networks and cooperation schemes, such as the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and the BRICS Policy Centre. The Brazilian city is also one of the few in the country with a municipal planning institute, the IPP-Rio³⁸ (Pereira Passos Institute), which collaborates with UN-Habitat in matters of sustainable urban development.

UN-Habitat appears as a central player in the planning process and in the knowledge production around best-practices and urban challenges in Rio de Janeiro. Since its inception, UN-Habitat has developed a vast array of tools to engage in global policy transfer. In 2001, the United Nations established the World Urban Forum (WUF), focused on the articulation of partners around the globe to face urbanization challenges and develop better solutions. In 2010, the WUF in Rio de Janeiro received over ten thousand contributors, engaging in more than 150 events, sessions, seminars, training events and

³⁸ <http://www.rio.rj.gov.br/web/ipp>

displays from cities around the world. It is the materialization of a space for transnational policy diffusion (McCann 2011).

The former mayor of Barcelona (1997-2006), Joan Clos was selected as the new head of UN-Habitat in 2010. This move emphasizes the importance of the guidance from charismatic leaderships and powerful symbolic representatives of a model of successful urban governance. Similarly, in Rio de Janeiro, from 2009 to 2016, mayor Eduardo Paes played a central leadership role.

UN-Habitat centres its efforts on policy transfer around the globe particularly concerned with urban planning and urban governance, and became a dominant force in the designing of global urban agendas (Leaf, 1998). It is important to notice that UN-Habitat has a more sophisticated role, beyond that of a policy diffusor: It is a network for sharing, exchanging, measuring, comparing and strengthening planning practices (Parnreiter, 2011). It facilitates transnational policies interplays by enabling infrastructures of compilation, interpretation and representation, acting also as a trigger for their motion across borders³⁹.

Rio de Janeiro's case study indicates a strong influence of multilateral organizations and city networks in the consolidation of strategic planning as an internationally legitimate approach for planning system. Additionally, it's important to investigate the impact of this approach in the process of "future aspiration crafting", normalizing a core planning agenda as driver for urban change in Rio de Janeiro.

³⁹ The "Best Practice Data Base", for example, is an open access database with over four thousand "proven solutions" from over 150 countries (<http://mirror.unhabitat.org/bp/bp.list.aspx>).

a) UN-Habitat's and the normalization of Strategic Planning in a global urban agenda

In order to examine the impact of the broader agenda setting processes to the value-system crafting in the case of Rio de Janeiro's aspired future, we investigate UN-Habitat's role in this process. Attention given to urban settlements is energized by multilateral policies and global agreements like the 21st meeting of the Council of Parties (COP 21), and the "New Urban Agenda" (UN-Habitat, 2016⁴⁰).

UN-Habitat publishes several reports every year, often suggesting a set of guidelines that are strongly connected to the mind-set of strategic planning. In some instances, it is explicit, as in the case of the 2005 "Promoting local economic development through strategic planning" report (UN-Habitat, 2005), and in 2009, with the "Global Report on Human Settlements" report (UN-Habitat 2009), in which strategic planning is promoted as an important methodology for urban planning. Regional papers are also an important medium through which UN-Habitat promotes a specific set of principles for urban governance, as noticeable in the papers focused on Latin America, the Caribbean and the African Network of Urban Management Institutions, stimulating strategic planning in these regions (UN-Habitat 2016).

Another aspect of UN-Habitat's published papers are the manuals for implementing strategic planning. The report "The state of the world's cities" paper (UN-Habitat, 2004) unambiguously suggests the need of recalibrating

⁴⁰ "If well-planned and well-managed, urbanization can be a powerful tool for sustainable development for both developing and developed countries." (New Urban Agenda, 2016: 6)

the articulation between urban planning and the market forces⁴¹. The 2010 “Citywide strategic planning: A step by step guide” (UN-Habitat, 2010) is exactly what it sounds like, carefully presenting 10 steps and 32 activities through a long guide that encompasses the roles of urban planners and decision-makers on how to create and maintain the process of strategic planning in different contexts.

It is crucial to highlight the tendency of these manuals to suggest that the leaders of poorer countries should be committed to the relevant stakeholders in the formulation of the plans, and should be open to reviewing the legislation articulated with land use, land administration and planning. The 2010 document (UN-Habitat, 2010) goes a bit further, recommending quick fixes and the avoidance of extensive revision processes.

Irazával (2009) discusses the role of UN-Habitat in promoting a specific set of principles for urban governance in regional papers. The main cases explicated by the author are the papers (see UN-Habitat 2014) focused on Latin America and the Caribbean and its influence on the African Network of Urban Management Institutions, stimulating strategic planning in these regions. There are specific activities that target developing strategic plans in Francophone African cities and active funding, through the European Commission, for the formulation of plans in numerous cities in Somali.

We argue that UN-Habitat plays a crucial role in the construction of a normative framework capable of translating urban challenges to a normalized language, serving as a benchmark for “measuring” and comparing cities around the world, affecting the perceived “best-practices” for urban

⁴¹ This paper’s rationale is concerned with reducing market restraints and emphasizing an entrepreneurial methodology that serves as an enabler of market-driven development.

governance. These effects can be identified not only throughout the planning processes but also in the published strategic planning documents.

Present Situation: The need of policies related to climate change is a trending topic, mainly due to the global UN agreement being signed in the end of 2009 in Copenhagen. Some cities are already announcing their climate change policies (e.g. São Paulo and New York). (Rio de Janeiro's 2009 Strategic Plan, 2009:111)

A telling example is the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015), which activates a cohesive method to structure a global normative framework. The most recent published strategic plan in Rio de Janeiro is explicitly inspired by the Agenda 2030's value-system.

The 2017 - 2020 Strategic Plan structures the short-term actions that integrate the city's initial effort in alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this way, it is integrated in the guidelines of the Sustainable Development Plan of the City of Rio de Janeiro, a plan that is being built with a vision until 2030, in the light of the UN SDGs, with the aim of integrating the commitments into a single planning matrix. (Rio de Janeiro's Strategic Plan "O Rio do Amanhã", 2017:31)

Additionally, this effect is potentialized through the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly goal 11⁴²), creating a specialized approach to urban governance with “measurable” urban indicators related to specific goals.

When compared to the other capitals in the South and Southeast of the country, Rio is still behind in most indicators related to the Sustainable Development Goals established by the UN. (Rio de Janeiro’s Strategic Plan “O Rio do Amanhã”, 2017:90)

This excerpt from the 2017 strategic plan in Rio de Janeiro showcases the impact of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals in the city’s self-evaluation process. By using the technical language provided by Agenda 2030 and the measuring devices promoted by the Sustainable Development Goals (urban indicators), Rio de Janeiro is capable of comparing its own “score” in different dimensions (e.g. poverty, education, gender equality, sustainability, economic growth, etc.) with other cities’ scores, and from there locate itself in relation to the rest of the world.

In short, the case study of Rio de Janeiro highlights UN-Habitat’s central role in the implementation of strategic planning processes and in the crafting of an agenda connected to green-competition. Additionally, this investigation indicates the global scope of the UN and its agenda setting power.

⁴² “11.3. By 2030 enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries” (2030 Agenda, SDG 11: Make Cities and Humans Settlement Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable)

4.5. Trigger 3: Consensus Creation

At this moment it's important to highlight another central trigger identified in the case of Rio de Janeiro: consensus creation (over a "shared" future vision). We argue that this trigger is "built into" strategic planning as a methodology and strengthened by specific political processes. Once strategic planning is implemented in a given city, this trigger potentializes the prevalence of a specific planning agenda over time. The search for a consensus has outcomes that are not limited to the methodology of the plan itself, but also to create a shared understanding of what model of the future city should be pursued and what challenges need to be confronted to get there. Even if each city in the world has a specific situation that requires different calibrations to the planning practice, the challenges faced globally, and the ultimate future goal are already set by this methodology, thus producing a standardization of priorities and the legitimation of the "city of the future" model.

We approach "consensus creation" as a central trigger in the case of Rio de Janeiro for its explicit and consistent emergence since the first strategic planning process in the 1990s until the most recent published plan, in 2017. The ways in which "consensus creation" is operationalized are constantly reliant on strong discursive relevance given to "participation schemes" and "public-private partnerships". This process indicates the importance of an alleged collective planning process that includes civil society and the private sector.

The modelling of aspired urban futures, as mentioned above, activates complex legitimation schemes. Due to its power to socially legitimate projects, formalizing a consensus over a future agenda, connecting "key-actors" and producing an allegedly collectively agreed horizon for the city, participatory

schemes are a critical topic for strategic planning. Influencing and mobilizing groups, organizing projects and “building agreements” is perceived as central to the production of coherent strategies for the city (Healey, 1997), legitimizing specific projects in the present with strong spatially transformative potential.

This vision can be personal and to a certain extent must be; mayors need to be committed, even passionate, about where they want to take their cities. But it also needs to be a vision that stakeholders can make their own. Consensus with the local population and business community can help to improve transparency, information, communication, and partnerships. (McKinsey&Company, 2015:4)

This consensus-seeking process targets a common future vision, shared by these agents and tackled by a rational project (as seen in the second chapter, these future visions are often very similar). It aims to be an “ideology-free” planning method, independent from political landscapes and detached from any party or ideal. We argue that this rhetorical strategy, presumably technical and politically neutral, is, in practice, activating crucial presuppositions, naturalizing certain conceptions and influencing the cities’ future aspirations.

The strength of this SP [strategic plan] lies in its ability to foster disciplinary and imposing consensus among the central actors directly involved in the vision, mission and larger goals to be achieved. [Author’s free translation]

(Plano Estratégico da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro: Rio 2020 mais solidário e mais humano, 2017:18)

The 2017 Rio de Janeiro Strategic Plan explicitly develops the idea of “consensus creation”, but the same logic can be observed in every published document. This process strives for political cohesion and social legitimacy, usually producing participatory schemes in order to develop a formalized consensus over the proposed future aspiration for the city (Albretchs, 2010).

Borja and Castells (1997) go as far as suggesting that the process of strategically seeking future vision and social legitimacy over projects is the end in itself for strategic planning. Despite cities’ specific situations – that would require different calibrations to the planning practice –, the perceptions of the challenges faced globally, and the future goals are already set by this methodology in most plans, thus producing a standardization of priorities.

In this sense, the plan will be a new instrument to intervene in the city, defining immediate actions that allow its transformation and adaptation to the new economic and social environment, solving conflicts between the market’s and the citizen’s logics, seeking objectives and strategic lines that are more appropriate in order to position itself in the “market of cities”. (Rio de Janeiro’s Strategic Plan, 2017:19)

Vainer (2010) argues that Strategic planning’s legitimacy results from an “ideological fabrication” of the consented pathway proposed in the strategic plan as the “only option”, often meaning that the city should be attractive to transnational investments by providing a stable and cohesive landscape, where

political disagreements are often seen as negative destabilization tendencies and not as normal products of a healthy democratic society. In an interesting dialogue with this idea, Randolph (2007), criticizes the process that he illustrates as a “non-negotiable project” of imbuing the city with a business-friendly “aura”, constituting a pathway already chosen, a horizon which is forcedly embraced by the city dwellers.

At this moment, it's central to explore published strategic plans in Rio de Janeiro in order to understand how “consensus creation” is activated textually in the documents and its impacts to the main values being put forward and reproduced. We argue that “consensus creation” legitimizes the planning agenda being activated in strategic planning in the past decades in Rio de Janeiro.

a) Consensus creation through participatory schemes and public-private partnerships

By investigating the published strategic plans in Rio de Janeiro it's noticeable that “consensus creation” is often put forward through “participatory schemes” that aim to legitimize the directions taken by the planning process as values emerging from society. We argue that the fact that most published strategic plans result in very similar agendas, often promoting green-competitiveness, indicates that these participatory processes are often used as legitimization fiction, instead of strategic decision-making devices. Additionally, this investigation identifies the importance of public-private partnerships in strategic planning processes for “consensus creation”, often using these partnerships as the proof of a harmonic conjunction between private and public aspirations for the city's future.

The first strategic plan published in Rio de Janeiro, in 1996, advocated a participatory scheme, stating that it would be a plan that involves all citizens that want to participate: experts, technicians, civil society organization, or any other. With 350 members, the “City Council” is supposedly created to be the materialization of citizens’ participation, serving as an advisory board in the whole process.

At this time, Carlos Vainer, a renowned scholar from the Urban and Regional Planning Institute (IPPUR-Rio de Janeiro), is invited to take part in the planning process as a City Council member. His experience resulted in a published article called “Do liberals also do Urban Planning?” (see Arantes et. al, 2000), where he provides interesting insights on how strategic planning decisions were crafted.

At first site we have a proportional representativeness [in the City Council] of the city's social spectrum. (...) But, in the end, evidently this is not very important: the function of the City Council is merely symbolic. (...) The counsellors do not interfere with the composition of the Director Council or the decisions of the Executive Committee. (...) As the Executive Director clarified [when, in a public debate, he was asked about the lack of democracy in the process] “it would be impossible to manage the debate in a collective [the City Council] that is that heterogeneous”. With this strictly operational concern, it was decided that more homogeneous collectives [the Executive Committee and the Director Council] should be in charge of the administrative task of debating and deliberating. (Arantes et. al, 2000:110)

The participatory process described by Carlos Vainer showcases the importance of “consensus creation” in strategic planning. We argue that, in this case, the participation of civil society is instrumentalized as a “legitimization” tool for the planning agenda being reproduced in the documents, and the overall future aspiration being put forward for the city. All published strategic plans in Rio de Janeiro approach this subject with participatory processes and claims on the importance of people getting involved in a “shared” future vision for the city. In the following table “consensus creation” can be identified in the documents in relation to participatory schemes and the importance of society’s engagement with the aspired vision being put forward by the plan.

Table 2: “Consensus creation” textual fragments by strategic plan

	2009 Strategic Plan	2013 Strategic Plan	2016 Strategic Plan	2017 Strategic Plan
Consensus creation	"Our first step in building a vision for the future was to carry out a diagnosis that identified the main challenges and competitive advantages of the city, as well as Carioca's most striking beliefs and values. " (p.11)	" Performing a popular research with more than 1,000 citizens from Rio de Janeiro and the structuring of the City Council, a high-level advisory forum." (p.19)	"(...) the City Council was created and opinion polls were conducted with in the streets of the city [in the last plan]. However, for Visão Rio 500 [the present plan], eight new forms of listening were created. " (p.37)	"The strength of the Strategic Plan lies in its ability to promote disciplinary and imposing consensus among the central actors directly involved with the vision, mission and major objectives to be achieved." (p.18)

In 2016, the published strategic plan took the participatory processes to a new level by introducing 8 channels of participation (e.g. live-broadcasted events, debates, interviews, pools, congresses, forums, digital platforms, school activities, etc.). Thousands of people took part in this stage of strategic planning. Nonetheless, despite the historical effort from the civil society to participate and imagine the future of Rio de Janeiro, the published document showcases a very similar result related to “strategic pillars” and priorities in its planning agenda. We argue that, once again, participatory processes have very low impact in the actual final published document, serving as a performative act aiming for a “consensus creation”.

Not differently from most plans analysed in the previous chapter, green-competition is a central feature of the planning processes in Rio de Janeiro. As showcased in the following table, the key values and priority given to green-competitiveness are very similar in the last 4 published strategic plans, despite the historical focus on participatory schemes.

Table 3. Rio de Janeiro’s Strategic Plans on green-competition and consensus creation

	2009 Strategic Plan	2013 Strategic Plan	2016 Strategic Plan	2017 Strategic Plan
Green	"Becoming a global reference in sustainable development and environmental	"We aspire to be recognized as a reference world in sustainable development with the preservation of	"Green, sustainable and resilient city." (p.110)	“ <i>City for the Climate</i> includes actions to encourage and promote sustainable and

	preservation." (p.15)	our environmental heritage." (p.15)		resilient urban development." (p.135)
Competitive	"Global recognition for business attraction, reduced unemployment rates and continuous income growth." (p.14)	"Our goal is to be a recognized city globally for the high attractiveness of business (...)" (p.14)	"Competitive, innovative and city of opportunities." (p.158)	" <i>Rio Vocação Global</i> seeks to strengthen the city's position in the world economic scenario." (p.47)

The green city is often operationalized based on the idea of sustainability and global protagonism, and more recently it's noticeable how "resilience" is a new emerging concept. The "competitiveness" strategic pillar is centred around the idea of global recognition, business attraction, and more recently "innovation" is an emerging trend. It's noticeable how strategic planning processes, even if strongly invested in contextual calibrations through participatory schemes and public-private partnerships, result in similar planning agenda in the published documents.

Rio de Janeiro will become a global attraction pole of investments and will compete directly with great cities from developed countries, becoming a great alternative

for the deployment and development of big companies.
(Rio de Janeiro's 2016 Strategic Plan, 2016:167)

The citation above, from Rio de Janeiro's 2016 Strategic Plan, displays a set of values that is present throughout all the other strategic publications. Rio de Janeiro's 2009 and 2012 Strategic Plans are titled "Post-2016: A more competitive and integrated Rio", suggesting its main focus on positioning the city as an important (competitive) player nationally and internationally, a trend also noticeable in every other published document.

When the documents detail the main goals for the city, recurring trends are present: a strong concern with the formation of a highly competitive, business-friendly environment, for sustainable development. In the "expected results" (and similar) sections of the documents we can also identify persisting concepts, such as the improvement of Rio de Janeiro's position in the business rankings.

It's important to understand that the "consensus creation" impetus activated by strategic planning processes is potentialized by the interplay between private and public actors. Private actors play a central role in this dynamic, from consultants and agents, to powerful firms (often North American and Western European) in the global proliferation of urban knowledge. It's also important to highlight the connection between the normative pressures exerted from these consultants and the "normative isomorphism" associated with professionalization:

Following Larson (1977) and Collins (1979), we interpret professionalization as the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control "the production of producers" (Larson, 1977:52), and to establish a cognitive base and

legitimation for their occupational autonomy. (Powell, 2000:152)

Additionally, new communication technologies enable more efficient connection by spatially distant actors – and the rise of consultancies, agencies and think tanks (Goldman, 2011). The emergence and influence of specific private actors can be noticed in processes of “fast policy transfer” (Peck and Theodore, 2001) activated by the need of certain localities (especially the ones under competitive stress) to embrace “off-the-shelf” policies already tested and legitimized elsewhere, brought by consultants (often driven by their own private pressure of acquiring contracts [McCann, 2010]).

The articulation between the local government and global firms attest to the permeability of strategic planning to private actors. Rapport (2013) engenders a critical investigation of global intelligence corporations (GIC) and argues that, despite the small scale of such expert groups, their influence power is substantial. Rio de Janeiro’s case is no different, with private consultancy groups present in its strategic planning processes.

For the development of this new plan we have the help of a recognized global strategic consulting firm, McKinsey & Company, who accompanied the City Hall staff over the seven months of work. Between September 2011 and March 2012 City Hall and McKinsey teams completed activities, through proven methodologies, for vision and planning, seeking to elaborate truly ambitious proposals for our city (Rio de Janeiro’s 2012 Strategic Plan, 2012:19)

McKinsey&Company has been, until now, a relevant global actor in producing knowledge related to urban governance. The debate over connecting public and private actors for urban planning is a central one in the development of city-planning processes.

In addition, great city leaders accept that not every service, from information services to park maintenance, needs to be provided directly by government personnel, and they acknowledge that the mandate for government changes over time. Although authorities may be wary of giving up control, well-designed public–private partnerships have proved capable of delivering infrastructure and services at lower cost and higher quality. (McKinsey&Company, 2015:2)

A by-product of this approximation in Rio de Janeiro’s case is the consolidation of public-private partnerships. It ended up striking initial partnership with 40 companies in 1996, meaning that “the decision to search funds from the private sector, from the beginning, is unprecedented in the history of city strategic planning [in Brazil]” (Rio de Janeiro’s Strategic Plan, 1996). This will become a trend in every edition of Rio’s strategic plan and the presence of private actors in urban strategic planning is now a common practice worldwide.

As discussed in this chapter, strategic planning global emergence can be connected, among many other factors, to the overall geopolitical historical context that consolidated “interlocal competition” and a neoliberal turn in the perceived global urban agenda. That being said, the relevance given to bridging public and private values through “public-private partnerships”

indicates a common trend in strategic planning practice, in the case of Rio de Janeiro. We argue that these partnerships are crucial to “consensus creation”, triggering the legitimization of strategic planning.

Conclusively, we learn from the documentary analysis that Rio de Janeiro’s strategic planning experience has been strongly connected to the development of participatory schemes and public-private partnerships in order to “listen to civil society” but, the resulting priorities, goals, projects and future aspirations were often very similar in every published plan. We argue that strategic planning as a methodology (and mindset for planners) is impregnated with a core value-system from the beginning, which is the actual driving force for the plan’s future vision and proposed projects, weakening the transformative power of the insights acquired by participatory schemes. In short, the pathway seems to be already set before the planning process even starts.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter examined the main triggers in the proliferation and legitimization of a planning agenda related to “green-competitiveness” in Rio de Janeiro, suggesting their relevance in global flows of best-practices. Our findings bring to light the central role played by Barcelona as an international model to be emulated by other cities. We also discussed the global relevance of UN-Habitat in consolidating best-practices and facilitating their proliferation. Finally, we engaged with the debate over interlocal competition and the important role played by strategic planning as a methodology that is crucial for cities concerned with their competitiveness and global status.

The main trends related to the proliferation of urban governance best practices discussed in this chapter lead to the conclusion that strategic planning is a

central feature of the enactment of urban competitiveness regardless of its correspondence (as a beneficial policy choice) to local particularities. This article argues that strategic planning's significance rests not only on its technical official applications, but, more importantly, in its symbolic power as a comparative advantage for cities. This symbolic trait is crafted by transcalar proliferation channels, from which we highlight the crucial role of multilateral organizations, the creation of transnational consensus through "city success models" and the operationalization of a geopolitical strategy based on green-competition.

Rio de Janeiro's case study exposed crucial processes that are idiosyncratic to that Brazilian city, ranging from its deep inspiration in the Catalan experience with Barcelona's strategic plan, UN-Habitat's importance to the city's planning institute and documents, and the strong focus on interlocal competition, public-private partnerships and consensus creation. At this moment, it's important to highlight that all triggers investigated in this chapter can be textually identified in each one of the 6 published strategic plans.

Barcelona was explicitly the model for the first strategic plan, and although its weight was not identical in every planning process, even in the 2017 plan the city is still being mentioned as an example for Rio de Janeiro. UN-Habitat's influence is also noticeable, from the 1992 congress hosted by Rio de Janeiro until the 2017 strategic plan that is based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework. Finally, consensus creation was explicitly a central topic in every planning process until the most recently published plan.

Additionally, even if the scope of this chapter was not the generalization of its findings, we argue that it indicates important trends that can be identified elsewhere: the discursive importance of a "successful" city model for the legitimacy of strategic planning; the normalization of a normative framework

on urban governance that emanates from multilateral organizations such as the UN and; the symbolic importance of strategic planning as a tool for navigating a geopolitical strategy based on interlocal competition.

The case study investigation framework was constructed inductively, mainly relying on documentary analysis, but the main takeaways can be applied to the investigation of strategic planning in other locations. Ghana's capital, Accra, is an interesting example for identifying patterns similar to the Brazilian case.

In 1991, Accra published its Strategic Plan in association with the UNDP and UN-Habitat. More recently, in 2019, Accra's association with the "100 Resilient Cities" network resulted in the publication of its Resilience Strategy. This document, while focused on resilience, has important similarities to the structure of strategic planning documents based on a future vision and strategic pillars. Accra's Resilience Strategy is based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, explicitly structuring its own goals in accordance with the UN framework (a chapter is called "Connection to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals).

Both documents' vision and strategic pillars are based on sustainable economic development, showcasing the tendency of a geopolitical strategy based on green-competitiveness. Additionally, in both cases the UN connection indicates the importance of its normative framework in the aspiration value-system crafting for the future plans of this African city.

When comparing the 2008 and 2018 GaWC ranking results, Accra is one of the cities with the best progression rate, climbing three steps in the global ranking tiers, from "High Sufficiency" to "Gamma+". It's fair to assume that we can identify in Accra the importance of strategic planning to navigate a geopolitical strategy in the direction of neoliberalism, in accordance with a broader national tendency.

Ghana therefore provides an example of a developing country which started its economic life greatly influenced by a planning strategy with strong state controls and, subsequently, made a complete turnaround, adopting a neoliberal strategy which, in some ways, is even more 'liberal' than that followed by some of its mentors in the Western world. (Huq and Tribe, 2017:47).

Conclusively, this chapter's case study improves our grasp on the complex processes of unequal urbanization and the role of strategic planning in Rio de Janeiro's case and more general tendencies to be investigated elsewhere. Rio de Janeiro's study identified specific triggers for the implementation of strategic planning and its planning agenda that result in a strong similarity with published documents from the last 21 years. We argue that strategic planning processes normalize a set of core values for the construction of urban future aspirations, based on international models, global normative frameworks and geopolitical strategies concerned with interlocal competition.

5. CONCLUSION

In this research we investigated strategic planning processes by examining the proliferation of this city planning method and mindset through the examination of official publications in 373 cities in the first chapter, by undertaking qualitative content analysis of 40 published plans from different cities in every world region in the second chapter, and by diving into a case study of the main triggers responsible for the proliferation and reproduction of 6 strategic plans for the same city in the past three decades.

In the first and second chapters the investigation theoretical and methodological foundations are laid out, setting up the framework in which we approach the research goals. We chose to structure this thesis in three main chapters, examining strategic planning processes in different scales, from an exploratory global account, to a comparative documentary analysis and a single case study.

The third chapter has the most recent GaWC Global City Ranking as the benchmark for investigating cities around the world and identifying their preferred planning practices. By constructing a typology and cataloguing published documents we mapped the cities with positive results for published strategic plans.

This investigation provides a better understanding of the magnitude and shape of strategic planning's proliferation as a city-planning methodology worldwide. From the initial 373 cities, 311 have at least one published strategic plan. These cities are from every world region and account for 115 different countries (from which 92 cities are capitals). It's also noticeable that strategic planning is an ascending trend, since while 5% of the database of plans were published in the 1990s, 21% were published in the 2000s, and 68% in the 2010s.

We also learned that there are cities from every GaWC global rank tier (Alpha++ to Sufficiency) with published strategic plans. Alpha, Alpha+ and Alpha++ (the highest tiers, indicating the most globally relevant cities) are 100% constituted by cities with published strategic plans, and only 2 out of 22 cities in the Alpha- tier have no strategic plan. It's also important to highlight interesting findings when zooming into specific cases, since it's observable that most cities without published strategic plans have indirect connections to this methodology by being part of a broader strategic plan (regional or national).

The third chapter shows the global relevance of strategic planning as a prominent city planning methodology. We argue that choosing specific methodologies to face urban challenges, instead of others, indicates more than a technical election, but also an “ideological” preference connected to a specific mind-set being reproduced by strategic planning. The planning process is intimately related to the construction and consolidation of a future aspiration for the city, legitimizing a specific narrative over what pathways should be taken. That being said, the first chapter suggests that strategic planning is a relevant planning methodology across the border and its qualitative impact should be further investigated.

Consecutively, in chapter four we follow the clues brought forth in the previous chapter by creating a sample of 40 cities from the database of 311 cities with published strategic plans (focusing on regional balance, global ranking positioning balance and recent publishing dates), in order to have an in-depth exploration of the qualitative impact of strategic planning as a methodology to the final published documents. We do it by undertaking thematic qualitative analysis, identifying the most common themes in the published documents and comparing the plans to track patterns.

This investigation identified dominant values emerging from the documentary analysis. Firstly, most plans have really similar structures, focused on proposing a “future vision” for the city and constructing “strategic pillars” that would steer the planning process to reach the city goals. Despite the inherited cultural, political and social differences between the studied cities and their related strategic plans, very similar values are replicated in the documents, especially “green-competitiveness”.

In chapter four we learned that the effect of strategic planning on city planning goes beyond its alleged technical role as a methodology. The published documents using this methodology show more than a similar structure, but the legitimization of a reproduced planning agenda that impacts how cities' future aspirations are constructed, what priorities are chosen and what kind of projects are proposed. The extreme similarities between published documents exposes a strong “ideological” turn for urban governance in the direction of “green-competitiveness” between cities.

Chapter five brings this discussion to a single case-study, using the insights from previous chapters to identify the main triggers in the proliferation and reproduction of strategic planning. We suggest that this kind of investigation should not aim to be generalized, since the mechanisms explaining the proliferation and reproduction of urban policies are complex, multi-dimensional and path-dependent. Nonetheless, we argue that using Rio de Janeiro as a case study for grasping the most prominent processes in the normalization of strategic planning as the “go-to” planning option, provides important lessons for a refined grasp on strategic planning’s global relevance.

In this chapter we investigated three main triggers in the case of Rio de Janeiro: international models, clearing-house functions and consensus creation. By approaching this examination with a combination of historical

and documentary investigation, we suggest that Rio de Janeiro had a political landscape in the 1990s with ideological synergy to strategic planning's mindset, producing the first publication in 1996.

We identified the importance of Barcelona as a model being emulated by Rio de Janeiro, explicitly both in public speech and in the documents. Additionally, the clearing-house function of multilateral organizations such as UN-Habitat play a crucial role in legitimizing best-practices and consolidating specific urban agendas. Finally, strategic planning processes in Rio de Janeiro are concerned with the legitimization of its agenda by engaging in "consensus creation". We argue that this is done mainly through the creation of mostly performative participatory schemes in the planning process and public-private partnerships. We argue that these triggers are central for the global proliferation of strategic planning as a "best-practice" for city planning, normalizing its technical procedures and replicating a specific "framing" of urban challenges and appropriate urban projects designed to face them.

This investigation also articulates this homogenization of planning approaches to a broader discussion put forward by the "new institutionalism" literature, especially in relation to diffusion and its main mechanisms: coercive, mimetic and normative pressures. As identified in the case study, we can bridge these concepts to strategic planning's proliferation processes. An interesting pathway for enquiry in a future research project can dive deeper into this dialogue and examine if these mechanisms are mutually reinforcing one another, or it could be that certain mechanisms are predominant and others less central.

One of the main arguments put forward in this research is the resulting planning agenda replicated in the proliferation of strategic planning and its inability to address context-specific problems. That opens up an interesting

dialogue with an already existing debate related to international organizations' (e.g. World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) role in the "legitimization" of a rigid development agenda for different national contexts around the world (see Mignolo, 2002) reproducing what would be a colonial structure of knowledge and power (Shahjahan, 2016).

Another interesting horizon for research would include other case studies with different attributes, and create interesting comparative studies. One way of doing so would be exploring a "negative case analysis" (Allen, 2017) of a city that employs different planning methodologies in contrast to strategic planning. A thought-provoking approach would be to compare how different the emerging planning agenda are from the strategic planning agenda studied in the present work. Additionally, this discussion can provide insights in relation to how different cities can operate more "freely" in relation to replicated planning agendas because of their differential power status or global positioning characteristics.

At this moment it's interesting to indicate horizons for city planning in general, in order to advance our debates over a more democratic approach to urban governance. A critical task for energizing this methodology for city planning is generating better contextual calibrations (or at least having this concern), articulating planners, local actors and "on-the-ground practices". "Local Actors" in this context indicates the local perception of the urban phenomenon, activated by local intellectual perspectives and expertise (scholars, planners and local political powers). "On-the-ground Practices" are connected to local perceptions of urban practice and narratives. In other words, the experience of ordinary people in their everyday lives. An urban planning process that is not sensitive to its own local context presents many dangers, as

explained by Anguelovski et.al. (2018) when investigating the green city orthodoxy and gentrification:

Our research points to the fact that planners are more likely to neglect the impacts of their plans on the exchange values of real estate and that they are often imprisoned in a logic of competitive urbanism and city (re)branding. (Anguelovski et.al., 2018:30)

In this research we investigated the proliferation of a planning agenda that is based on green-competitiveness and enabled via Strategic Planning. It's fair to suggest that this can be understood, in Connolly's (2019) terms as a "planning orthodoxy". The author argues that Jane Jacobs' work marks a turning point on the field of urban planning, by challenging the "Radiant Garden City Beautiful orthodoxy". Interestingly, for Connolly (2019) this movement gave birth to the "Smart Sustainable Resilient City" planning orthodoxy. In accordance with this idea, in this work we identified the global scope of strategic planning's proliferation and the pervasiveness of "green-competition" related values in the published documents, suggesting the relevance of the "planning orthodoxy" concept.

Additionally, the dialogue with green planning literature is a fertile pathway for advancing this research, expanding our understanding on crucial topics such as green gentrification (see Anguelovski, 2016 and Checker, 2011)

Few have questioned urban greening as an orthodox value for progressive planning, but an emerging literature is

beginning to interrogate whether greening efforts—especially the kinds awarded the Jane Jacobs Medal in New York City—are in fact helping or hindering the cause of social equity. This literature examines the relationship between green infrastructure and gentrification, and how the Smart Sustainable Resilient City framework both supports and conceals this relationship. (Connolly, 2019:66)

We argue that some of the research tools used in this work offer interesting ways of scrutinizing the relation between urban planning and green gentrification, especially using documentary and thematic analysis in order to connect proposed urban projects with actual implementation. We argue that the challenge of constructing just cities is multidimensional and an important "battlefront" is the urban planning process. That being said, a more democratic planning process capable of engaging and assessing the impacts of urban projects implementation is crucial for facing green gentrification trends. The "green-competitiveness orthodoxy" described in the present work should not be read as a resigned look into strategic planning, but as an effort to spot improving opportunities.

Jane Jacobs taught planners that homogenization kills the forces that make cities great, but her more important lesson was in teaching the field how to question its own orthodoxy. There is much work to be done in order to create a clear counter institutional position relative to the Smart Sustainable Resilient City and to create the conditions for that position to be adopted. (Connolly, 2019:69)

An exciting pathway for further exploration of this research topic would be a more fine-grained analysis of the politics of strategic planning processes. That would open up a rich discussion related to political resistance and the “fractured public interest” (Scott, 2002), advancing the debate over the conflictual trends in the strategic planning process and implementation.

It’s important to highlight that this research aimed at a specific stage of this process, not being able to tackle the actual transformation between the planning documents and the implementation of urban projects. This is a stage that must be enquired, mainly through case and comparative studies, unveiling the conflictual political process underlying the implementation of urban projects in different urban settings (see Enrico, 2015).

It is crucial to scrutinize the assumptions in global discourse that drive urban policies, confronting all-encompassing narratives with already existing concepts and theorizations in specific contexts, with peculiar institutional landscapes and cultural backgrounds. An example of “situating research in practice” (Lawhon; Ernstson and Silver, 2014) is found in Edgar Pieterse (2018) engagement in criticizing the idea that conventional understandings of cities serve as references that guide research and urban policies. Pieterse (2018) argues that, on the contrary, everyday practices should ignite the debate and inform the theory of urbanization and its implications for urban policies (see also Simone, 2004).

The argument is that this type of work will reorient theory-making and stabilize a different image of the city— what it is (ontological difference), how it works (epistemological difference), whom it is for (moral), and

how it can be changed (political project). (Lawhon; Ernstson and Silver, 2014:11)

It is essential to engage in a cooperative cross-pollination between policy and academic literatures and the creation of dynamic and permeable goals and aspirations for the urban future. This process is not the same as passively replicating global values and creating homogeneous city models. On the contrary, it critically assesses and scrutinizes the offered guidelines and attunes these projections to local aspirations.

This interaction cannot be legitimated without being informed by on-the-ground practices, narratives and the voices of ordinary people, in a democratic and participatory fashion. Urban planning should be centred on producing refined methodologies that engage the population into the planning practice process, not only in the vetting of the final proposals. The expected outcome is working towards the creation of a cohesive framework with clear and relevant normative aspirations – calibrated by localized knowledge and on-the-ground practices – and operationalized by a solid governance structure.

Finally, in this research we aimed at contributing to the existing literature by exploring an original approach that articulates urban planning with “aspiration-crafting”. By doing so we argue that the way in which cities are planned emerges from pre-existing replicated planning agendas with specific values (often related to green-competitiveness). In conclusion, this research highlights the conceptual “battle” over the desired future of cities, often portrayed in a replicated value-system and operationalized with a normalized planning agenda. We argue that a critical (re)framing of urban challenges and the consecutive suitable action tools is crucial for a more just and democratic

process of urban transformation that is capable of efficient contextual calibrations.

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