The Urban Planning Diagnostic Tool

Why does the City's Urban Planning System need to be assessed?

Cities might be the most complex of human inventions. They are dynamic containers of intertwined and interdependent social, economic, environmental, and spatial components that shape our living condition in every aspect. Cities are also shaped by local political, cultural, and economic systems that differ from one context to the other, usually reflected in a variety of decision-making systems and approaches.

One of the most powerful of these decision-making processes is Urban and territorial planning, which tries to articulate competing interests, conflicting rationalities, strategies, and visions to realize economic, social, cultural, and environmental goals. Achieving a balanced and sustainable development through spatial strategies has been a long-lasting challenge for cities around the world, challenging their capacity to cope with rapid growth, disasters, climate change, just to name a few.

We believe that the way towards inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities begins with the fundamental exercise of assessing the institutional, technical, and financial capacity of cities to deal with those challenges and identify the strengths and gaps in the planning policy framework to better assist cities in achieving their development goals. Hence the relevance of the planning tool.

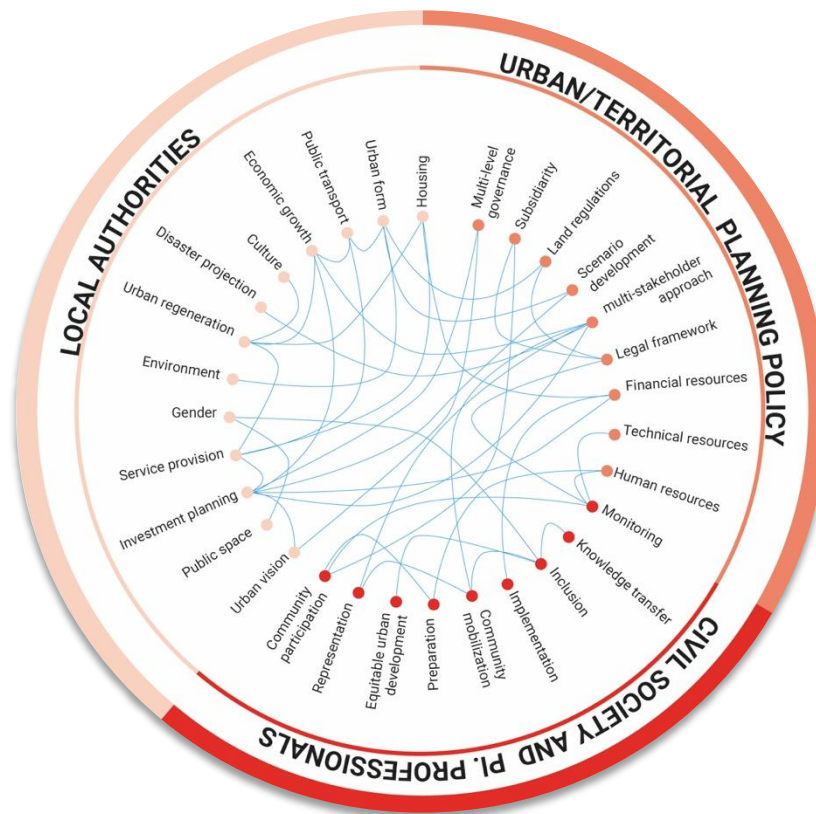## What is the Urban Planning Diagnostic Tool?

The **Urban Planning Diagnostic Tool** is a **digital survey** that aims to **diagnose and understand** the urban and territorial **planning system** in cities at **different scales**. It assesses their institutional, governance and technical **capacity** to respond to the challenges of urban development. It **deconstructs** the different aspects of planning (participation, inclusiveness, urban governance, sustainability, etc) to identify gaps and help cities strengthen their planning system.

It provides recommendations based on existing literature such as **UN-Habitat International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning** as well as other recognized sources. The tool also refers to **case studies and ongoing programs** to better contextualize the tool.

How does It Work?

The Urban Planning Diagnostic Tool consists of **3 themes, Urban/Territorial Policy Framework, Local Authorities, Civil Society & Planning Professionals**, and covers 107 questions in different sub-themes. These themes are interlinked, and aim to deconstruct the components of urban and territorial planning at the institutional, strategic and implementation level. They also identify the different urban planning actors and their contribution in the elaboration, implementation, and monitoring of urban strategies.

SDG Cities
Global Initiative

The survey takes into consideration the contextual diversity of cities, both in terms of their institutional constellations and cultural specificities. It therefore designed to encompass those differences and understand how an integrative and sustainable urban development can be achieved in different contexts.

The Diagnostic Tool

The tools contain two main steps, an assessment survey and a recommendation report, to provide an overview of city's urban planning capacity.

Assessment Survey
In the Urban Planning assessment survey, respondents will need to answer three tiers questions to provide general concept of the topic (tier 1), more detailed info (tier 2), and extra knowledge about city's performance (tier 3). The questions will include Yes/No questions, Linkert Scale Questions, Single Choice questions, Multiple Choice questions, and Test questions.

Example of questions in assessment survey:

Q2.2_ Is the planning approach/system integrated and aiming at a multi-sectoral approach?

1   The majority of the respondents agree that

2   Significant portion of the respondents are unsure whether the

3   The majority of the respondents disagree that

Recommendation Report

In the Urban Planning Recommendation Report, it will aggregate results from all respondents and calculate the scores of the questions, the sub-themes, and the themes. The score will be shown in a traffic light system in **Red**, **Yellow**, and **Green**. Red means the area needs immediate focus or action, Yellow means this area can require strengthening and support, Green means the area is a strength of a city, while also something to maintain and advance further. Direct recommendation and narrative recommendation will be generated for further guidance on relevant topics according to the aggregated scores.

Example for direct recommendation:

Theme: Urban planning as a driver of local economic development

Take advantage of urban and territorial planning and associated progressive zoning regulations, such as form- or performance-based zoning- to strengthen land markets management, and to enable a market for development rights and mobilize urban finance. This can be combined with diversification of different financial sources to cover capital, operation and maintenance costs including local taxes, endogenous income, public-private partnerships, private financing, and initiatives led by communities or co-operatives.

Example for narrative recommendation:

If yes below 33%

It is therefore **highly recommended to establish horizontal** and **multilevel** integration of the planning system. This could help to reduce friction and conflicts between the different (sectorial) stakeholders, coordinate sector policies, concepts, objectives and actions towards a common goal, to avoid misleading development and to capture the inherent synergy.

(UN-Habitat) See "Our City Plans": https://unhabitat.org/our-city-plans-an-incremental-and-participatory-toolbox-for-urban-planning

If yes (33%-66%)

"name of city" is encouraged to **strengthen** horizontal (inter-ministerial and/or inter-municipal cooperation) and multilevel (decentralization and subsidiarity) integration of the planning system.

If yes (>66%)

This area is crucial in determining the performance of the planning system and **should continue** to be part of the city's strength.