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This study is funded by the Interreg MED Project CO-EVOLVE, co-financed by the European regional development fund (grant reference: 1MED_15_3.1.).

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Tourism-driven strategic planning

Guidelines for the co–evolution of human activities
and natural system for the development
of sustainable coastal and maritime tourism





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ISBN 978-88-255-2782-7

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I edition: September 2019


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Introduction

The aim of this book is to provide useful guidelines to Co-Evolve Pilot Areas, and other Mediterranean areas, to develop and implement an effective strategic plan to address a sustainable tourism co-evolution. The main scope of the guidelines is to provide Public Administrations, in charge of construct and promote plans at local level, an operative and easily applicable tool to construct place-based strategic plans coherent with ICZM principles and Sustainable Coastal Tourism main goals.

The purpose of tourism-driven strategic planning is to define a clear vision of what a place could be in the long terms and set the most feasible methods of implementing policies. Within Co-Evolve project, the Guidelines for tourism-driven strategic planning are the results of the efforts made at European and national levels to promote an integrate and sustainable development of coastal and maritime areas, increasing connections, enhancing the valorisation of local peculiarities and reducing cumulative pressure.



These guidelines are organized in two main parts. The first part, Chapter 1, describes what is the strategic planning and the main principles that address it. Furthermore, starting from a review of the literature available, it examines the role of strategic planning in coastal areas and its relation with Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) principles and goals.

Finally, the chapter describes how the strategic planning can be used for tourism development in coastal areas in complete integration with the application of ICZM planning tool. The second part of the book are the Guidelines elaborated by Luav for developing tourism-driven strategic plans according to Co-Evolve projects steps and outputs. In these guidelines the whole planning process is divided in six essential Steps. Each step is explained in detail and the tools that can be used in each step reported.

In conclusion, some reflexions and elements of discussion are reported to stimulate future guidelines' enhancement.



1. Towards a tourism-driven strategic planning

1.1 Strategic Planning

Coastal areas, as cities and towns, are faced with resource and capacity constraints to manage the process of development. Strategic planning is a management tool that determines the direction in which an organisation is moving, and how it will get there (Albrechts et al., 2003).

Strategic planning determines the direction of development of a specific territorial area, in the context of its current profile and SWOT analysis. This approach helps to respond to fast-moving events, to manage change and to improve the quality of life. It is not a static process: it must change to reflect the changing situation. Inevitably, the process moves forward and backward several times before arriving at the final set of decisions.

Strategic planning helps to answer questions like:

- Which areas should receive which type of growth?
- How can the existing economic base be preserved and expanded?
- How can quality of life be protected and enhanced?

Strategic planning and plans in no way substitute for the spatial planning process and spatial plans proposed to be prepared at various levels. The strategic planning process guides development in the direction of those strategic priorities identified by all stakeholders through a consultative process. (Kay & Alder, 1999) Strategic planning reflects the complex and continuous process of territorial change.

The following attributes, when combined effectively, define a successful and comprehensive strategic planning process:

- It is oriented towards the future and attempts to foresee how the world could be different five to ten years from now. It is aimed at setting the area's development direction based on what this future is likely to look like;
- It is flexible and oriented towards the larger picture. It aligns the specific context (cities, towns, neighborhood etc.) with its environment, setting a context for meeting goals and providing a framework and direction to achieve the desired future;
- It creates a framework for competitive advantage through thorough analysis of the context, its internal and external environment, and its potential. This enables public authorities to respond to the emerging trends, events, challenges, and opportunities within the framework of the vision and mission they have developed through the strategic planning process;
- It is a qualitative, idea-driven process. It integrates "soft" data that are not always supported quantitatively, such as experiences, intuition and ideas, and involves stakeholders in the ongoing dialogue with the aim of providing a clear vision and focus for the city;
- It allows public authorities to focus, because it is a process of dynamic, continuous self-analysis.

Box 1

Strategic planning seeks the answers to three fundamental questions:

- **Where are we now?**
(What is the present status, situation or condition of the city?)
- **Where do we want to go?**
(Where would the city like to go or what direction it is taking?)
- **How do we get there?**
(How would the city like to get there?)

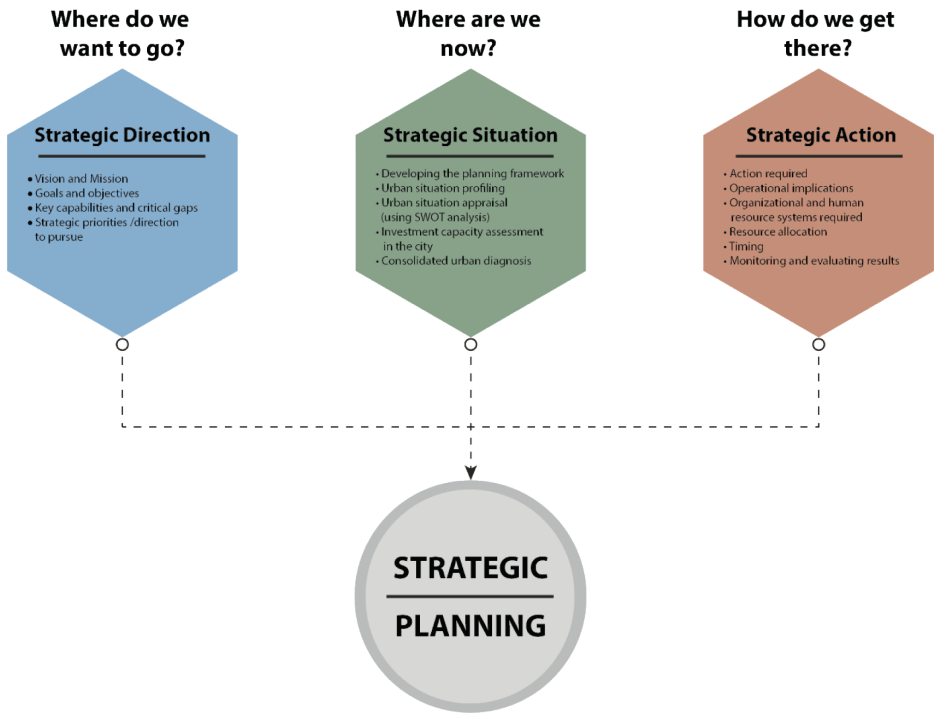


Figure 1. *Urban Strategic Planning Process. (Source UN-Habitat, 2007 elaborated by luav)*

Strategic planning can be used to address specific concerns or broad range of issues. It is about co-operation at organisational, local and regional levels. It has potential to mobilise resources and co-ordinate activities on a wide scale.

Strategic Planning is distinct from the conventional planning approaches such as master plans or comprehensive development plans, in a number of ways. As stated above, it is a dynamic process, inclusive and participatory, with an eye on implementation. Further, it is selective, focusing on a few priorities at a time, rather than comprehensive and all-encompassing. The differences between the two approaches are shown in Figure 2 on the following page.

Strategic planning is the process that drives the inclusive approach being advocated through the strategic planning process. It is based on a comprehensive situation assessment, or situation analysis. Further, it involves an inclusive consultation process for development of a vision, mission, goal and objectives; setting priorities and strategic directions; and defining action plans.

Strategic planning

Decentralized approach (bottom up)

Process – oriented and action – oriented

Combination of responsive and proactive

Flexible

Starts with consensus on issues

Planning budgeting and implementation integrated

Focused and selective - Target: Identify and resolve criticalities. Strategy: long term urban development
Strong assessment of internal and external environment (situation)

Expects new trends, discontinuities and surprises

Interactive with range of stakeholders

Political / multi-stakeholder awareness and involvement

Implementation by empowerment



Conventional planning

Centralized approach (top - down)

Product – oriented (the plan)

Driven only by proactive strategies

Rigid

Starts with consensus on “power to enforce”

Planning separated from implementation
(and therefore, budgeting)
Comprehensive

Limited or politically motivated assessment of situation

Assumes that current trends will continue in the future

Based largely on data rather than stakeholder engagement

Administrative orientation and awareness

Implementation of directive

Figure 2. *Strategic Planning Vs Conventional Planning Approaches. (Source: UN-Habitat, 2007)*

1.1.1 Main principles of Strategic Planning

The norms of a good territorial governance provide the basis for the strategic planning process. Participation and civic engagement is sought at various levels and through a variety of mechanisms such as cross-sectoral teams (Municipal Planning Team, City Profiling Team and Investment Capacity Team), consultations and issue-specific working groups. Transparency and accountability is ensured through participatory action planning, resource mobilisation and resource allocation. Sustainability is guaranteed by facilitating access to information in order to help the stakeholders make informed choices.

Efficiency is ensured by mobilising and involving stakeholders in implementation of projects as well as in operation and maintenance of services (UNWTO, UNEP, WMO, 2008).

A more detailed description of the norms of Good Governance and their significance in the strategic planning process, applied to urban and territorial areas, is provided below.