

18.18. Strategic alignment

Project Name: CONNECTING Nature (Grant Agreement no. 730222)

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Strategic alignment	Participatory Planning and Governance
<p>Description and justification</p>	<p>As complex societal problems cannot be addressed through siloed approaches but require the active search for synergies in terms of how different problems relate to one another and how addressing one problem might reproduce another. Multifunctional solutions like nature-based solutions offer the potential to address multiple policy priorities and goals simultaneously. Therefore, the governance of nature-based solutions cannot be separated from urban governance of other policy priorities and goals such as mobility, health, climate resilience etc., and requires cross-sectoral, multi-scale and inclusive approaches in terms of who is best placed to ensure development, delivery and ongoing sustainability of the nature-based solution and how effective governance networks can be fostered (Buijs et al., 2018; Pauleit et al., 2016; Kabisch et al., 2017). This requires alignment with broader social, political and business priorities and goals of a city and of a city region.</p> <p>Strategic alignment is widely discussed in organisation and business management literatures. In general terms, strategic alignment is the process of aligning an organisation's decisions, actions and resources such that they support the achievement of strategic goals. In other words, it means that all elements of an organisation, and each activity and project are arranged in such a way as to best support the fulfilment of its long-term purpose (Trevor and Varcoe 2016). Strategic alignment also means fit between an organisation's strategic priorities and its environment (Walter et al. 2012). In relation to urban governance, Hölscher et al. (2019) define strategic alignment as the orientation towards shared sustainability and resilience goals in the long-term that provide common reference points for concerted action and helps to move from problem-focused to solution-oriented approaches. This means, essentially, that every task should be able to be linked to an overarching vision.</p> <p>Strategic alignment with regard to nature-based solutions means that nature-based solutions are strategically linked to the city governments' goals, strategies and agendas, and vice versa. Strategic alignment has many benefits for nature-based solutions implementation. Overall, several studies found that the level of strategic alignment of an</p>

organisation explains a large degree of the difference in performance between organisations (Al Khalifa 2016; Walter et al. 2012). Positioning individual issues and priorities such as nature-based solutions within broader goals serves to identify synergies and trade-offs across sectors, scales and time (McPhearson et al. 2017). It also helps local policymakers or practitioners build the case and communicate how nature-based solutions can generate wider benefit. In turn, this will help build alliances with different partners who have different interests (Loorbach et al. 2015). For example, a nature-based solution could support people getting healthier by providing space for exercise and help to increase biodiversity and stormwater management. These benefits could be communicated to organisations working to improve residents health and wellbeing, to those working to improve the natural environment, to maintaining open spaces and to development planning organisations.

Strategic alignment builds on buy-in and support (Walter et al. 2012). Thus, it needs to be co-created to ensure that all interests are heard, increase ownership, deal with conflicts, safeguard against overlooking issues of social justice and mediate good compatibility between knowledge and different contexts (Loorbach et al. 2015; Wittmayer et al. 2014). Strategic alignment also implies that resources are deployed towards new behaviours, processes and practices (and away from older, less strategic areas) (Myler 2013). This means that a vision is also translated into (political, financial and institutional) incentives and conditions for working towards the vision, and that the contribution of each project to the strategic goals is evaluated. This involves incorporating long-term and multi-scale thinking into decision-making, implementation processes and performance reviews as well as decisively clarifying costs, benefits and responsibilities at systemic levels for taking up action in alignment with the long-term goals (Loorbach 2014; Hodson and Marvin 2010).

Trevor and Varcoe (2016) present a simple test to evaluate strategic alignment of an organization, based on two crucial dimensions: (1) *Fit between strategy and organisation's purpose*. Purpose is what the organisation is trying to achieve. Strategy is how the organisation will achieve it. Purpose is enduring – it is the north star towards which the company should point. Strategy involves choices about what activities and projects to do to achieve the purpose. In relation to nature-based solutions, this question means how well the nature-based solutions are linked to fulfil the city's goals. (2) *Organisational support for the achievement of the strategy*. This includes all of the required capabilities, resources (including human), and management systems necessary to implement the strategy. If nature-based solutions are a key strategic priority, the

	<p>organisational structure needs to facilitate this. To maintain strategic alignment, an organisation's people, culture, structure and processes have to flex and change as the strategy itself shifts.</p>
Definition	<p>Strategic alignment means that nature-based solutions are strategically linked to the city governments' goals, decisions, actions and resources, and vice versa.</p> <p>The Indicator will be equal to the sum of the average number of each question (sum of responses per question divided by respondents), divided by number of questions. The strategic alignment can be evaluated using a five-point Likert scale:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Poor — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — Very good / excellent</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor (1 – 1.79) 2. Fair (1.8 – 2.59) 3. Average (2.6 – 3.39) 4. Good (3.4 – 4.19) 5. Very good / excellent (4.2 – 5)
Strengths and weaknesses	<p>+ Innovative measure to check how well an organization (city government) is supportive of nature-based solutions and able to establish synergies across different priorities and departments</p> <p>- Complex concept and measure, followed by considerable limitations in quality of measurement</p> <p>- Measure does not account for identifying synergies and trade-offs between nature-based solutions and priorities and goals</p>
Measurement procedure and tool	<p><i>Quantitative P:</i> Scale inventory/Questionnaire (survey procedure, paper-and-pencil administration, computer-based administration)</p> <p>T: 3 items at measuring respondents' perception of strategic alignment</p> <p><i>Qualitative P:</i></p> <p>T: case study methodology – semistructured interviews, case study analysis, participant and non-participant observation</p> <p>T: participatory data collections methods, focus groups, collaborative participatory data collection, semistructured interviews</p>
Scale of measurement	<p>Items aimed at strategic alignment (based on Trevor and Varcoe 2016; Hölscher et al. 2019):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nature-based solutions are linked to other city strategic priorities, strategies and goals. <i>Strongly disagree – Disagree - Not sure – Agree - Strongly agree</i> 2. The city government supports the implementation of nature-based solutions by providing and investing in capabilities, resources and management systems necessary. <i>Strongly disagree – Disagree - Not sure – Agree - Strongly agree</i>

	<p>3. The city government supports innovative ways to cooperate, pool resources and build synergies across sectors for nature-based solutions implementation.</p> <p><i>Strongly disagree – Disagree - Not sure – Agree - Strongly agree</i></p>
Data source	
Required data	Essential: Questionnaire of strategic alignment assessment
	Desirable: Data on processes of strategic alignment, perceived opportunities and barriers for collaboration and alignment, and outcomes related to a nature-based solution implementation in a city
Data input type	Quantitative (quantitative and qualitative, if participatory data collection methods, and/or participatory action research are opted for)
Data collection frequency	Aligned with NBS implementation and timing of targeted objectives
Level of expertise required	Methodology and data analysis requires medium level expertise in the city's policy and governance processes and conditions
	Quantitative data collection requires no expertise
	Qualitative data collection requires medium level expertise in social science research and the city's policy and governance processes and conditions
Synergies with other indicators	
Connection with SDGs	<p>Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</p> <p>Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p> <p>Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p> <p>Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p> <p>Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</p>
Opportunities for participatory data collection	Participatory methods may be applied to collect data on nature-based solutions governance processes to reveal challenges and opportunities for strategic alignment, as well as to reflect on outcomes.
Additional information	
References	<p>Al Khalifa, M.M. (2016) The impact of strategic alignment on the performance of public organisations. PhD thesis. Brunel University London.</p> <p>Buijs, A., Hansen, R., Van der Jagt, S., Ambrose-Oji, B., Elands, B., Rall, E. L., ... & Møller, M. S. (2018). Mosaic governance for urban green infrastructure: Upscaling active citizenship from a local government perspective. <i>Urban Forestry & Urban Greening</i>.</p>

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18.19. Reflexivity: time for reflection

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Reflexivity: time for reflection	Participatory Planning and Governance
<p>Description and justification</p>	<p>Conventional governance, policy-making, planning and project management approaches aim to optimize existing processes starting from pre-defined problems and solutions. After a problem or solution is identified a monitoring and evaluation process is designed by selecting suitable evaluation methods. For example, by selecting indicators to measure the effectiveness of the project(s) after implementation. This is done by experts and requires a low level of participation of other actors. Implementing large-scale nature-based solutions is a complex process that includes innovative processes that are hard to oversee and plan on beforehand. Therefore, time for reflection is needed to create room for collaborative learning, experimentation and adaptations during the planning, delivery and stewardship phase of the nature-based solution.</p>