



## Small Municipalities and Planning: Dilemmas and Perspectives

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### Abstract

The paper aims to understand the experience in preparing a training strategy linked to knowledge management, learning and organizational change done at a private institution of higher education. More specifically, it seeks to detail the stages of development, analyzing the difficulties faced and provide indicators of change throughout the process. A feature of the strategic process in the researched organization led the search for a theoretical discussion could involve strategy, knowledge and change. This association was fully viable when considering events that are mobilized by people interacting in a defined context. It uses a methodology of action research in which the investigative process includes a cycle of planning, action, observation and reflection. As a result, we defined four general indicators of the actions and influencers nine indicators of knowledge management should be promoted in the strategic process.

**Keywords:** *Strategic, process, knowledge management, higher education institutions.*

### Introduction

Recognizing the relevance of Strategic Planning (SP) as a management tool, it is observed that it has been applied on a large scale to public organizations, such as the military and public businesses. However, in the context of the municipalities,

especially the small ones, it is still poorly practiced. In this regard, this study brings a new perspective to the SP knowledge area as dealing with its use in small municipalities, and it focuses, mainly, in the municipalities that belong to Santa Catarina State, in Southern Brazil.

The literature heralds that the SP destined to the public area brings many benefits to the citizens and to the municipality. It is built by means of administrative techniques that analyze the reality and prospect sceneries, strategies and actions, and, this way, it can contribute to think and act collectively, organizing present actions and preparing the future of the municipality. However, the challenge of planning the local development requires considerable efforts of data collection and analyses and, mainly, the forces concentration in a given territory.

The authors' previous empirical experience, as well as the scientific study, has noticed that only the SP technical mastery does not guarantee its good creation, and even less its implementation. To this end, it is necessary to observe other criteria, such as: the quality of the citizen participation, the coordinate articulation of different decision maker actors, and the compromising of the public and politic agents with the process and the implementation capability. This way, the main justification to this study was to investigate how the public and politic agents of small municipalities of Santa Catarina understand the planning and which importance degree they attach to it. It will be assumed that the decision makers' beliefs, values and perceptions can produce effective results about their action.

SP on public area meets the same requirements of the one used on the private area, aggregating qualitative components to the attendance of the common interest and of the socially just, environmentally responsible and economically viable. Besides this aspect, the planning to the development of a territory requires the adoption of territorial governance, able to coordinate the citizen and public and private actors' participation.

This study used a qualitative approach, without, however, dismissing numerical-natured data. It is a descriptive research, focused on Santa Catarina's small municipalities, because in this Brazilian federation unit, these municipalities (less than 10.000 inhabitants) compose more than 59% of the set of municipalities (IBGE, 2010) and rarely reach technical conditions of developing SP, which meets the society's expectations. After this introduction, it is presented a literature review, followed by the methodology adopted to the research that based this article. Right after, it follows the data presentation and its analysis, the conclusion and the references.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

In the 1950s, SP had as a major intention to contribute to the financial control. Nowadays, it consists on a tool that directs the management to the effectiveness of the objectives in a more systemic way and, to Poister (2010), SP is the analysis synthesis and shall point to the action, getting, thus, a clear implementation direction of what is planned.

Among the management strategies, SP started to be seen as an essential component to any organization that wishes to reach sustainable development (MENDES et al., 2006). When SP is implemented in an organization, it tends to cause structural changes, because, according to Blatstein (2012), many organizations make SP with the intention of getting prepared to the future. Regarding its main characteristics, it contains, according to Oliveira (2004) and Pereira (2010), eight steps.

**Table 1** – Steps of Strategic planning

Steps of the SP	Characteristics
1. Strategic diagnosis	To analyze the complexity of the internal and external aspects in the consolidation of organizational structure.
2. Mission	The organization's reason of existence.
3. Vision	To show the way the organization must follow to achieve its objectives.
4. Success critical factors	Conditions that define if the organizational structure is established and if it will reach its goals.
5. Strategical issues	Topics to be developed and implemented to the strategic horizon.
6. Strategies	Develop as many strategies as necessary to solve the situation.
7. Strategical actions	They contain the same methodological and practical elements.
8. Implementation and control	Practice of the Strategic Planning process.

Source: created based on Oliveira (2004) e Pereira (2010).

It is possible that the environment planning to public organization has to be even more considered by its developers.

## MUNICIPAL STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Municipal Strategic Planning is the process in which the institution organizes the decisions analyzing the environment and adopting that most befitting ways to the achievement of its goals. This municipal planning is “[...] a project directed to city halls that enables the public managers to establish a direction, aiming the synergic integration of municipal decisions and actions with the several actors and citizens involved.” (REZENDE, 2004, p. 2, our translation).

Complementing, Poister (2010) states that the strategic planning is efficient on the part of the public entities, because it can be an instrument to bring significant changes.

The task of elaborating and implementing SP in the public sphere is complex and, by the practical experiences, many recurrent problems are reported, which remind the disorders of bureaucracy, provoking stiffening and barriers that not always match the agility necessary for the formulation of strategies. The characteristics of this dysfunctional bureaucracy that can disturb SP, according to Silva and Gonçalves (2011), are the responsibilities departmentalized division, the excess of legalism, the formalistic hierarchy and the resistance of changes. Other factors that can complicate SP processes is the fidelity to a centralized management model, the slowness in the decision process, the immovability, the established privileges, and other defects that are also present on the public management (SILVA; GOLÇALVES, 2011). The manager's ability becomes important before these obstacles, since the development and implementation process is complex.

The public manager's determination in materializing SP is essential, although we recognize that, in the public area, only the managers' voluntarism is not enough, because any initiative requires the articulation of numberless actors and the attendance to the constitutional principle of legality.

The municipal SP, as Rezende and Guagliardi (2005, p. 2, our translation) mention, "[...] is a dynamic and interactive process to the determination of objectives, politics and strategies", in other words, it is the process that determines a direction to the municipality in order to gather different perception of multiple individual and institutional actors. Marx (1986, p. 142, our translation) complements that "[...] the integration between management of the public issues and SP is essential both to the continuous success and to the accomplishment of broader social objectives." This is one of the differences of SP in the public sphere: there are substantive objectives, linked to the public interest, not always measurable, that need to be considered when there is the SP elaboration to municipalities.

Rezende (2004) and Rezende and Castor (2006) divided SP in four phases: strategic diagnosis, municipal strategic guidelines, municipal strategies and actions and municipal control. With small variations, Oliveira (2004) and Pereira (2010) also work these same phases to municipal SP as summarized on Table 2.

**Table 2** – Steps of the Municipal Strategic Planning

Phases	Divisões e Subdivisões		Característica
First phase	Municipal strategic analyses	Analysis of the city	The city's strengths and weaknesses on the external and administrative issue.
		Analysis of out of the city	
		Analysis of the municipal administration	
Second phase	City's guidelines	View	What the city wants to be, what it aims to do in the future.
		Talent	Municipal talents.
		Values	What the citizens believe in.
		Objectives	They are challenges, situations aimed by the city.
	Public administration's guidelines	Mission	Greater commitment to be accomplished.
		Municipal activities	They define, validate and review the main activities.
		Municipal policies	Guidelines that orient in the management of the city.
Third phase	Strategies	Operating procedures	How municipal policies are elaborated and executed.
		Municipal actions	Ways of achieving the objectives.
Fourth phase	Municipal control		It involves how to make strategies.
			Responsible for controlling, accompany, measure performance in order to guarantee that the planning is achieved.

Source: elaborated according to Rezende (2004); Rezende e Castor (2006); Oliveira (2004); Pereira (2010).

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

The SP used to formulate strategies and, thereat, to accomplish certain objectives is a tool that is getting essential to mobilize strengths to the sustainable development. According to Philippi Junior and Pelicioni (2005, p. 618, our translation), “[...] there is not a doubt about the necessity of planning. Especially in the subject areas of the public policies or nature policies and social interest [...]” Agreeing with Koloszko-Chomentowska (2012), when it is said that the sustainable development implies the preservation of biodiversity and of the integrity of natural systems with the implementation of economic rights and social objectives, it is understood that a SP process in municipalities should keep in mind the social, environmental and economic sustainability. The SP may contribute to help the population, for example, to use biome in a sustainable way. According to Streimikienė and Barakauskaitė-

Jakubauskienė (2012), if the environment is outworn or weakened, it can stop the economic development and affect people's quality of life.

The development objectives are the main reason to build the SP with the population's involvement, since it has to take responsibility with the sustainable development. Macêdo and Cândido (2011, p. 622, our translation) comment that "[...] for a consistent development process, it is necessary the involvement of everybody, by means of the observation of the reality around the improvement of collective life and the welfare of the people from the present without compromising the future." Besides this aspects of the participation and liability of the population involved, according to Sachs (2002, p. 53, our translation), the public planning must "[...] adopt traded and contractual patterns of diversity management." For a long-lasting development, it is necessary, therefore, to observe the reality and search the welfare, but without compromising the future (MACÊDO; CÂNDIDO, 2011).

Another important SP part, emphasized by Philippi Junior and Pelicioni (2005, p. 66, our translation), is that "[...] to decrease the pressure around the natural resources, it is necessary to fight poverty, and, therefore, to promote economic growth." So, it is understood that the integration of the three kinds of sustainability, economic, social and environmental, must pervade all the SP process on the public sphere.

## MULTI-ANNUAL PLAN

Researchers consider necessary to include this part in the article, once it was noticed on the empirical data that the Multi-Annual Plan (MAP) is the main planning instrument that the small municipalities of Santa Catarina, focus of this research, wish to use.

MAP is mandatory for all the government levels and attends four-year cycles. According to Andrade (2008, p. 21, our translation), "[...] the MAP validity comprehends [...] second year of a mayor's mandate and ends at the first year of the subsequent major's mandate, avoiding the discontinuity of the government actions." It is possible that this cycle reduces the discontinuity; however, it is observed on the municipalities' empirical reality, that it is not eliminated by the simple use of MAP.

MAP is an instrument constituted by guidelines, which are the orientation of the municipality's governmental actions to reach the objectives that must show results by the execution of programs (ANDRADE, 2008).

To supplement, Andrade (2008, p. 20, our translation) affirms, still, that "[...] any governmental action will only be able to be executed during the year [...] if the

program is properly inserted in MAP.” This legal imperative creates, oftentimes, the sensation on the citizen or on the layman in public management of delay on the action on the public management. However, this device aims transparency and defense of public interest.

MAP relies on the Budgetary Guidelines Law (BGL) and on the Annual Budgetary Law (ABL). These three public planning instruments are demanded by the 1988 Federal Constitution (FC) and the 2000 Fiscal Responsibility Law (FRL).

It is believed that the integration of the legal instruments required to the planning on the municipal public sphere (MAP, BGL, ABL) with the strategic type planning, in a cycle with longer term than the four years from the expedient compulsory by law can bring a mobilization and the continuous actions able to create sustainable development to the small municipalities.

## METHODOLOGY USED ON THE RESEARCH

This study is qualitative, since it worked with subjective nature data: the perception of the public and politic agents about the municipal planning. However, it was also used data organized and tabulated in numerical representations. It was a descriptive explanatory research. The cutting was done by the study place: from 296 municipalities of SC, the small ones (270) were chosen. The criterion to decide which ones where small was from IBGE (2013), which defines as: Small Municipality 1: population until 20.000 inhabitants; Small Municipality 2: population from 20.001 to 50.000 inhabitants.

The used instrument of data collection was a semi-structured questionnaire by Google docs and sent by e-mail to the respondents, reinforcing by phone. The questionnaire was sent to the 270 small municipalities of Santa Catarina and 66 returned it answered, in a percent of 24,44%. Among the several factors that led to this low degree of acceptance by the respondents, it is considered possible, by what was observed on the reinforcement phone calls, that the own unfamiliarity with the strategic planning tool has contributed. That is why the reflection about the reached results becomes relevant.

The questionnaire was structured with a closer part and a more open one. On the closed part we explored data about the structure and the existence of strategic planning and the way of creation and implementation. On the open part we sought to capture more directly the respondents’ perception about strategic planning, as well as about the possible difficulties for its effective implementation in their municipalities.

For the open part, we applied on the classification and on the analyses the classification and interpretation technique, based on the development of topics suggested by the literature review. The emphasis was on the content of the message received from the respondents (TRIVIÑOS, 1987). On the selection of the research participants, the focus was on those segments of the municipality decision maker population in the area of planning.

Additionally, to complement the comprehension of the studied phenomenon, a collective interview was organized by means of the discussion group technique conducted by the researchers. The use of the discussion group is particularly appropriate when the objective is to capture how the people consider an idea (in this case, the strategic planning to municipalities).

The discussion group, as group interview, allowed collecting data in a short period of time and in an appropriate quantity. We invited 12 public agents acting directly in the planning area of the municipalities, and seven showed up. These public agents belong to three municipalities of the AMMOC region (Association of the Municipalities of Mid-West of Santa Catarina) and the discussion was realized on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Who participated of the event were: one councilor; one Secretary of Planning; one Secretary of Administration; one Coordinator of Administration; two Accountants and one Technician responsible for the MAP. Its length was 50 minutes and, with everybody's authorization, the dialogue was recorded. The participants were chosen by the criterion of direct contact with the municipal planning. In this event, the researchers introduced the topic strategic planning and put it under discussion, directing the debate about the subject in a natural way. The researchers used a previously elaborated script, but they let the debate flow freely.

The data obtained both by the questionnaire and by the discussion group were transcribed and analyzed based on the literature review. It is stressed that this research, in addition to generating knowledge, will be able to stimulate actions favorable to the culture of the long term planning in the municipal scope.

## **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

In this section, we present the data collected by means of the analysis of secondary data and of documents and statistical sources and of primary data obtained by the questionnaires and by the discussion group.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SMALL MUNICIPALITIES OF SANTA CATARINA**



Santa Catarina State is located in the South of Brazil and, according to IBGE (2010), it has an area of 95.736,165 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 6.248.436 inhabitants. It has 296 municipalities, of which 270 are small. The municipalities are organized in six mesoregions: West, North, Serrana, Vale do Itajaí, Great Florianópolis and South.

Besides this mesoregions, the state also has 21 Municipality Associations. These associations are independent, with the main objective of developing the participant municipalities, strengthening, expanding and coordinating the administrative, economic and social capability of the municipalities. They are organized on a Federation, called Fecam (Santa Catarina Federation of Municipalities), which provides technical service and works as advocacy to the municipal interest (FILIPPIM; ABRUCIO, 2011).

The sustainable development is understood, in this study, as the one who has the balance of three dimensions: social, ecological and economic. In accordance with these dimensions, the Sustainable Municipal Development Index (SMDI), created by Fecam (2013), indicates that Santa Catarina has a SMDI of 0,675, considered a medium classification level. However, great disparities are detected among the municipalities and regions of the state, what motivates the prospection of planning for the regional development.

## THE PLANNING ON THE VIEW OF MUNICIPAL PUBLIC AGENTS

The greatest concentration of adhesion to the instrument Questionnaire was located in the mesoregion West of Santa Catarina, with 32 respondents in a total of 66. It is not possible to infer about the reason for the greatest adhesion of respondents in the West.

Public agents, holders of various positions in the municipal city halls, answered the questionnaire. Among them: majors, deputy majors, municipal secretaries, and others, all of them acting on the planning of the municipality. The agents who answered the most were: majors (16 respondents), secretary of administration and treasury, secretary of Finance and the controller (five respondents each). The participants of the discussion group were seven public agents from three municipalities of the AMMOC region. The names of the participants of the discussion group used here are fictitious to guarantee the confidentiality.

### The planning in the perception of the participants of the research

The respondents of the questionnaire recognize that the Strategic Planning is a very important tool (53 quotes) or important (13 quotes) to the development of the municipality. The method by which the SP was elaborated, in the perception of most of the respondents of the questionnaire, is similar to the one applied on the private sector, but with specificities to the public area.

The researchers presented to the respondents several statements about the municipal strategic planning; the public or politic agent (respondent in elective position) should answer according to his/her perception. The statement, which assured that the SP is an important management tool, was the preferred one, obtaining 57 in complete agreement.

Besides the statements about the municipal strategic planning, other alternatives were presented about the parts that a municipal strategic planning must have (elaborated from the literature). Considering the answers, it was noticed that they consider the vision, as the main part that an SP must have, and the values as the least important one. These items received 47 and 29 answers, respectively. When reporting the importance of the SP, a respondent of the questionnaire expressed himself like this:

The Strategic Planning implemented in the Municipality would make it more organized, would work in an untroubled way with the population, and would help in the municipal development, with not only a quality administrative return but also with a financial return. (verbal information, our translation).

It was predominant, on the answers obtained, the perception that the planning is an essential part for the public administration. As one of the respondents mentions: "Ideal and vital when we think about the municipality for the next generations." (verbal information, our translation). In addition to planning the future, some respondents said that the SP organizes the public policies and the management of the municipality. One respondent mentioned that:

The Municipal Strategic Planning is a relevant instrument of planning, public politic and management of municipalities. All of the municipal questions, politic and management, have constantly challenged the municipalities. The pressures of the legislation and of the citizens might be minimized with the elaboration of the Municipal Strategic Planning in a participative way. (verbal information, our translation).

Advocating the strategic planning and mentioning that it is necessary to think about the future, the participant of the discussion group, João, commented that the SP must be evaluated annually, according to the demand and other factors. He advocated, still, that the SP should not think in only one municipality, it must plan on the regional level, especially referring to troubled municipalities.

The SP is understood, in theory, as an essential tool for the good progress of a municipality. In relation to that, respondents of the questionnaire mentioned that “It is a great tool which works for the sustainable and economic development of the municipality.” (verbal information, our translation). Another respondent said that it is “[...] essential to guarantee the citizens’ quality of life, the city hall financial health, the economic development of the community and the organized urban growth.” (verbal information, our translation).

As previously mentioned, the SP generates aims for the municipality, which can go beyond that ones established on the planning compulsory instruments (MAP, BGL, ABL). A respondent of the questionnaire mentioned that the SP is “[...] important to generate other objectives not estimated on the MAP. It serves to give a new direction to the Municipal Administration, and from the moment when there is effective community participation, in addition to existing politic promotion.” (verbal information, our translation).

### Difficulties related to the process of elaboration and implementation of the Strategic Planning

According to the literature, the strategic planning presents many difficulties in its formulation or in its implementation. In the public agents respondents’ perception, the main difficulty faced is the lack of technical knowledge, observing that this alternative was cited 30 times. Here, maybe there is an explanation to the fact that the respondents consider the SP so important, however, little exercised. It is possible that the small municipalities feel unable to master the techniques of strategic planning at the point of taking the initiative to establish this management tool in their municipalities.

The least cited difficulty in relation to the SP was: *the ones who plan are not the same as the ones who execute*, cited four times. Chart 1 presents all the difficulties cited by the questionnaire respondents.

**Chart 1** – Difficulties for the elaboration and implementation of Strategic Planning in municipalities

Difficulties for the elaboration and implementation of Strategic Planning in municipalities	Qt. Cit.	Freq.
Lack of technical knowledge;	30	45%
Lack of belief on the benefits of strategic planning to municipalities;	19	29%
Lack of involvement of the municipalities;	19	29%
The politic competition among parties and coalitions;	16	24%
Lack of resources;	16	24%
Lack of time;	9	14%
Lack of support of the city’s leaders;	9	14%

The different school education stages (schooling);	6	9%
The ones who plan are not the same as the ones who execute.	4	6%
<b>TOTAL OBS.</b>	<b>66</b>	

Fonte: the authors.

The strategic planning indeed is not easy to be elaborated or implemented, because it can provoke many changes that threaten the dominant status quo and are not always welcome. Nonetheless, in front of its benefits, public management might find ways of executing it, mostly that in consortium that tend to reduce the cost and to add the technical capabilities.

The participants of the discussion group also reported difficulties on introducing the strategic type planning in small municipalities. Among them, the main difficulty reported by the managers participants is the lack of community participation. The participant Rita justified that this lack of participation, in her opinion, is understandable, as what is planned is not always executed because of lack of funds, in other words, the population approves of something, but the municipality has funds only for something else and it discourages the community to participate. She declared:

[...] I understand the absence of the community in the public audiences, because everyone wants to pull to their communities and it happens that when they approve of the action in the audience, this actions will be developed in the subsequent years, the mayor goes there to take the funds for the action, but there is not, the funds come to other one, so, why will I participate to approve of that action if it won't be executed? It creates an expectation on the community. (verbal information, our translation).

José, a participant, highlighted the lack of the community participation as an impediment even to the formulation of the MAP. Still about this participation, Ana expressed:

We have the great difficulty of civil mobilization. The organized society still has some restrictions to participate [...] I don't know if once there was so much stimulus for the popular participation, through councils, representations, but we still fell the society with some fear. Up to this year, we changed a little the elaboration systematic of the MAP. We would always go to the community for it could put its perspectives. This year, we opted for reversing [...] the own community will list with its pairs by means of its representations, which are its priorities. (verbal information, our translation).

Another difficulty highlighted by the participant of the discussion group, Luiz, was the municipalities' financial situation, in other words, in this public agent's perception, the small municipalities do not have enough resource to implement a Strategic Planning. An issue that caused some trouble in the debate was when one of the participants, Luiz, pointed that a great part of the difficulties for the municipalities' planning, in addition to the financial, which is unanimity, is the action of the Federal

Government. Such action, in the discussion group's participants' perception, often occurs in an imperative way, imposing which policies, programs, projects and actions must be taken by the municipalities. This way, in Luiz's view, there is no point the municipality making long-term plans.

According to Luiz, the Mayor goes to Brasília and brings some funds that were not projected in the planning of the municipality. Once rare mayors want to run the risk of "giving back" a resource from the Union, since it has electoral impacts, it is up to the people responsible for the planning of the municipalities to "find a way" of fitting this resource and allow its exploitation.

In the same line of thought, the participant Paula highlighted that the Union decides *when, how much* and *what for* this fund will be directed and that oftentimes this fund is sent to something that the municipality does not need, or it is incompatible with the soil or other factors of its reality. Luiz finished saying that if the fund is directed to something that was not expected, they will accept anyway, however, they are putting aside the priority listed in the municipal planning.

Here, the discussion group brought a relevant problematization to the planning issue in municipalities: the necessity of reviewing the competences of each one of the federated entities, municipalities, states and Union, in a manner that the action of one entity does not superimpose itself or disturb the action of the other entity. In the participants' perception, not only the action of the Union limits the planning capability of the municipalities, but also the State Government makes the same.

Then, Rita declared that the municipality anticipates some actions from MAP and BGL to execute in a certain year, then, the Mayor goes to Florianópolis (capital of Santa Catarina) to request funds from the State Government for that action which was listed in MAP, so, she expressed: "[...] but the government doesn't have funds for that action, it has resources for a tractor, for example, we don't have a paving action, there is no money for paving, there is money to buy a tractor, the government will send a tractor [...]" (verbal information, our translation).

Paula exemplified this situation saying that "[...] the union understands that it has to allocate resources to motor grade in every municipality and the municipalities are thankful for being receiving the motor grade. But oftentimes the equipment description is no suitable with the terrain and that received machines cannot go up the hill we have here." (verbal information, our translation). Similarly, Luiz declared that:

[...] the municipalities depend on the State's money, the Union's money, because they often only have the counterpart. They depend basically on the constitutional transferences from the State and the Union, that transferences which only finance the maintenance actions, then for capital actions it depends on the resources and often the resources are not for what was planned. (verbal information, our translation).

In the perception of the participant João, the lack of resources in the municipalities is related to the centralization of power in Brasília, because the municipalities raise the money that is sent to the Union and they receive “crumbs back”. Jorge, a participant, agrees with João and complemented arguing that he believes that this centralization was due to the bad administration in the 1950s, when unnecessary public works were built. Luiz also reinforced as a planning inhibitor the evidenced lack of resources. According to him:

[...] the small municipalities have a very hard financial reality. 95% of the resources are to maintenance. Therefore, I am somebody who feels unmotivated to participate of a planning, despite the sense that it needed to be done. However, you know that it won't be done, or it is done upside down. Then I wonder: where is the planning? (verbal information, our translation).

This testimony can give some clues for the comprehension of why the SP is not implemented in the small municipalities of Santa Catarina. The same interviewee from the discussion group highlighted that:

When the community participation was imposed in the Fiscal Responsibility Law, I imagined: now this is going to work! But I feel very bad there in front of the people explaining them. You don't see the thing happening, and it is not the Mayor's, the planning secretary's or anyone else's bad will, it is the lack of resources. (verbal information, our translation).

These public agents who were listened to demonstrate to feel stuck in front of the lack of resources which attacks the small municipalities and assign part of the noticed crises to the Union's action. With the same thought, Paulo gave the example of the perception that the Union centralizes the decision-making, what was seen in the National Conference happened in 2013 in several countries, because in the perception of the this discussion group's participant, everything that was to be debated in the Conferences would come ready, explaining that even the slides for the Conferences came ready from the Union.

In a general way, the public budget, in José's point of view, is plastered and there are many restrictions that the responsible people for the planning find in the municipalities. The municipality is able to do some infrastructure works with its own resources and the biggest works end up losing, because they do not have resources to give the counter back.

The discussion group's participant Ana presented what, in her opinion, is one more problem to the municipal planners:

[...] when it is said: *there is no planning secretariat in the municipality, or they didn't plan correctly*, this bothers a little because it is not like

this. Actually, the planning secretariat is systematic, it covers the other secretariats; it isn't its responsibility the function of saying "*we will do this, we will build that, we will organize that*", all the secretariats have its dynamics and with the population are listed the priorities of what must be done. (verbal information, our translation).

Another complex issue, pointed by José, is that the time to present the ready planning is short. In José's perception, "[...] the dust didn't even settle from the election campaign and you already have to plan based on the mayor's government planning and based on the community wishes." (verbal information, our translation). The participants, in general, agree that the public planning and budget are plastered and that the assignments of the municipalities are getting bigger every day. So, Luiz declared: "[...] there are too many restrictions, every time we observe the State and the Federal Governments, they pass more assignments to the municipalities, which embrace everything." (verbal information, our translation).

The participants of the discussion group were unanimous in declaring that they know the importance of the Participative Strategic Planning, however, they showed the cited limitations to its implementation. These public agents seemed to the researchers very unsatisfied with this situation and would like to have the possibility of planning and executing with more effectiveness, however, they declare to feel embarrassed before the lack of resources, the Union and the State's predatory action to the municipal autonomy and before the low popular participation.

## Responsibility for the planning

The questionnaire's respondents were also asked about who is responsible for the elaboration and execution of the planning in the municipalities. With 57 of the answers, the public administration was the most mentioned. Other responsible entities were cited: Public and Private; the Commission Designated to that end.

In the discussion group realized with the public agents, some people and organs were cited as the responsible for the planning: the accountant, the administration secretary, the mayor and the other secretariats of the city, for example, the education secretariat. Rita mentioned that in her city, because it is small, it ends up centralizing everything in the accountant, in the administration secretary and in the mayor, because the city does not have a specific planning sector.

## Existence or not of an implemented Strategic Planning

From the 66 respondent municipalities, 13 declared that they have implemented Strategic Planning, the other 53 respondents declared to be with the planning in phase of implementation, but not the strategic one.

It is concluded, by the inclination observed among the respondents, that, in Santa Catarina, a few small municipalities have implemented strategic planning. The mesoregion West has eight municipalities with the implemented SP, according to the respondents in a total of 32 answers gotten in this mesoregion. The mesoregions of Great Florianópolis, North and Vale do Itajaí, from the respondent municipalities, none of them declared to have the implemented SP.

Yet, in the discussion group, it was understood that at least one mayor is thinking about a long-term planning. Rita affirmed: "The major has been thinking in how the city will be in 20 years and actions that are being taken from now." (verbal information, our translation). Ana highlighted that the federal government has been inducing that the municipalities have a long-term planning, but sectorial, for example, they must have the educational municipal plan for at least 10 years.

It was observed both in the discussion group and in the analyses of the questionnaires, that MAP (Multi-Annual Plan) is the main planning tool used by the small municipalities of Santa Catarina.

Among the kinds of planning, MAP is excelled, both in the data of state scope and in that by mesoregion. It is possible that this fact explains itself, because MAP is compulsory, and the use of another kind of planning is optional to the municipalities.

## The citizen's participation in the Planning

For the formulation of any kind of planning in a city, the community must be called to constant participation (REZENDE; ULTRAMARI, 2007). The public agents respondents of the questionnaire, when asked about the community participation, mentioned (37 answers) that there rarely is. What makes the researchers wonder is that they did not get any answers from any of the mesoregions in the alternative that the community always participated.

Several ways can be used for the community participation of the SP formulation. It was found that, in the respondents' perception, the most used way when there was community participation was the public audiences (17 mentions). One respondent pointed a practical function to the SP:

[...] with the strategic planning it is easier the search of resources with the federal and state organs, because there is already knowledge of the local needs, the opposite of what is seen oftentimes when you don't know what to do for the lack of planning and listening to the communi-



ty, and bringing it closer to the administration. (verbal information, our translation).

It is observed that the perception about SP captured with the respondents is something to be, a view of how it should be and not what it is on the current reality.

## Technical and operationalization issues of the Strategic Planning

The planning technical elaboration process faces various problems, according to the respondents, and the main problem cited was in relation to the formulation of strategies, according to 30 answers. Other topics were mentioned as problems: low responsibility from the administration, implementation difficulties and lack of community participation.

About the concrete implementation, it was established on the municipalities that have strategic planning, 13 of the respondents cited that the actions are partially implemented. It is possible that the lack of participation and charging from the society do not put pressure on the municipal public managers to implement the planned things, because “[...] it is not observed legal requirements in this order; however, the decision of a city in elaborating such plan indicates a specific interest and a consensus among the several agents of a society.” (REZENDE; ULTRAMARI, 2007, p. 259, our translation).

There were questions about the public agents’ perception about the SP implemented on the municipalities, in other words, if it is implemented and is being put in practice. To implement an SP in a city it is necessary to have qualified people. Agreeing with this statement, two respondents expressed that “[...] the municipal technicians’ training is necessary” and the other said that “In the case of the managers, they are usually well-intentioned, but they don’t have technical education to work with this managing techniques.”

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In relation to the general aim of this research, it was sought to describe and analyze the municipal managers’ perception about the strategic planning to small

municipalities of Santa Catarina, meeting the conclusion that a few small municipalities have strategic planning implemented. What was observed is that these municipalities have the compulsory planning tools by laws such as MAP.

With regard to the perception that the public agents subjects of the research have about the strategic planning, it was observed that it is directly favorable, what, however, does not reflect in practice. The perception is of recognizing that the SP is a relevant management tool to municipalities, but the participants point some difficulties in its use, such as: lack of technical capacity, lack of resources, lack of community participation and low liability of the city's decision makers.

Another learning of this study was that the analysis of the received data made the researchers realize that it was not possible to treat them only as Strategic Planning (SP), according to what was planned in the research project. This observation, instead of becoming a difficulty, is constituted in one of the findings: the municipalities still do not deal, for the most part, with the *Strategic type* Planning. What is usual and well acculturated in the environment of the municipal public management is the planning in the ways that the law establishes: The Multi-Annual Plan (MAP), BGL and ABL.

This study suggests the overcoming of these difficulties in an associated way, in other words, the possibility of regionalized SP elaboration, reuniting municipalities with similar problems and possibilities. It is also suggested that the assistance organizations like Fecam establish stimulation and qualification programs to the regionalized SPs elaboration to the small municipalities of Santa Catarina. It is suggested, still, the study about the financing need to the SP to these municipalities on the part of the State and the Union.

An issue that alerted the researchers, mentioned by the research subjects, is about the question of the competition of the Brazilian federative model; the interviewees notice an action of the Union of the State as inhibitor of initiatives in favor of the strategic type planning on the part of the municipalities. This aspect will be able to be more explored and it is constituted in an opportunity of future research.

The most difficulty declared by the respondents of the questionnaire was the low institutional and technical capacity of the small municipalities in elaborating and implementing SP. It is added to this difficulty the one indicated by the interviewees of the action of the State and the Union that, oftentimes, overlaps itself to the planned in the municipalities.

A limitation of this study, which it is intended to overcome in a future study, is that the citizens were not listened, what represents an opportunity to collate their

possible views with the ones from the public agents who participated of the current research.

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