

Prevailing Issues and Actions in Urban Best Practices Across Latin America and the Caribbean

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Abstract

This research examines urban best practices (BPs) across Latin America and the Caribbean to illuminate the prevalent issues and actions associated with these locally implemented initiatives. An analysis of 45 BPs from the UN-Habitat repository was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods, organized into three phases. The first phase focused on collecting data such as BP sources, countries of origin, and years of implementation. The second phase identified common problems and actions within the BPs. The third phase involved a cross-sectional analysis to identify significant patterns and trends. The study found that many BPs originated from the Dubai International Award for Best Practices and the Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation, with a notable dominance of contributions from Brazil, followed by Argentina and Mexico, while other countries in the region had minimal or no representation. The results revealed shared challenges and commonly adopted actions across diverse BPs, transcending characteristics, locations, and implementation years. The most common issues included financial constraints, bureaucratic complexities, and deficient infrastructure, while active community engagement, collaboration with various stakeholders, and garnering political support were the most recurrent actions. This research contributes novel insights to the field by systematically analyzing real-world case studies in the region, enhancing understanding of the transferability of these practices. It also identifies key similarities that will aid policymakers and practitioners in preparing and optimizing future initiatives for greater success.

Keywords

community development; community engagement; infrastructure improvement; public policy; social inclusion; urban development; urban governance; urban regeneration; urban resilience

1. Introduction

Urban development has significantly altered society's living conditions, but disparities in the distribution of resources essential for well-being persist (UN-Habitat et al., 2022, p. 3). Latin America and the Caribbean are particularly affected, being described as “the most urban and unequal region in the developing world” (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2016, p. 5). This inequality manifests as social exclusion, marginalization, and weakened community cohesion, often intensifying in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2020, p. xvii; UN-Habitat et al., 2022, p. 8). Key goals for current initiatives should focus on fostering inclusive urban prosperity and ensuring environmental sustainability (E. Silva & You, 2022). To improve the chances of achieving these objectives, it is essential to consider the geographic scope, i.e., the spatial scale, both territorial and administrative, that allows for understanding the connections and relationships between different cities and regions (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2016, p. 14). While there is a wide diversity of serious and complicated issues hindering sustainable development, there are also significant initiatives developed by local governments and other societal agents that represent interesting examples of overcoming challenges (E. Silva & You, 2022, p. VII). These initiatives, rooted in concrete experiences, serve as evidence-based examples that address the aforementioned problems (UN-Habitat et al., 2022, p. 200).

Within this framework, this research starts from the premise that good policies and practices are key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (UN-Habitat et al., 2022, p. 6), and learning from them can empower transformative local governments to tackle social challenges. One of the most common ways to define initiatives with a proven capacity to improve population conditions are the so-called best practices (BPs; UN-Habitat, n.d.-a). However, applying BPs to new cases and contexts is complex and has often been criticized (Cochrane, 2011; Delgadillo, 2014; Saraiva et al., 2021). This research aims to extract new knowledge that could be effectively implemented in future initiatives by systematically studying a selection of BPs in Latin America and the Caribbean to identify the most prevalent issues faced and actions undertaken. Understanding the challenges faced by these initiatives and the strategies employed to overcome them is crucial for providing useful examples for future stakeholders (Macmillen & Stead, 2014). Additionally, this study contributes to addressing the lack of systematic research focusing on analyzing, comparing, and organizing BPs, thereby narrowing the implementation gap between research and practice.

2. BPs Background

2.1. BPs, Policy Transfer, and Benefits

Although different definitions of BPs exist, and their applicability is frequently debated (Macmillen & Stead, 2014, p. 80), emphasis is often placed on their potential for transfer to other contexts and their capacity to inform decisions on urban policies (Blake et al., 2021, p. 1254). This transferability could mean adapting proven experiences to new places, considering specific problems, resources, and potentialities (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2016, p. 8; UN-Habitat, 2020, p. xxiv). Learning from BPs could also involve accessing know-how that can be transferred (Jajamovich, 2016, p. 78; Porto de Oliveira, 2021, p. 2), which might be abstract, “such as ideas, ideologies, principles, discourses, paradigms, [or] more concrete, such as policy models and designs, laws and constitutions, administrative arrangements, forms of

government, policy instruments, institutions, etc.” (Porto de Oliveira, 2021, p. 7). In other words, there is more to learn from BPs than the practices themselves.

Effective policy ideas do not simply emerge by chance or because they inherently possess merit; they require deliberate creation and active promotion to gain acceptance and implementation (Temenos et al., 2019, p. 106). Validation is key to transferring BPs to other contexts (Duque Franco, 2014). Therefore, BPs can formalize or certify policies to improve their chances of accessing resources, attract investments, promote successful initiatives, support reciprocal teaching and learning processes, and even inspire other actions (Macmillen & Stead, 2014, p. 84; Nagorny-Koring, 2019). Additionally, well-guided BPs “can serve as a basis for action” and recognizing them “seeks to stimulate the exchange and diffusion of experiences among the different member countries in order to promote and move forward together towards a sustainable territorial and urban development” (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2016, p. 8).

With roots that can be traced back to ancient Greece (Porto de Oliveira, 2021, p. 3), more than 100 terms have been identified relating to this policy diffusion process (Graham et al., 2013). It includes both voluntary and involuntary—when forced by another institution (Stone, 2000)—adoption of ideas, and has prompted scholars to develop concepts and frameworks to study how policies circulate globally, thus creating a new research domain in policy studies (Porto de Oliveira, 2021, p. 1). This exchange is defined as a network operating as a complex system of interactions and power dynamics, where policy is actively circulated and influenced by ever-shifting local and global relationships, ultimately blurring the lines between the local and the global (Cochrane & Ward, 2012, p. 561).

Through this active mobility, ideas mutate, not only as a result of adaptation attempts but also as a direct consequence of that exchange (Temenos et al., 2019, p. 106). That is why policy mobilization among cities needs to be critically implemented to achieve meaningful results (McCann, 2011) and to prevent the recurring similarities in urban policies that are intentionally shaped by a network of policy influencers who standardize and disseminate BPs globally (Temenos & McCann, 2013, pp. 353–354). Further, Dolowitz (2021, p. 39) notes that “with a degree of learning and adaptation, the transfer concept will be able to provide many more years of useful analytic and conceptual study.”

In this regard, international organizations are key in building and maintaining these networks and, as mentioned above, in the certification process that promotes BPs (Hadjiisky, 2021). In addition to UN-Habitat, which was the focus of this research, there is a long list of organizations that contribute to this network, including the World Bank, United Cities and Local Governments, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the Inter-American Development Bank. However, many other actors are involved, from cities and countries to professionals, activists, and nonprofits. Together, they forge an infrastructure to “interpret, frame, package, and represent information about best policy practices, successful cities, and cutting-edge ideas” (McCann, 2011, p. 114). Thanks to all these actors at different scales and roles, ideas are now more actively circulated than ever before, not only from South to North or North to South but also horizontally between cities that share common needs (Stren, 2021, p. 170).

2.2. Criticism Around the Concept of BPs

While BPs have proven useful for urban policy development, it's important to note criticisms surrounding them. For instance, there is no consensus on the evidence used to define BPs, often leading to their selection being politically motivated or highly subjective (Blake et al., 2021, pp. 1267–1268; Macmillen & Stead, 2014, p. 85). Replicating BPs isn't automatic and requires case-by-case analysis, platforms for information sharing, and specific incentives (Boulanger & Nagorny, 2018, p. 326; Marsden, 2011, p. 50). Some authors assert that BPs align with the agendas of more developed countries, maintaining a global interest that can be disconnected from local realities (Whitney, 2022a, p. 477). It's crucial to recognize that BPs might only show part of the story, omitting information useful for future applications (Bulkeley, 2006, p. 1041).

It is important to critically consider BPs because the focus is generally on the practices themselves, often overlooking how they are promoted or what kind of impact they may have (Silvestre & Jajamovich, 2023, p. 321). In this regard, actions undertaken by international organizations have sometimes felt disconnected from national and local needs (Hadjiisky, 2021, p. 136), representing an issue generally defined as the “Galton problem” (Murdock, 1949). In urban policy, the Galton problem is used to discuss whether similarities in urban policies across different cities are due to direct policy borrowing and adaptation, independent development in response to similar urban challenges, or through a process of global policy diffusion driven by international organizations, conferences, and literature (Braun & Gilardi, 2006; Buckner, 2024; Porto de Oliveira, 2021).

For reasons like these, some authors have criticized BPs framed within the discourse of “technological solutionism,” introduced by Evgeny Morozov, who critiques the idea that complex social and political issues can be effectively resolved through technological innovations alone (Morozov, 2013). Even design practices that profess a dedication to social justice, sustainability, and equality often gravitate towards solutions that try to be marketable (Facchetti, 2021, p. 160). This approach promotes a superficial model of sustainability that fails to address the deeper, structural causes of the issues identified, bypassing the essential and more complex task of understanding local conditions (Montero, 2020). In other words, despite technocratic arguments and narratives about BPs, the processes of diffusion and circulation of urban policies can be fraught with conflicts and incongruities (Jajamovich et al., 2022, p. 349).

2.3. The Importance of BPs for Local Governments

As demonstrated by problems such as epidemics and environmental issues, many challenges transcend political boundaries, which is why sharing knowledge is key to addressing them more effectively (Porto de Oliveira, 2021, p. 1). Being the governmental level closest to communities—compared with regional and national scales—local governments have a unique opportunity to implement innovative initiatives that emphasize community integration and enable more responsive and inclusive governance (Dywili & Draai, 2019). Collaboration between municipalities is critical for creating and implementing effective solutions, such as BPs (Silvestre & Jajamovich, 2023). It empowers communities by strengthening democracy through participatory decision-making processes that give individuals a voice in governance. This approach ensures that governance is more attuned to the diverse needs of its constituents. By bridging the gap between community needs and political action, governance becomes more effective, equitable, and sustainable (Newman et al., 2023).

Even considering the critiques discussed above, BPs can benefit local governments in several ways:

- *Knowledge transfer*: By studying BPs, local governments can learn from the experiences of others to include successful strategies for dealing with similar issues (Barton et al., 2009; Lahiri & Rajan, 2022; Lassen et al., 2023; Rauhaus et al., 2023; Young, 2023).
- *Innovation promotion*: Examining how different cities approach similar problems can inspire innovative solutions and creative problem-solving, leading to more effective and tailored policies that better address the specific needs of a community (Linton et al., 2022).
- *Avoiding pitfalls*: Awareness of the challenges faced by other cities and how they were addressed helps local governments avoid similar pitfalls (Guillaumie et al., 2024; Hoppe et al., 2015). Studies have shown that this practice can save time, resources, and effort in implementing urban policies that might not be effective or could have unintended consequences (Olivo et al., 2022).
- *Enhanced public trust and support*: By implementing proven effective solutions, local governments can build trust, as citizens are more likely to support policies that have a track record of success in other places (Puttick et al., 2022; Rutledge et al., 2022).

In summary, this research underscores that local governments can play a pivotal role in contributing to the global exchange of BPs. They are also instrumental in fostering proven strategies, leveraging local knowledge and practices, responding effectively to the unique needs of urban communities, and driving policies that ensure equitable distribution of resources and services.

3. Materials and Methods

This research is based on an analysis of a selection of BPs available in the UN-Habitat repository, hosted on the Urban Agenda Platform website (<https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/best-practice>). This repository was chosen because it is a globally recognized source that aggregates BPs from various renowned sources (UN-Habitat, n.d.-b). It is one of the most significant BP repositories globally, tasked with “coordinating, identifying, documenting, and disseminating best practices and enabling policies on urban development” (UN-Habitat, n.d.-a). The only filter applied during the search was “Latin America and the Caribbean” under the region’s menu. No other keyword or selection method was used. The initial search yielded 56 results, covering a broad range of BPs such as the transformation of public spaces, infrastructural improvements, urban agriculture, waste management, and sustainable tourism practices. After the first screening, several were excluded: eight due to lack of information or overly brief descriptions, two for not specifically relating to Latin America and the Caribbean but having a global scope, and one because it took place in Spain. Consequently, 45 BPs were ultimately studied. Focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean does not intend to overlook the differences in such a complex region; it merely recognizes that many areas, despite their differences, face similar circumstances and could improve their chances of success by learning from experiences tested elsewhere. This complex conjunction of cultures has often been considered as a region by many international organizations, primarily due to historical links, socio-economic similarities, and similar development challenges.

After the selection, a qualitative and quantitative data analysis was conducted in three phases. The first phase focused on collecting facts such as sources of the BPs, countries of origin, and years of implementation. Aligning with the main objective of the research, the second phase entailed a detailed read-through of all the BPs to

identify issues faced and actions performed, later organizing these into groups to identify the most common ones. The third phase involved a transversal comparison of these findings to identify relevant patterns and trends. In all phases, systematic analysis was performed using strategies that included analyzing the BP reports, coding meaningful components of the data, looking for patterns that recognize similarities, categorizing groups for comparison or clustering, and reasoning aimed at compiling findings and establishing conclusions (Saldaña, 2014, pp. 582–588). For the coding process, “open coding” was favored due to its flexibility and because it involves representing concepts found in the analyzed data with the primary goal of generating categories with similar characteristics that can be classified (Blair, 2015, p. 26; Flick, 2009, p. 369; Kothari, 2004, p. 123). An “open-ended approach” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 115) was maintained throughout this process, facilitating the study of the wide variety of BPs under investigation. The process was iterative, involving reviewing, grouping, and refining codes until the final configuration was reached.

For the purpose of this research, a comprehensive approach was adopted in analyzing the issues and actions associated with the BPs, i.e., issues and actions were considered broadly. For instance, rather than distinguishing between actions specifically designed to address the BPs’ challenges and those integral to their planning, implementation, and maintenance, all actions were examined within a unified framework. This inclusive approach was chosen because the BP reports did not differentiate between these two types of actions (proactive and reactive), but it also allowed for capturing a full spectrum of strategies, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of how these BPs function in diverse urban contexts.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. BPs’ Sources, Geographic Distribution, and Timeline

The UN-Habitat Urban Best Practices repository “contains practices that have been vetted and made available by different international award schemes” (UN-Habitat, n.d.-b). However, the research sample highlights two main contributors: the Dubai International Award for Best Practices and the Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation, which together account for nearly 70% of the entries (Figure 1). A few sources have only one contribution each, and the repository does not specify the source or selection method for some BPs. The source of the BPs could be important because the profile of each contributor could influence the selection of experiences. For instance, the Dubai International Award for Best Practices accepts contributions from national and local governments, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, the private sector, and individuals. However, the Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation is only open to cities and local governments (Guangzhou Award, 2019).

The chronological distribution of the BPs (Figure 2) reveals a clear pattern of constant growth. A comparison and summation of the years in which the BPs confirmed their activity in the analyzed texts show this growth continuing up until 2017. However, no updating process is mentioned or evidently used, so it’s not possible to determine how long these initiatives were active or if they are still active today based on the information gathered from the repository. Some may still be active, as indicated on their websites or social media, suggesting the trend of growth peaked in 2019. However, this trend should not be assumed to indicate stagnation or decline, considering that the main sources of BPs have not issued any recent awards. The last Dubai International Award for Best Practices was held in 2019, while the last Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation took place in 2020.

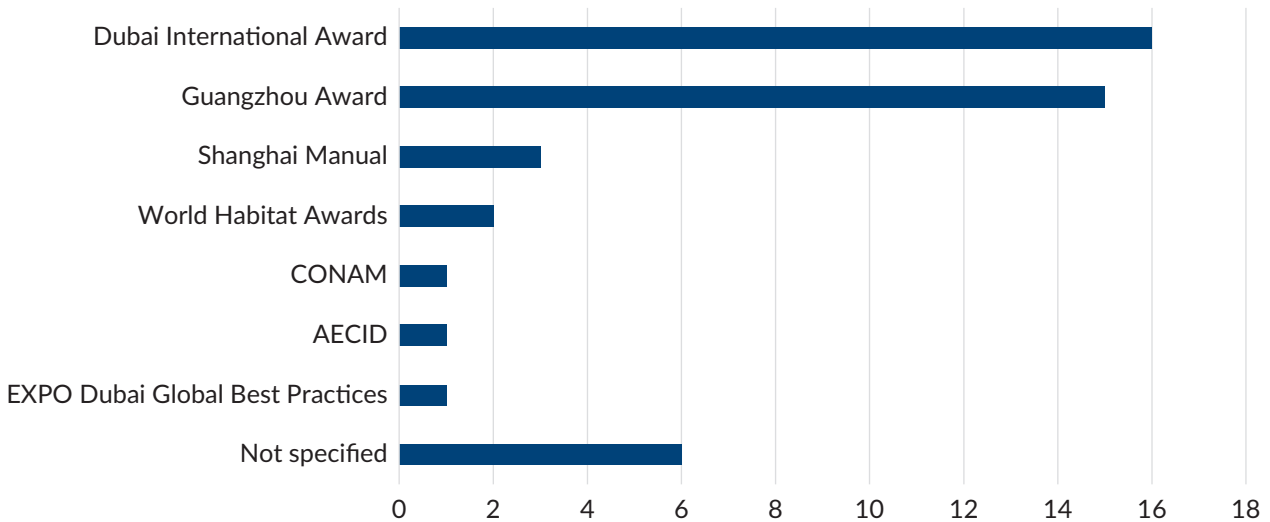


Figure 1. BPs sources as listed in the repository. Notes: CONAM = Consejo Nacional de Ambiente (Colombia); AECID = Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development.

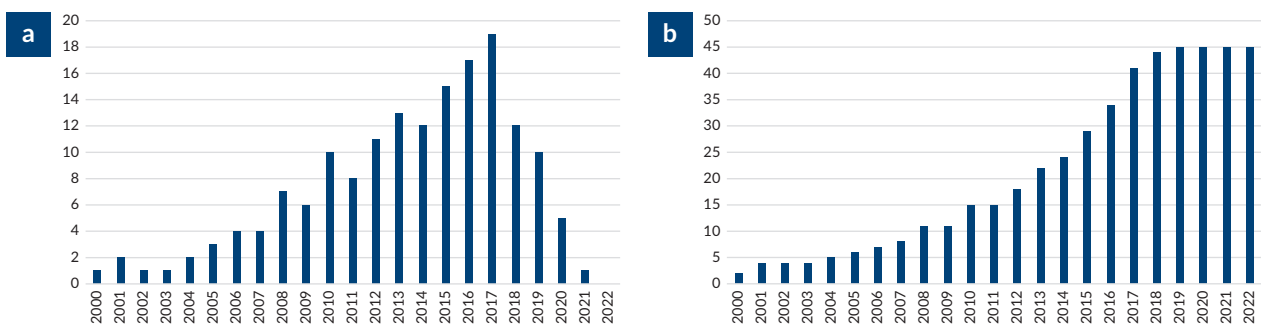


Figure 2. (a) BPs' active period as mentioned in the reports analyzed in the database; (b) BPs' active period assuming continuity after the reported starting date.

When analyzing the countries of origin (Figure 3), Brazil emerged as the most significant contributor, with a number of contributions almost tripling the average. Besides Brazil, only Argentina, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Colombia exceeded the average. In other words, only 5 out of the 16 countries were above average in terms of BP contributions to the selection. Conversely, six countries made only one contribution each, with the majority contributing one or two initiatives. It's also noteworthy that out of nearly 50 countries and territories in Latin America and the Caribbean, only 16 (32%) have contributed to this list. These findings are important because, as observed in previous research, the geographical unevenness in policy transfer reflects disparities in resources and visibility, affecting which policies, cities, and consultants gain global recognition and influence in shaping international BPs (McCann, 2011, pp. 121–122).

4.2. BPs' Prevailing Issues and Actions

Focusing on the central theme of this research, the review of the BPs facilitated the identification and organization of a series of common issues that the BPs have had to face. Similarly, the actions implemented by the protagonists of these BPs to advance their initiatives were also identified. In both cases, the lists were ordered from most to least common. However, more than the order, it's important to consider the frequency

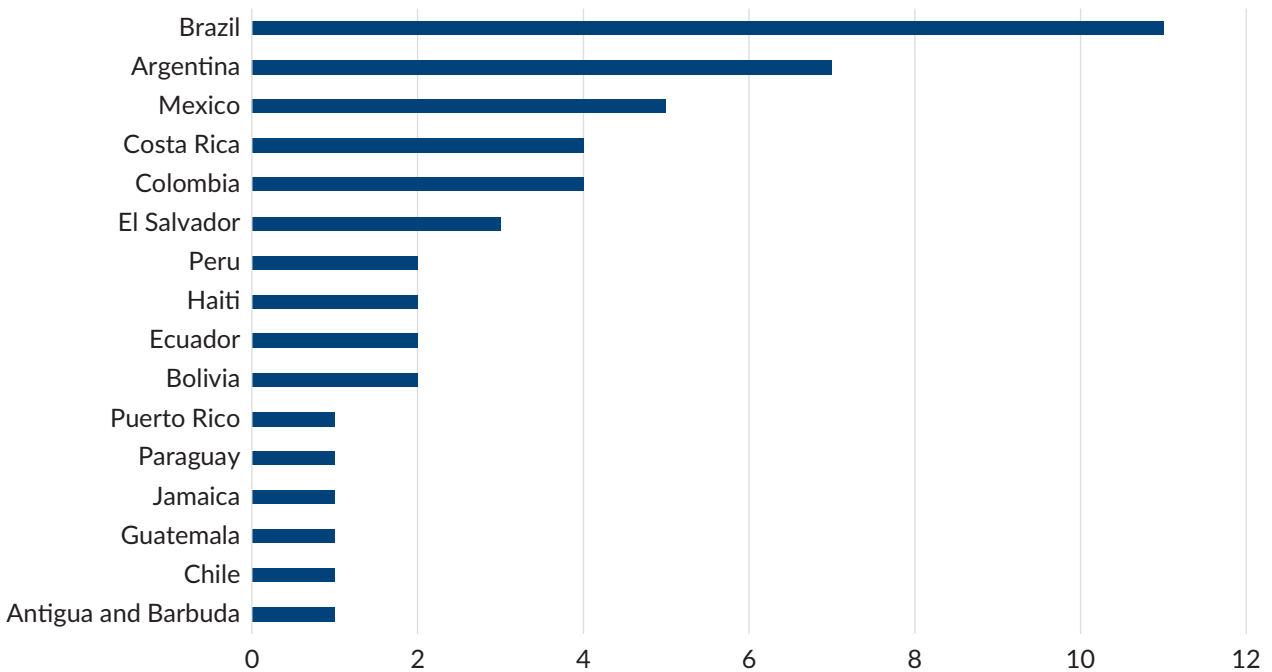


Figure 3. BPs by country of origin corresponding to the period analyzed (2001–2021).

of each occurrence, as the difference can be significant. For example, there's only a one-appearance difference between the ac1 and ac2, while there's a 17-appearance difference between the ac2 and ac3.

After reviewing the general conditions of the BPs, the following list presents the 20 most identified issues by the selected BPs, organized from the most to the least common (Table 1).

Considering the frequency of each issue, certain patterns become discernible. Economic difficulties are the foremost issue, mentioned in some form by almost all the studied initiatives, with 32 occurrences. It significantly outnumbers the next set of problems. There are three issues with nearly the same frequency: challenges in dealing with existing regulations, inadequate infrastructure, and complexities in coordinating all stakeholders. These four problems are highlighted by half or more of the cases studied. Below that, lack of awareness about issues addressed by the BPs and resistance to change each appear 18 times. Beyond this point, there is a shift as the differences in frequency between each subsequent problem become less pronounced, forming a descending staircase pattern.

Even though the list is extensive and covers a wide range of topics, these results align partially with other studies. They highlight the complexity inherent in any transformative effort, among other findings. For example, Dorst et al. (2022) identified barriers such as limited collaborative governance affecting decision-making, challenges in knowledge and awareness impacting information application, limited involvement of the private sector, conflicts in the utilization of city spaces, inadequate development of policies, lack of public resources, and difficulties in citizen engagement. Similarly, Wamsler et al. (2020) found that some common barriers for implementing policies had to do with lack of citizen awareness and interest, counterproductive citizen involvement, municipal departments working in silos, lack of monitoring from inception to completion, and the absence of top-down guidance, regulatory frameworks, and essential tools.

Table 1. Issues definition and number of occurrences in the BPs.

#	Code	Definition
32	is1	Financial constraints or poor financial structure.
24	is2	Complicated laws, bureaucratic hurdles, or slow decision-making.
24	is3	Stakeholder disagreements, poor coordination, and conflictive relations.
23	is4	Inadequate, poor, or deteriorated infrastructure or built environment.
18	is5	Lack of awareness or skepticism.
18	is6	Resistance to change or opposition to different approaches.
14	is7	Inaccessible information for the community, including the digital divide.
13	is8	Political instability or lack of institutional support.
12	is9	Poor community participation or engagement challenges.
11	is10	Inequality, including gender, social, and economic disparities.
10	is11	Technical challenges or inadequate technological framework.
9	is12	Challenges in project sustainability, including monitoring, maintenance, and accountability.
8	is13	Lack of skilled workforce or need for specialized training.
8	is14	Social and cultural barriers or differences.
7	is15	Communities with poor socioeconomic conditions.
7	is16	Challenges in scaling, adapting, and replicating unique projects.
6	is17	Lack of reliable data or data collection difficulties.
6	is18	Environmental vulnerability, degradation, and natural resource scarcity.
5	is19	Lack of trust and engagement challenges, including prejudice or negative perception.
4	is20	Economic challenges, including inflation and devaluation.

Note: Colors indicate magnitude; darker backgrounds represent most common issues.

More in detail, several of these issues have been found in previous studies, often in different but related ways. For instance, it is not surprising to find funding constraints (is1) at the top of the list, particularly in developing countries, where they are often tied to inflation and devaluation (is20). Several studies have noted similar issues, including significant ties to inequality (is10), either because interventions are focused on areas with better economic potential (Delgadillo, 2014; Whitney, 2022b, p. 19) or because these practices have been highlighted by major international agencies (Montero, 2017; Temenos & McCann, 2012). Funding issues have also been identified as obstacles to promoting awareness and engagement (Le Gouais et al., 2023, p. 6), which have been connected in previous studies to a lack of interest and participation (Deely et al., 2020; Egusquiza et al., 2019; Wamsler et al., 2020) and also appeared high on this list (is5, is6, and is9).

Another set of commonly identified issues in several BPs is bureaucracy and inadequate legislation, which ranked second (is2). These issues are strongly linked to political instability and lack of institutional support (is8). Political instability has been defined as a common factor in developing countries that hinders the maintenance of solid institutions to support sustainable initiatives (Julio & Yook, 2012; Kayode-Ajala, 2023; Roe & Siegel, 2011). Additionally, several studies have shown that underdeveloped institutional capacities affect project development, including inherited state bureaucracy and other obstacles to interinstitutional coordination (Carbonetti et al., 2014; de Vaal & Ebben, 2011; Kayode-Ajala, 2023; Singh, 2023). These issues have also been linked to a lack of human resources, insufficient training, or inadequate technical guidelines (Kayode-Ajala, 2023; Slunge & Tran, 2014) that were also identified in some of the BPs

analyzed (is13). Although all identified issues could be linked to various stakeholders, the last items related to bureaucracy, legislation, training, etc., are particularly pertinent to local governments and their potential for political leadership.

In the same format as previously discussed, the following section will present the 20 most identified actions by the selected BPs, organized from the most to the least common (Table 2).

In analyzing the actions from the BPs, certain patterns of occurrence can be recognized. The first two actions, relating to community engagement and stakeholder relations, have almost the same number of appearances, with 37 and 36 respectively. These are the only actions appearing in more than half of the BPs. Subsequently, there is a significant jump to a second group of four actions: government support, evaluation and monitoring, training, and effective communication. Another jump leads to a third group of six actions with between 15 and 14 appearances. Following a unique case with 12 appearances, the same decreasing stair-step pattern observed in the problem analysis can be seen.

As observed with the issues analyzed, identified actions show partial alignment with findings in previous studies. For instance, several studies have highlighted community involvement and stakeholder relations as crucial topics (Kayode-Ajala, 2023; Stanowicka, 2021; Wamsler et al., 2020), which in this research ranked at the top of the results and were closely related (ac1 and ac2). In relation to this, understanding local culture

Table 2. Issues definition and number of occurrences in the BPs.

#	Code	Definition
37	ac1	Engaging with the community in a participatory process.
36	ac2	Collaborating with diverse stakeholders.
19	ac3	Garnering political and governmental support.
19	ac4	Monitoring, evaluating, and measuring impact.
18	ac5	Training and educating communities.
18	ac6	Communicating effectively and building trust.
15	ac7	Developing pilot projects and promoting scalability.
15	ac8	Maintaining flexibility and adaptability.
15	ac9	Developing or adapting low-cost technological solutions.
15	ac10	Designing innovative financing models.
14	ac11	Promoting gender and socioeconomic inclusivity.
14	ac12	Considering environmental sustainability.
12	ac13	Adapting to the local context and culture.
9	ac14	Developing efficient protocols and reducing bureaucracy.
8	ac15	Adopting an integrated approach with long-term planning.
7	ac16	Seeking external support and expertise.
7	ac17	Aligning the project with existing laws and regulations.
6	ac18	Practicing multidisciplinary approaches.
5	ac19	Improving infrastructure conditions.
3	ac20	Addressing community necessities.

Note: Colors indicate magnitude; darker backgrounds represent most common actions.

(ac13; Marciani et al., 2016) and aligning with existing policy frameworks (ac17; Wittwer et al., 2023, p. 5) have been shown to be key in achieving these relations. These topics also relate to the development of long-term planning and efforts to reduce bureaucracy (ac14 and ac15), common practices in efforts to achieve better governance (Gans-Morse et al., 2018; Jennings Jr, 2007). Combining these ideas, the collaboration between communities and political entities proves crucial in implementing effective solutions. This partnership allows for the incorporation of diverse perspectives and expertise, leading to more innovative and sustainable outcomes.

Returning to the most common actions found in this research, communicating effectively and building trust (ac5) have been linked to efforts of training and educating communities (ac6) in this and previous studies (Campo et al., 2015; Polko & Kimic, 2024; Poynton et al., 2018). However, many of these efforts require several steps, which is why many of these initiatives start with short-term pilot projects to later consider scalability and replicability (ac7 and ac8; Whitney, 2022b, p. 20; Wu et al., 2023, p. 136). This complexity requires a series of important components that have been considered in the form of stakeholder involvement, but also include external support in political backing, expertise, and multidisciplinary approaches (ac3, ac16, and ac18). Other experiences have underscored the importance of these elements (Marciani et al., 2016, p. 353; J. L. S. Silva et al., 2021). By working together, stakeholders can identify priorities, allocate resources more effectively, and implement strategies with broad support. This collaborative approach not only strengthens the fabric of urban governance but also ensures that solutions are grounded in the realities of those most affected, thereby enhancing the overall resilience and well-being of urban areas.

4.3. Patterns and Interactions Between Issues and Actions

While it is not always the case, issues and actions in BPs can often find corresponding counterparts. For example, stakeholder disagreements, poor coordination, and conflictive relations (is3) could be seen as the opposite of collaborating with diverse stakeholders (ac2). This observation led to the notion that obstacles could be converted into actions, with BPs taking specific actions to counter related issues. However, the analysis revealed that issues and actions that could be directly related or generated as responses did not consistently appear within the BPs (Table 3). For instance, garnering political and governmental support (ac3) was uncommon in cases reporting ineffective laws and bureaucratic hurdles (is2). Similarly, training and educating communities (ac5) and effectively communicating to build trust (ac6) were seldom seen in cases with a lack of awareness or skepticism (is5). Interestingly, some topics that could be considered unrelated showed stronger relationships, such as insufficient funding (is1) with the development of pilot projects and promoting scalability (ac7), and poor infrastructure (is4) with multidisciplinary approaches (ac18). These observations could indicate that some actions taken were aimed at addressing issues that were not mentioned in the reports collected by the database. Considered as a whole, this complex—and probably inconsistent—relationship between issues and actions highlights the need for nuanced approaches in urban planning, suggesting that solutions require innovative thinking and a deep understanding of the interplay between various factors and actors, necessitating collaborative, adaptable, context-specific strategies.

By examining these issues and actions transversely and observing how they have been handled in previous studies, it is possible to identify groups that further help to understand the areas in which BPs implementation needs consideration. In other words, beyond individual analysis, thematic groups can be organized to better understand the nature of these issues (Table 4). While different organizations would be valid, cross-checking

Table 3. Correlation between issues and actions in the analyzed BPs. 100% indicates complete overlap, while 0% indicates no overlap.

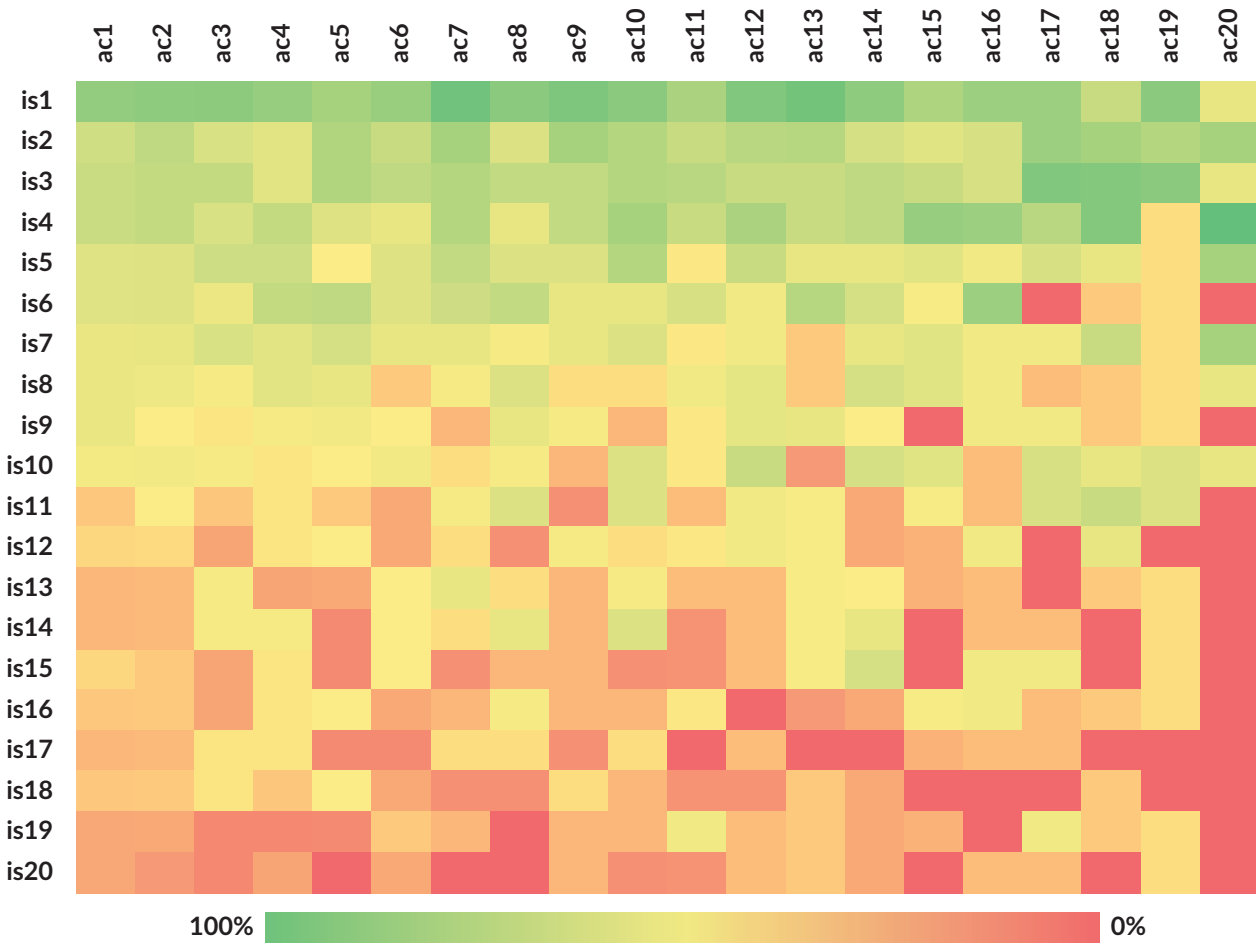


Table 4. BPs' issues and actions organized by categories.

		is1	is2	is3	is4	is5	is6	is7	is8	is9	is10	is11	is12	is13	is14	is15	is16	is17	is18	is19	is20
Management	115	34			23			14				10	9	8			7	6	6		4
Communities	103			24	18	18				12	11				8	7					5
Government	37		24						13												

		ac1	ac2	ac3	ac4	ac5	ac6	ac7	ac8	ac9	ac10	ac11	ac12	ac13	ac14	ac15	ac16	ac17	ac18	ac19	ac20
Management	137				19		18	15	15	15	15		14			8	7		6	5	
Communities	120	37	36		18							14		12							3
Government	35			19											9			7			

the lists reveals two main themes: resource management (funds, infrastructure, information, workforce, etc.) and relations with communities or stakeholders. When organizing problems and actions according to these themes, it's evident that points not belonging to either specifically relate to government relations. Although the government is a stakeholder in many cases, these points refer to the governmental and legislative framework

within which the BPs operate. Adding up the number of appearances for each problem or action related to these three groups somewhat confirms the initial approach. The first two themes almost evenly split the nature of the issues highlighted by the BPs. Similar to previous findings, this analysis underlines the importance of understanding the multifaceted nature of issues and actions within implementation. By categorizing these aspects into thematic groups—resource management, and stakeholder or community relations, with a distinct emphasis on governmental and legislative frameworks—the resulting distribution demonstrates that effective proposals require intense interactions between people and politics, where management processes are central.

The formulation of this research has certain limitations. The most significant is that the analysis and results regarding the problems and actions of the BPs are based solely on what authors have stated in reports compiled in the repository. This does not imply that these were the only problems faced or solutions found, but rather those that were highlighted. Given that these texts are relatively brief and aim to synthesize what the authors intended to express, it is challenging to estimate what has been excluded or how authors have chosen to present their BPs for different selection methods. It is plausible that some difficulties or solutions may have been omitted, mitigated, or overly emphasized. Another limitation related to the nature of these reports is that studying issues and actions broadly didn't allow this research to identify possible actions that were taken as specific responses to particular issues.

5. Conclusions

The findings from this research on BPs have significant implications for urban policy development in Latin America and the Caribbean. By identifying the prevalent issues and successful actions within the region's BPs, policymakers are equipped with a clearer understanding of the crucial factors that contribute to the effectiveness of urban initiatives. Specifically, the frequent occurrence of financial and legislative challenges suggests a need for reforms that streamline bureaucratic processes and enhance funding mechanisms. Policymakers should consider creating more flexible legal frameworks that can adapt to the dynamic needs of urban development and increase the accessibility of funds for critical projects. Additionally, the research underlines the importance of stakeholder collaboration in policy formation. Therefore, policies that foster cooperative relationships among government entities, private sector players, and community groups could be instrumental in advancing urban development goals. Implementing these recommendations could not only address the specific hurdles identified but also enhance the overall efficacy and sustainability of urban projects in the region.

This research has enhanced understanding of BPs, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. It highlighted inequities in BP representation but also revealed significant insights across a diverse range of cases. This contributes to understanding how learning from BPs becomes new, transferable information. Future expansion could greatly benefit from exploring other repositories like the Urban Sustainability Exchange and directly engaging with protagonists of BPs. This approach promises to yield deeper insights and understanding. Additionally, the study raises important questions regarding the correlation between the challenges BPs face and the actions they implement, indicating a need for further investigation. Moreover, a comparative analysis of BPs from various geographical regions could reveal crucial regional similarities and differences, thereby enriching urban planning and development strategies with a more global perspective.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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