

## **Jaime Lerner**

Throughout a career spanning six decades, architect and urban planner Jaime Lerner built a legacy of innovation in the way we think about and intervene in cities. He emphasized the value of simplicity, "making things happen," creating places for togetherness, and the transformative power of "urban acupuncture."

Lerner served as the Mayor of Curitiba three times and led an urban revolution that made the city a national and international reference in urban planning. One of his most influential projects was the creation of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, which is now present in over 180 cities worldwide. Additionally, he served as the governor of the state of Paraná twice, driving significant economic and social transformations that changed the state's profile.

Lerner had a penchant for aphorisms to synthesize ideas and coined several that consistently guided his thinking and actions. In a time of growing concerns about climate change and limited financial resources, he argued that "The city is not a problem, the city is a solution." He also emphasized that "To innovate is to start," and that "The city is not as complex as the 'complexity sellers' want us to believe." He contended that "If you want creativity, cut one zero off your budget; if you want sustainability, cut off two," that "Bureaucracy cannot be an excuse for inaction," and "You can't expect to have all the answers before you start."

These understandings translated into numerous initiatives that left an indelible mark on the lives of the people of Curitiba and Paraná, inspiring many others around the world. For example, in the early days of the public transit system, Lerner implemented a special city lottery that used bus fare as lottery tickets to increase funding and encourage ridership. To combat Curitiba's growing litter problem, he introduced more incentives for recycling, including a city-wide recycling program called "lixo que não é lixo," which involved schoolchildren as its main advocates, as well as an initiative called "câmbio verde" that enabled exchanging bottles, cans, and other recyclables for food in poorer communities. Lerner believed in implementing plans swiftly — in just 72 hours, he converted the main thoroughfare in the city's downtown into Brazil's first pedestrian mall, now known as Rua das Flores.

For his work, Lerner received several international awards, including the United Nations' Highest Environmental Award (1990), UNICEF Child and Peace (1996), the Ordre National du Mérite (1997) from the French Republic, The 2001 World Technology Award for Transportation (2001), the 2002 Sir Robert Mathew Prize for the Improvement of Quality of Human Settlements, by the International Union of Architects - UIA, and the Volvo Environment Prize 2004. In 2010, Time Magazine listed Jaime Lerner among the 25 most influential thinkers in the world, and he received the Medal of Urbanism from L'Académie D'Architecture (France). In 2011, he was honored with the Leadership in Transport Award from the International Transport Forum at the OECD for his leadership, vision, and contribution in the field of sustainable urban mobility. In 2018, readers of the Planetizen website voted Jaime Lerner the second most influential urbanist of all time.

Jaime Lerner passed away on May 27th, 2021.