

Luciano Rezende inspires data driven smart cities in Brazil



A Q&A with the Mayor of Vitória, Brazil during his Pacific Leadership Fellowship

By Rachel Hommel | GPS News



In Vitória, Brazil, [Luciano Rezende](#) is putting the city at your fingertips. During his fellowship at the Center on Global Transformation at the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS), he was warmly welcomed by leading Latin America focused scholars and students.

“The 30th celebration of GPS is about inviting people to the school who excel in novel academic ideas to improve the government of a city,” said [Rafael Fernández de Castro](#), GPS professor and director of Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies (USMEX).

During his [Pacific Leadership Fellowship \(PLF\)](#) residency, Rezende focused on SMART cities and the Brazilian presidential elections, creating a futuristic vision of Vitória’s future that is data driven. With efforts focused on sustainability, he noted he particularly enjoyed meeting with David Graham, Deputy Chief Operating Officer for the City of San Diego, an expert in smart and sustainable communities.

“We are also people from the water. Our city started as a port and is now becoming a hub for innovation and technology,” said Rezende. “A shared government has to be rapid, efficient, transparent and online.”

Known fondly as the “Mayor of Bikes” by his citizens, Rezende enjoyed exploring the San Diego lifestyle, including time trick-or-treating with his wife Marina, son Davi and Artur and exploring the USS Midway Museum. A former professional rower, Rezende highlights the lessons sports taught him, and its influence on his career as mayor.

Read below as Rezende shares his impressions about the fellowship, including how it sparked his own goals for the future of his city of Vitória.

What led you to GPS as a PLF Fellow and what has been your overall impression so far?



LR: I've known International Advisory Board member Ricardo Tavares for several years and he invited me to the fellowship. I've been very impressed with GPS and the people are very kind. My schedule has been full! I've been learning a lot from various professors and getting strategic information to do my job in Brazil. It's been wonderful to exchange experiences from my point of view.

Vitória is on the same path that San Diego was on twenty years ago. We are turning the city towards education, innovation, technology, tourism, environmental preservation, gastronomy and many cultural activities. The California way of life is very close to Brazil's lifestyle. I feel myself at home here!

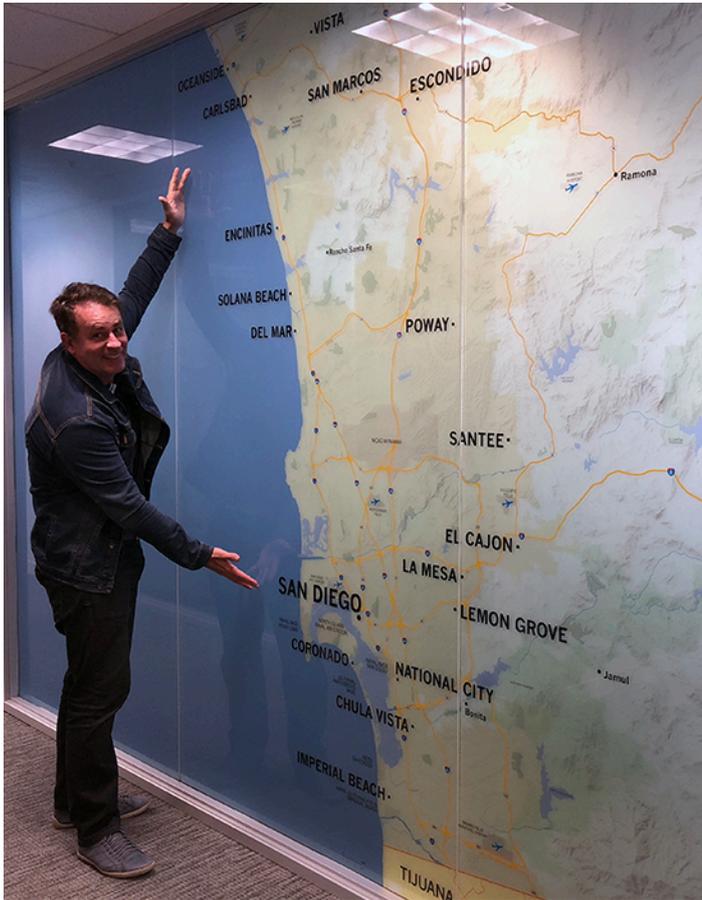
During your residency, your focus will be on SMART cities and the Brazilian presidential elections. What do you hope to learn at GPS and across campus?

LR: I was so impressed with the democratic and liberal spirit of California people. From a distance, I was expecting to see some tension on the border with Mexico, but once I arrived, I was really happy to see that the U.S. is building bridges rather than walls. I even saw a bridge that goes over the border to get to the airport - [Cross Border Xpress](#) - a symbol of California's efforts to ensure this region will work as one. I found no tension at all, purely partnership and fraternity.

It's a genius idea to schedule daily conversations with such a variety of people with a range of expertise. I found it really critical and important. I am leaving with ways to improve my management to the city and professors are leaving with practical information they can use here. This system is a great way to refresh the professors view of Latin America and to ensure there is always new information. The university will never get passed by time. GPS recreates itself every day. I want to bring this model to Vitória.

For your talk, you will provide your assessment of the challenges to succeed in local administration in a period of crisis. From your own experience as mayor, what do you believe are the biggest challenges to the new administration?

LR: Brazil needed leadership, we were adrift for four long years. We experienced the deepest economic crisis in Brazil, ever. We had economic corruption and no leadership. We will need to reform the administration system, political system and retirement system. Our social security is a time-bomb. People are living longer and nothing has been done in the last 30 years. These will be the greatest challenges. Government has to be straight - rapid, efficient, transparent and online, so everyone can access it.



Before becoming major, you served as the city's Secretary of Health and Education and the state's Secretary of Sports. What role does health and education play in our society?

LR: I was at one time the Brazilian and South American champion for rowing. It gave me a lot of discipline. I got my medical degree in sports medicine. My life has always been connected to sports. I think for a complete education one has to also have a sports program and a cultural program, in addition to pure academic training. Sports gave me the discipline, organization, perseverance and drive to keep doing hard things. To not quit. This is a key to success.

What's been the most surprising visit or activity on the agenda so far during your stay?

LR: I'm having more time with my family than in Brazil, from lunch together to taking walks with them on the beach. They are loving San Diego. The two-week residency has been very rich. I have many notes and ideas to take back to Brazil. I've loved my time here.

Do you have any parting career advice for students looking to get into politics or city planning?

LR: They should be open-minded about experiences all over the world. All politicians should do the following - pick up two sources that you don't agree with

and read them every day. People today are living in bubbles and it is much harder to listen to people we don't believe. When you listen to different opinions, your balance is much more precise. When I have a difficult problem, I always ask myself where the public interest is concerning that issue. It always guides the way.

View a [photo gallery](#) of Rezende's visit.