Democratic Innovation in World Cities

**DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION?**

Innovation = a new approach to a difficult challenge. But not all innovation is equal in its impact. Often, government has incentives to innovate for internal efficiency, while maintaining existing power relationships in government and society. We seek to find and share stories of how cities are strengthening resident power and political inclusion, particularly with respect to low-income residents and marginalized communities, by experimenting with governmental structures, processes and practices.

**FOCUS AREAS**

**EMBEDDING A CULTURE OF INNOVATION**

What are the administrative structures, processes, policies or partnerships that can encourage creativity, risk-taking, experimentation or results-driven behavior within government?

**SHARING INFORMATION**

How are city governments re-shaping information flows to create more open, responsive, nimble and accountable governance? How are they using data, and what role do mobile devices and other technologies play?

**DEEPENING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT**

How are city governments bringing diverse citizen voices into planning, policy-making and service monitoring? How are they demonstrating effectiveness to the public, particularly low-income residents and marginalized communities?

**POLITICAL APPROACH**

We are interested not only in the technical aspects of how city governments innovate for democratic impact, but also in the political and human aspects of urban governance reform. This includes when and why leaders initiate reform, and how and why they are successful (or not) in securing buy-in. Political economy analysis and candid interviews with a wide range of stakeholders are crucial to our inquiry.

**INITIAL CITIES**

- New York City
- Mexico City
- Bogota
- Mumbai
- Nairobi
- Seoul
- Jakarta
- Buenos Aires

**SELECTION CRITERIA**

- Diversity of region, development, governance challenges
- Examples of new approaches in inclusive governance and problem-solving
- Willingness of key officials and city staff to participate
- Connections to NDI/Living Cities networks
- Strength of civil society and community groups
- Existence of local research initiatives on urban governance or innovation
METHODOLOGY

**Desk Research**

**International Peer-to-Peer Engagement**

Living Cities will sponsor U.S. city administrators from its City Accelerator program to participate as peer experts in the site visits.

**Site Visits: Conversations with Leaders & Stakeholders**

Staff from NDI and Living Cities, accompanied by an administrator from an innovative U.S. city, will endeavor to meet with key interlocutors, including:

- **Political Leaders**
  - mayors
  - city legislators
  - chiefs of staff
  - party leaders
- **Innovation Staff**
  - chief innovation officers
  - project directors
- **Administrators**
  - chief administrative officers
  - directors of IT, finance and other key sectors
- **Tech Leaders**
  - civic technologists
  - industry leaders
  - tech hubs
- **Civil Society**
  - civic activists
  - community group leaders

PRODUCT: MULTIMEDIA CASE STUDIES

The stories of urban innovators, and the citizens they engage, will be told through video, audio, photography, text and/or data visualization. The primary audience for the case studies will be city leaders and administrators around the world, but they may be equally useful for community activists, civic technologists and others seeking to effect changes in city governance.

We will also explore ways to amplify the voices of urban innovators and strengthen peer-to-peer engagement, through mechanisms such as webinars, virtual exchanges or digital conferences.

OBJECTIVES

Understand the political incentives, aspirations and/or identities that are driving political leaders of megacities to encourage or adopt innovations.

Investigate the institutional framework and political incentives for adopting, implementing and executing significant management reforms designed to improve civic engagement and urban democracy.

Explore the extent to which innovative management reforms—particularly involving new mechanisms for collecting, obtaining, using and/or sharing information—are altering political incentives and power dynamics.

Review what innovations are improving citizen engagement in what contexts, as well as their ownership by, and impact on, women and marginalized groups.

Identify transferable, actionable best practices from successful models of innovation that can be both sustainable and transformative in nature.

Generate recommendations and advocacy tools for city leaders seeking to replicate successes from other jurisdictions.

TIMELINE

**Q2 2016**

Desk review & consultations

**Q3 2016**

Conduct site visits

**Q2 2018**

Disseminate stories

Connect innovators

**Q3 2018**

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NDI

National Democratic Institute

LIVING CITIES

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