DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION IN WORLD MEGACITIES

NDI and Living Cities are investigating new approaches to management and governance in the world's megacities, with a focus on urban democracy. We intend to generate and share knowledge about how innovators are making city government more nimble, inclusive and data-driven in order to strengthen democratic accountability, particularly for low-income residents and marginalized communities.

Areas of Focus

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?

Managing 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?

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 in ways that improve internal efficiency while maintaining existing power relationships. We seek to understand what types of impacts are likely to result from what types of processes and—by extension—how cities can innovate in ways that are more likely to strengthen citizen engagement and political inclusion, particularly with respect to low-income residents and marginalized communities.

Political Approach

We are interested not only in the technical aspects of how city governments innovate for 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 will be crucial to our inquiries.

Potential Cities (5-7)

NYC or DC
Mexico City
Bogota
Lagos
Nairobi
Mumbai
Seoul
Bangkok
Jakarta

Selection Criteria

Very large cities

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 learning & assessment missions.

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	Innovation Staff	Administrators	Tech Leaders	Civil Society
mayors city legislators chiefs of staff party leaders	chief innovation officers, directors of innovation projects	chief administrative officers, directors of IT, finance and other key sectors	civic technologists, industry leaders, tech hubs	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	Q3 2016	Q4 2016	Q1 2017
Conduct desk review & consultations	Conduct site visits Share impressions & initial findings		Disseminate report Participate in conferences