The background features a dark, textured grid pattern with various colored circles (purple, yellow, orange, grey, black) scattered across it. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Network Effects

The innovation multipliers of international collaboration for cities and subnational governments

Dr Tim Moonen, Dr Ellie Cosgrave, Jake Nunley and Dr Oliver Zanetti

September 2020

## About Nesta

Nesta is an innovation foundation. For us, innovation means turning bold ideas into reality and changing lives for the better.

We use our expertise, skills and funding in areas where there are big challenges facing society.

Nesta is based in the UK and supported by a financial endowment. We work with partners around the globe to bring bold ideas to life to change the world for good.

If you'd like this publication in an alternative format such as Braille or large print, please contact us at: [information@nesta.org.uk](mailto:information@nesta.org.uk)

## Thanks and acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank warmly the following individuals for their guidance and input at various stages of this report's development: Michele Acuto, Professor of Urban Politics, Melbourne School of Design; Eugen Antalovsky, CEO of Urban Innovation Vienna; Max Bouchet, Senior Policy Analyst, Brookings Institution; Maria Camila, Coordinator, IDB Cities Network, Inter-American Development Bank; Prof. Greg Clark CBE, Global Head of Future Cities and New Industries, HSBC; Pascal Cools, Managing Director, Flanders District of Creativity and Coordinator, Districts of Creativity Network; Carme Gual, Director, Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation; Tricia Hackett, Sustainable Urban Development Advisor, EU-IUC North America; Ronald Hall, Principal Adviser on International Relations, DG REGIO; Alan Harding, Chief Economic Adviser, Greater Manchester Combined Authority; Maimunah Jaffar, Head of Planning and Compliance, Iskandar Regional Development Authority; Casey Jaquez, Global Cities Communications Manager, Mastercard; Abha Joshi Ghani, Director for Knowledge and Learning, World Bank; Raghu Kasevan, Senior Infrastructure Specialist, World Bank; Tin Tin Kyi, Director, City Planning and Land Administration, Yangon City Development Committee; Lina Liakou, Managing Director Europe and Middle East, Global Resilient Cities Network; Johannes Lutter, Head of Future Cities, Urban Innovation Vienna; Patrick McVeigh, Practice Lead, MartinJenkins, Auckland; Louise Peace, Marketing and Communications Lead, Mastercard Enterprise Partnerships; Susannah Robinson, Technical Officer, World Health Organization; Ariella Rojhani, Director, Partnership for Healthy Cities; Anaclaudia Roszbach, Regional Manager - Latin America and the Caribbean - Cities Alliance; Lauren Sorokin, Acting Executive Director, Global Resilient Cities Network; Khoo Teng Chye, Executive Director, Centre for Liveable Cities; Caroline Twigg, Joint Head of International Affairs,

Bristol City Council; Maria Vassilakou, former Deputy Mayor of Vienna and Founder of Vienna Solutions; Victor Vergara, Lead Urban Specialist, Social, Urban, Rural and Resilience, World Bank; Hyoung Gun Wang, Senior Economist, World Bank; Michael Woodbridge, Infrastructure Canada and former Research Programs Manager, NewCities.

A special thanks to William Cobbett, Marek Gootman, Amy Hochadel and Chris Murray for their expert advice and insights throughout.

Any errors of fact or interpretation in this report are the authors' responsibility alone.

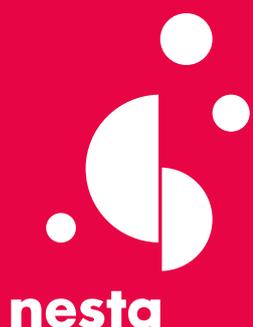
## About the Authors

**Ellie Cosgrave (@elliecosgrave)** is Associate Professor of Urban Innovation and Policy at University College London and Director of the UCL's Urban Innovation and Policy Laboratory, within the Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy (STeAPP). Ellie is an experienced researcher, educator and advisor to city authorities on innovation policy globally. She is course convenor for UCL's Masters in Public Administration for Urban Innovation and supervises multiple masters and doctoral candidates on research topics related to innovative urban policy making.

**Dr Tim Moonen (@TimMCities)** is Managing Director at The Business of Cities, an urban research and intelligence group based at STeAPP, University College London. He works with leaders in more than 50 cities, national governments, and global organisations on long-term strategies for competitiveness, internationalisation, the innovation economy and performance benchmarking. He is the co-author of *World Cities and Nation States* (Wiley, 2017) and a former Non-Resident Fellow at the Brookings Institution.

**Jake Nunley** is Head of Research at The Business of Cities. His research primarily involves in-depth appraisal and peer review of city strategies, policies and tools. He has delivered and overseen comparative global case study analysis on 25 projects, including for cities and organisations in Milan, Glasgow, Oslo, Malmo and Brisbane, and is currently leading a major analytics project on the world's top 100 innovation districts. Jake has a Geography degree from the University of Cambridge.

**Oliver Zanetti** is a Senior Researcher in the place-based Innovation Policy team at Nesta. Prior to Nesta, he was a postdoctoral researcher in the University of Oxford's School of Geography and the Environment, where he was working on the effects of smart city technology on social difference as part of a large, Economic and Social Research Council funded project. His PhD from the Open University examined food security and food plant seed banking, and he also holds an MA in Cities and Cultures from Queen Mary, University of London.



# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>5</b>
The promise of international collaboration for innovation	6
Recommendations	8
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
Why now?	11
After the scepticism, the opportunity	11
Unpacking the innovation goals	12
Methodology	14
This report	15
<b>2. The short story of subnational collaboration so far</b>	<b>16</b>
1st phase (1970–1990) – Universalist but uneven cooperation	18
2nd phase (1990–2008) – Globalisation, regional networking and first mover advantage	19
3rd phase (2008–2016) – Crisis, fragmentation and insurgent platforms	19
4th phase (2016–2020) – Renewed agendas and the search for inspiration	20
Towards a new cycle? The effects of COVID-19	22
The choices for cities and subnational governments	24
<b>3. How does subnational collaboration promote innovation?</b>	<b>25</b>
Innovation for what?	26
The innovation process	28
Stage 1: Identifying the problem space	29
Case study #1: ASEAN Smart Cities Network	30
Stage 2: Discovery	32
Case study #2: C40	33
Stage 3: The application	34
Case study #3: Partnership for Healthy Cities	35
Stage 4: Implementation	37
Case study #4: Mastercard City Possible	38
Stage 5: Outcomes and impacts	39
Case study #5: Districts of Creativity Network	40

Stage 6: Sharing and establishing combined influence	42
Case study #6: Barcelona and Catalonia	43
Conclusion	44
<b>4. Getting it right: Beyond the barriers to subnational collaboration</b>	<b>45</b>
1. Selecting the places and collaborations to work with	46
2. Corresponding internal capacity to make the most of partnerships	47
Case study #7: International Urban Cooperation programme	48
3. The fundamental purpose of the collaboration	49
4. Partnership design to spur catalytic engagement	49
Case study #8: Urban Housing Practitioners Hub	51
5. Leadership and management of collaboration	52
Case study #9: Global Resilient Cities Network	53
6. The durability of partnerships	53
7. Communication and demonstration of partnership impact	55
Conclusion	56
<b>5. The opportunity for second and third-tier cities and regions</b>	<b>57</b>
Case study #10: Bristol, UK	59
<b>6. Implications and recommendations for cities and subnational governments</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>63</b>

# Executive summary

---

COVID-19 has added urgency to the agenda to transform the innovation and delivery capacity of cities, regions and local governments around the world. In a global system that encounters simultaneous shocks and shared challenges, the innovation imperative at subnational levels needs to be served by agile collaboration internationally.

While nation states have scrambled to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, lower tiers of government – that is, subnational government (SNG) institutions – have needed to be particularly agile and innovative to tackle an unprecedented crisis. But the pandemic can also be seen as an additional innovation challenge for cities and regions as they now tackle disrupted economies, fiscal strains, revealed inequality, political polarisation and the climate imperative. Additional sources of subnational innovation are now in great demand in the many countries, despite resurgent nationalism, centralisation of decision-making and stubborn economic and social asymmetries between places within their borders.

Optimising national government approaches and enhancing domestic collaborations with other SNG institutions both remain vital sources of innovation. In addition, an increasingly important mechanism for SNGs to innovate has been direct *international* collaboration: networks of cities, regions and local governments innovating through a wide range of formal and informal strategic alliances, peer groups and platforms.

These international collaborations aimed at boosting the innovation capabilities of SNGs – especially those consisting of cities and metropolitan regions – are growing in number, reach, ambition and complexity. Many are now using their convening power to spread tools, tactics and technologies so that their participants can face post-COVID-19 growth and governance challenges head-on.

But while SNG leaders and practitioners are more globally networked than ever, many of them recognise that this is no guarantee of long-term improvement or innovation. The sheer range of international opportunities for SNGs in 2020 mean that the current challenge is *less about whether international collaboration for innovation is possible* and much *more about how to navigate the vast array of potential networks* to ensure maximum innovation impact for your city or region. Picking the right international collaboration opportunity to ensure the maximum benefit to an SNG's innovation capability requires a clear understanding of the fast-moving landscape, as well as the choices and opportunity costs, and the future value proposition.

## The promise of international collaboration for innovation

---

Where it is crafted and executed well, international collaboration for innovation can drive cities and SNGs to refine and reinvent their policies, systems and cross-sector relationships. Through participation in international networks managed by third parties, peer-to-peer partnerships and international expertise and solution platforms, SNGs can transform the way they address a huge variety of complex policy areas – not just science and innovation policy, but also land use, transport, housing, healthcare, economic development, sustainability, social inclusion, brand identity and investment-readiness.

Equally, international collaboration serves many stages of the innovation process – from discovery through implementation – and can ultimately fuel a place's innovation capability by raising performance, coordination, appeal, soft power and responsiveness to citizens and to markets. The 20-year progress of cities and regions such as Medellín, Seoul, Barcelona and Flanders are just four examples of harnessing the potential innovation multiplier effects of proactive international collaboration.

This report provides an in-depth analysis of the development of SNG international collaborations for innovation and sets out some of the range and potential of such collaborations for SNGs still considering how to maximise the value of engaging in these networks in the post-COVID-19 period. This report draws on a set of 10 carefully selected case studies of SNG international collaboration, and the reflections of experienced senior practitioners, experts and external observers,

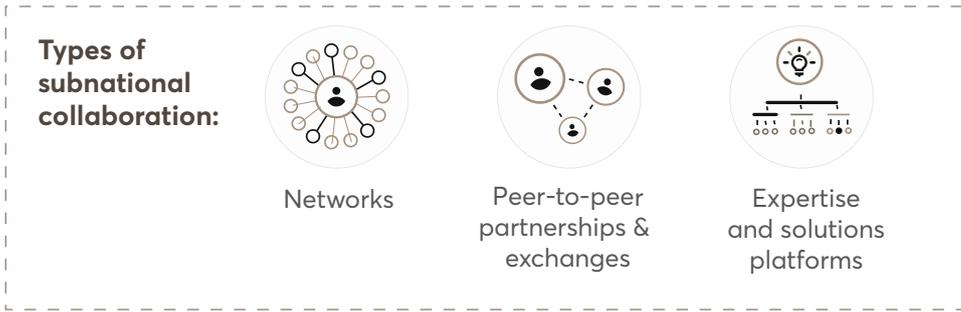
to indicate pathways for SNGs to navigate this complex area of innovation and position themselves for future success. The 10 case studies have been chosen to illustrate the geographical, conceptual and technical variety of collaborations worldwide.

As Figure 1 shows, we need new frameworks and lenses to capture the range and potential of SNG international collaborations for innovation, encompassing:

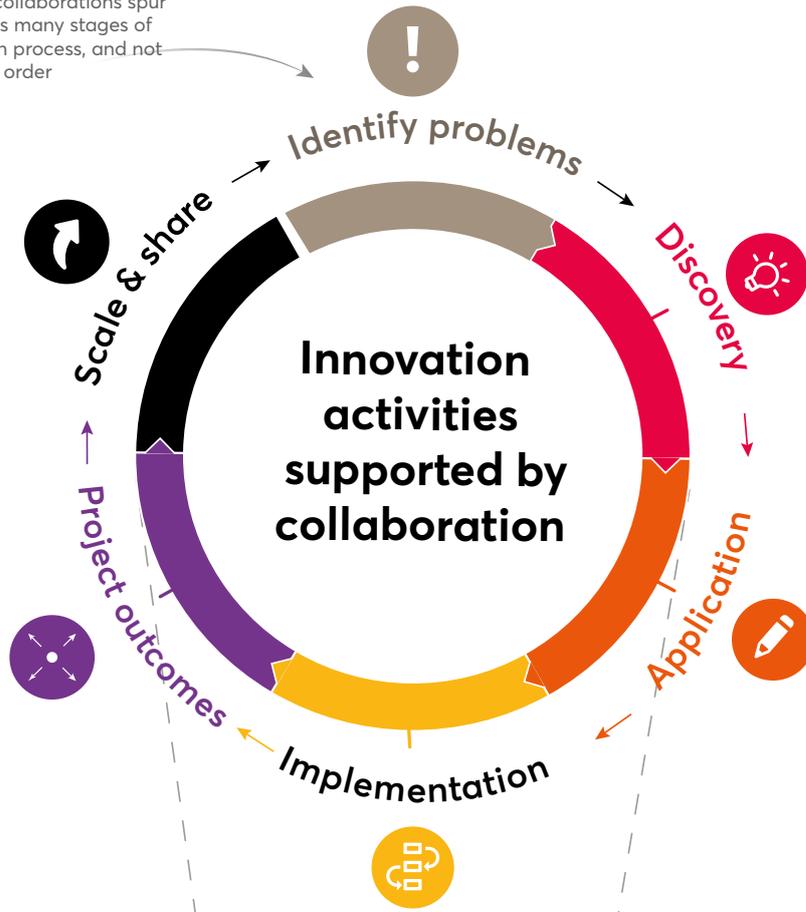
- The **scale** of geographic entities taking part, such as cities or regions.
- The **type** of partnership they are developing.
- The different **stages** of the innovation process they are used to support.
- Whether the innovation from the collaboration is directed at **systems, partnership or policy** innovation.
- The kinds of **barriers** SNGs are likely to have to overcome to ensure success.

The framework and analysis for this report makes clear that the scope that cities and SNGs have to team up internationally, distil and apply insights and pool capabilities to upgrade their approaches still depends greatly on their know-how, resources and institutional arrangements. Where these are unfavourable, there are clear risks that engagement will be shallow, short-lived, asymmetric, perplexing or frustrating. Being 'under-powered' narrows the range of partnerships that can produce innovation and constrains the overall potential in a national system for places to iterate and innovate in response to collective challenges.

# Figure 1: Understanding international collaboration for innovation by subnational governments



Subnational collaborations spur change across many stages of the innovation process, and not necessarily in order



## Reading this diagram:

This diagram provides an overview of the types, scales, and innovation contributions of subnational collaboration that are explored in this report.

The top and lower right of this page lay out the different types and scales of subnational collaboration. These are described in Chapter 2.

The ring highlights the different stages of the innovation process supported by the spectrum of subnational collaborations, which are examined in Chapter 3.

The circle beneath this shows the different types of innovation that subnational collaboration can support.

The main barriers to the creation and maintenance of successful subnational collaborations are discussed in Chapter 4, along with some of the tools to help overcome those barriers.

## Collaboration barriers

For innovation collaborations to be successful, there are some common barriers they must overcome or avoid.

- Partner selection
- Capacity deficits
- Purpose
- Engagement
- Leadership
- Durability
- Demonstrating impact

## Scales of collaboration

- Subnational**
  - States and regions
  - Large cities
  - Medium-sized cities
  - Small cities
  - Rural areas
- National**
  - Supranational
  - National

We do not look at national levels of collaboration in this report

## Recommendations

---

Into the next decade, cities and SNGs can be much more purposeful about their international collaboration and will need to decide where and how to team up and become globally savvy. Based on the insights from the broad range of case studies of international collaborations reviewed for this report as well as the reflections of experienced senior practitioners, experts and external observers worldwide gathered via interviews, three sets of recommendations emerge for officials in SNGs looking to maximise the value of international partnerships for innovation.

### 1. Take a 'whole of place' approach to international engagement

- Understand the landscape after COVID-19, fully catalogue all your place's existing commitments, and regularly reassess their value and objectives in relation to capacity.
- Seek a more integrated approach that looks beyond political boundaries, siloes and timescales. Work in a way that maximises knowledge flow and coordination across departments, makes collaboration choices accountable and licences civic and business partners to lead, shape and participate.
- Don't treat different collaboration networks as optional or interchangeable: rationalise what you do, learn who your peers are and learning partners might be, and spend time to align with your whole city's or region's long-term innovation goals and aspiration for continual improvement.

### 2. Focus resources on collaborations that are innovation-ready, including:

- Credible leadership and expert facilitation to negotiate international differences, provide challenge and rigour, and tease out local implications and innovation potential.
- Tight definitions, durations and objectives, with a clear account of what is required of network members in terms of commitment, responsibilities, ambitions and measurable outcomes.
- The profile and appetite to engage a wider stakeholder base, including citizens, business, investors, universities and other levels of government.

### 3. Pursue national-level policy reforms, allies and partnerships that will unlock capacity for internationalisation and innovation at scale

- Identify the national catalysts and resources that can enable a more systematic and innovation-focused collaboration agenda. Organise more strategically with existing domestic networks and peers, including to assess global partnership opportunities.
- Connect international collaboration to national strategies. Look for synergies between international partnerships and wider nationwide efforts – for example, to create more centres of productivity and distribute innovation capacity.
- Leverage the national government innovation initiatives operating across borders, find allies within them who grasp the distinctive imperatives for SNGs to work internationally, and seek to access personnel and development opportunities alongside them.

# 1

## Introduction

---

Cities and regions are entering a pivotal period in the 2020s as three dynamics coincide. These three overlapping predicaments create a huge impetus to transform the innovation and delivery capacity of lower levels of government.

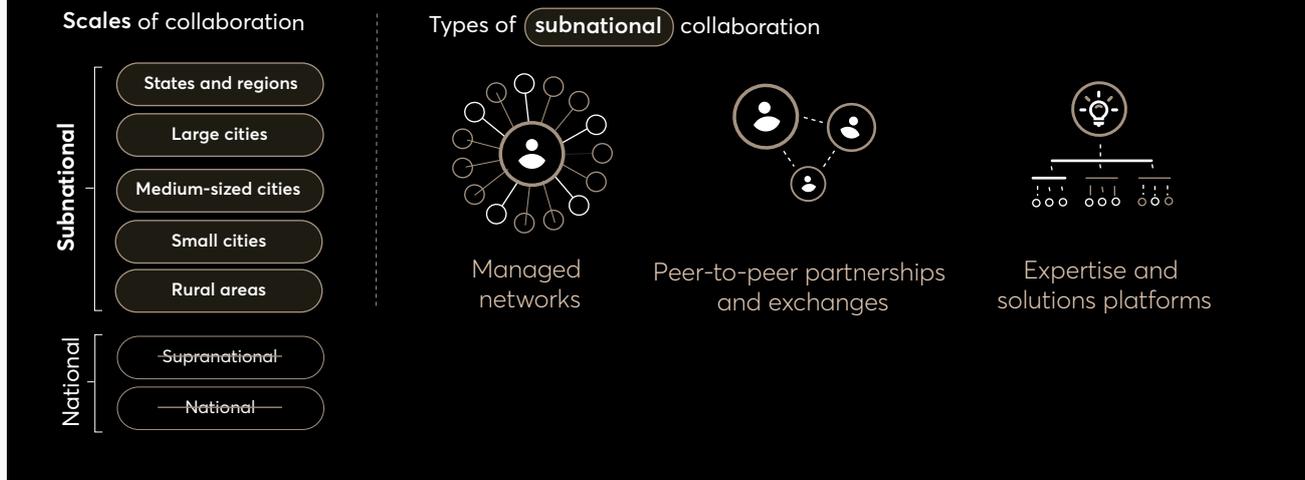
- First, COVID-19 may be creating the biggest worldwide disruption to urban and regional economies, living standards and fiscal conditions in at least 70 years. The risk of eroded productivity, an impaired innovation economy and intensified geographical inequalities between winners and losers within nations and between them is stark.
- Second, the waxing and waning of nation state capacity and leadership demands urgent additional sources of subnational leadership and invention on global agendas of public health, climate change and digital transformation, especially given the mismatch between the global scale of these challenges and the institutional arrangements at hand to address them.
- Third, the resources and institutional competences subnational leaders can draw on remain very constrained. Cities in particular are 'under-powered' and often subject to inconsistent national urban policies, investment and devolutionary impulses.

One route to fostering such innovation capacity is collaboration between peers and partners internationally.

There are now hundreds of collaboration models for cities, city regions, rural areas, states and devolved nations to work together across borders.<sup>1</sup> This activity has become very popular over the last 20 years in particular. Many leaders of governments below the nation state level have become motivated to embark on new forms of partnership and diplomacy.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, many nation states and intergovernmental organisations have been consciously experimenting with how best to foster and finance this kind of collaboration.<sup>3</sup>

## Box 1: What is international city-to-city and subnational collaboration?

**Figure 2: SNG collaboration types**



A huge variety of activities come under the umbrella of subnational collaboration – everything from high-level economic cooperation between two state governments all the way to loose networks of thousands of local authorities. Aspiring sovereign nations, state and provincial governments, regional authorities, metropolitan agencies, cities and mayors, local governments and rural areas all frequently work with counterparts overseas. Within this report, we use the shorthand 'subnational government' or 'SNG' to capture this spectrum.

There is no bird's eye view of this activity, nor an agreed formula to distinguish between what is out there. Different definitions among scholars and practitioners emphasise their own vantage points. Examples include:

- " Collaborative relationships between subnational governments from different countries, aiming at sustainable local development, implying some form of exchange or support carried out by these institutions or other locally-based actors.<sup>4</sup>
- " Flexible collaboration of various local and regional stakeholders based on their shared goals and comparative advantages.<sup>5</sup>
- " Multiple platforms ... that promote initiatives related to cities and that try to engage with traditional international actors, especially governments and international organisations, but also civil society and the private and knowledge sectors.<sup>6</sup>
- " Cities working together for a better world.<sup>7</sup>

At the simplest level, we may differentiate between three basic types of subnational collaboration (Figure 2): (1) managed networks that bring together many members and organise programmes of interaction; (2) peer-to-peer partnerships and exchanges of self-selecting cohorts motivated by common objectives; (3) expertise and solutions platforms that enrol places seeking access to particular insights and applications. These three types are the subject of this report.

Of course these core city-to-city and region-to-region activities sit in a much wider world of peer learning and knowledge transfer, both formal and informal. These include:

- Multilateral development projects that target particular groups of cities and regions for learning from one or more 'model' or 'demonstrator' places.
- Large philanthropic initiatives with specific issue-based expertise and investment aims (e.g. urban sanitation), which bring places and projects together to learn and replicate.
- Technical guidebooks and intergovernmental codes of good practice that successfully circulate discrete policies, such as participatory budgeting.
- Business-to-government sales of 'smart' solutions by international technology providers and consultancies seeking to persuade cities of a set of principles and the need to buy 'kit'.
- Media and syndicated news that circulate news of 'good practice', high-performing places, awards and other coverage of urban and regional policy initiatives.

- Massive Open Online Course platforms for government officials to access knowledge on core disciplines and best practice examples.
- Informal personal networks and ad hoc channels that have now built up through multiple career moves within and between places, and between public and private sectors.

Participants in all of these different domains note that the explosion of opportunities for knowledge acquisition have gradually established more shared assumptions about the direction of travel in order to improve and innovate. It has also subtly shifted the purpose of collaboration today towards questions of capacity and implementation, in addition to accessing ideas or information.

## Why now?

Faced with pandemic uncertainty, severe recession and major geopolitical, climate and technology changes, SNGs need a clear handle on the collaboration options open to them and the value they bring.

Some of the logics, purposes and promises of international collaborations have been assessed in existing literatures.<sup>8</sup> SNG leaders and departmental directors are certainly becoming ever more networked internationally, and many directly testify to the value and impact of collaboration.<sup>9</sup> In recent years, studies have captured how partnerships advocate, convene members, organise visits, create reports, provide financial backing and facilitate public-private joint ventures.<sup>10</sup>

Yet for SNG leaders seeking to build their institutional and innovation capacity, the landscape, the choices and the practical realities are still often unclear.<sup>11</sup> Many innovation-bearing activities happen below the radar, outside of high-profile networks and formal institutional arenas. The merit and potential of these peer collaborations has not yet been fully accounted for. As the landscape has become increasingly complex, it is at times a daunting prospect for officials seeking to engage effectively.

There has long been a gap in identifying what learning needs SNGs really have, what formats for joint endeavours work well and what options exist to set up, design, fund, govern and lead future experimental collaborations.<sup>12</sup> This becomes especially important in a post-COVID-19 world if such activities are to be prioritised over other urgent initiatives or reform agendas governments may spend time on. As the stakes rise, there is a great deal to learn from what has and has not worked so that attention and resources can be placed appropriately in the years ahead.

## After the scepticism, the opportunity

Among the media, national governments and populist electorates, there are still many sceptics and critics of SNG international collaboration. Even many participants and conveners of partnerships are themselves unconvinced of the merits of all networked activities. The doubts apply especially to places that have low levels of autonomy, under-bounded political borders and narrow spans of institutional competence and who, therefore, have limited scope to apply partnership insights with an integrated, 'whole of place' perspective. Many view collaborations to date to have been vehicles for political and institutional self-promotion more than for innovation or reform.

This presents a creative task about how to raise the standard, the value and the reputation of future partnerships that SNGs take part in. Collaboration has to be a worthwhile value proposition, in particular for 'low power' and 'weak demand' cities whose structural disadvantages narrow the range of activities they might usefully participate in.

This imperative applies to British cities, city regions, rural areas and devolved nations that have themselves been active participants in a number of long-running managed networks and peer-to-peer working groups.<sup>13</sup> Many have also developed international connections within policy sector silos in a more ad hoc way.<sup>14</sup> Yet UK SNG has been historically under-powered and underfinanced compared to almost every national system in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The UK's relationships with the rest of the world are entering a period of upheaval post Brexit, intensified by the shock of COVID-19. At the same time, UK city regions in particular are starting to build more cross-cutting strategic capacity under recent institutional

rearrangements, and there is more political impetus to distribute the UK's innovation capacity more effectively. In this context, choices about the kind of strategic connections forged by SNGs with their peers in Europe and beyond will become even more important.

## Unpacking the innovation goals

This report identifies a number of innovation goals currently set out by SNG partnerships, through which cities and SNGs are 'reinventing themselves and their systems'.<sup>15</sup> We observe three primary innovation goals at play (see Table 1):

1. Inspiring and inventing better policies, tools and service designs for leaders and governments in the here and now (**policy innovation**).
2. Breakthroughs, reforms and pilots to address longer-term systemic issues of institutional capacity, delivery and integration (**systems innovation**).
3. Improved relationships and coordination between government and business, universities, and other institutions in service of 'whole of place' competitiveness and resilience (**partnerships innovation**).

Among the hundreds of collaborations taking place globally, direct cooperation on innovation policy or innovation economy is currently very much the exception, not the norm. Despite aspirations that cities and regions partner

up to animate and elevate their respective ecosystems in pursuit of greater productivity, these are not the primary or explicit goals of peer partnerships. Up to now, international collaboration for innovation policy has been viewed primarily as a national (even diplomatic) activity, especially in centralised unitary nations like the UK.

Instead, numerous practitioners we spoke with observe a profound interconnection between a place's innovation capacity and other policy sectors and areas where collaboration is already widespread: land use, transport, housing, economic development, gender, regulation, inclusion, brand, investment and bankability. Influencing positive change on these agendas – at the levels of policies, systems and partnerships – is a valued form of innovation in itself. When collaborations serve these kinds of innovation – through sharing, shaping and scaling – they nourish and sustain business innovation and commercialisation. This is because they make places more organised, more coordinated, more attractive, more responsive to citizens, more sensitive to market changes, more adaptive to new ways of doing business and better equipped to serve local and internationalising companies. These are some of the longer-term indirect outcomes of well-crafted collaboration that accrue even though they are only sometimes the primary goal of the collaboration itself.

**Table 1: Landscape of SNG international collaboration according to policy sector and innovation goal**

	<b>Partnerships innovation</b> Ecosystem activation, distributed intelligence, civic leadership	<b>Systems innovation</b> Patient seeding of know-how, reforms and capabilities	<b>Policy innovation</b> Empowering and equipping existing leadership and practitioners
<b>Cross-sector</b>	New Urban Champions, Cities of Service, Lyon-Montreal Cooperative Agreement, Centrope, Auckland Tripartite Economic Alliance, International Observatory of Participatory Democracy, Connective Cities, URBACT Working Groups	IDB Cities Network, Eurocities, Global Platform for Sustainable Cities, CIDEU, EU LEADER Programme	<b>EU-IUC</b> , UCLG, Metropolis, ICMA, INTERREG, Mercociudades, World Cities Project, International Observatory of Mayors Living Together, Union of the Baltic Cities, Global Taskforce of Local & Regional Govts., Global Parliament of Mayors, CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, Association Internationale des Maires Francophones, Bloomberg American Cities Initiative, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe, Council of European Municipalities and Regions, MedCities, EU Platforma
<b>Innovation and technology</b>	<b>Mastercard City Possible</b> , SciTech DiploHub, Cisco Kinetic for Cities, ERRIN, Ontario-Jiangsu Industrial R&D Program, Top Technology Region/Eindhoven-Leuven-Aachen Triangle, EU Sharing Cities, Curitiba International Collaboration Programme, Bavaria-Quebec Collaboration, Euroregion Pyrenees-Mediterranean, Institute of Innovation Districts, Karnataka Global Innovation Alliances, Asia Innova, Living Labs of Southern Africa, Next Century Cities, AfroLabs, Morgenstadt Innovation Partnership	<b>Districts of Creativity Network</b> , Indo-German Smart Initiative, Global Cities Dialogue on Information Society, Small Places Big Ideas Innovation Cohort Programme, Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network, Korea K City Network	<b>ASEAN Smart Cities Network</b> , The Innovator's Forum, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Urban-EU China, Seoul Urban Solutions Agency, Sharing Cities Alliance, Telecities
<b>Climate change and sustainability</b>	Embarq, URBAL, Sierra Club Mayors for 100% Clean Energy Initiative, Urban Knowledge Exchange South Africa, FRACTAL	UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, CityNet, ICLEI, Regions4	<b>C40, Global Resilient Cities Network</b> , Voluntary Local Review Movement, Brookings SDG Leadership Cities, Under2 Coalition, U20, Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance, EU Energy Cities, SDG Knowledge Platform
<b>Other dedicated theme</b>	LA Pacific Council, Compassionate Cities, Cities of Migration, Global Cultural Districts Network, Inclusive Economic Development Network, Stockholm Benchmarking Alliance, Welcoming America	<b>Urban Housing Practitioners Hub</b> , Polis, CIVITAS, WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth, World Cities Culture Forum, UN Women Safe Cities and Public Spaces, Inclusive Cities Partnership Programme	<b>Partnership for Healthy Cities</b> , Brookings Global Cities Initiative, IBSA Human Settlements Group, ISD Strong Cities, WHO European Healthy Cities Network, UNESCO Learning Cities, UNESCO Creative Cities, C.I.T.I.E.S., European Forum for Urban Security, International Association of Educating Cities, Mayors Against Illegal Guns, Mayors for Peace, Mayors Migration Council
<b>Note:</b> Collaborations shown in <b>bold</b> are featured in this report.			

## Methodology

This report has been informed by a global review of collaboration models with a particular focus on cities, metropolitan areas and subnational regions.

The review consisted of literature appraisal, desk research, dialogue with scholars and observers of SNG networks and interviews with conveners and participants of more than 15 partnerships, past and present, spanning multiple types. The focus has been on the accomplishments produced by collaborations in terms of capacity, outcomes and mindsets, and the conditions that made these possible.

We probed questions of membership, ownership, thematic agenda, stakeholder breadth and financial and organisational imperatives. The review was peer-reviewed by an international advisory board of institutional leaders spanning four continents.

Across Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this report, we showcase 10 distinctive case study examples of collaboration approaches that provide lessons and insights for SNGs. These include eight examples of collaborations and two examples of SNG approaches.

**Table 2: The 10 case studies featured in this report**

Network	Collaboration type	Main innovation goal	Sector area	Featured trait
ASEAN Smart Cities Network	Managed network	Policy innovation and partnerships innovation	Science, technology and innovation	Identification of problems
C40	Managed Network	Policy innovation	Climate change and sustainability	Discovery
Districts of Creativity Network	Peer-to-peer partnership	Systems innovation	Science, technology and innovation	Outcomes
Global Resilient Cities Network	Managed network	Policy innovation	Climate change and sustainability	Durability
International Urban Cooperation – EU	Peer-to-peer partnership	Policy innovation	Cross-sector	Capacity support
Mastercard City Possible	Expertise and solution platform	Partnerships innovation	Science, technology and innovation	Implementation
Partnership for Healthy Cities	Managed network	Policy innovation	Health	Application
Urban Housing Practitioners Hub	Peer-to-peer partnership	Systems innovation	Housing	Engagement
Bristol	Varied	-	-	Strategic collaboration
Catalonia/Barcelona	Varied	-	-	Influence and soft power

The range of case studies has been selected in order to:

- Reflect the dynamics that occur at different territorial scales, policy areas, membership sizes, collaboration mechanisms and innovation focus.
- Illustrate the value of collaboration for places at different stages of development empowerment and innovation.
- Rehearse the lessons and learnings for SNGs about how to most effectively join in collaboration.

A total of 30 collaboration leaders, participants, deputy mayors, international officers and others with decades of experience observing this activity were consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **This report**

In Chapter 2, we recap the recent history of international SNG collaboration, showing how it has evolved into a rich landscape that is adapting rapidly in light of COVID-19 and now offers SNGs many choices and opportunities to support innovation. Chapter 3 explores the mechanisms by which collaboration processes promote and support innovation by identifying six key stages. Each of the six stages is illustrated by a case study of a collaboration whose approach exemplifies these benefits.

In future, partnerships and SNGs themselves need to move beyond the barriers and limitations of existing arrangements, and opportunities to do so are summarised in Chapter 4. One of the most important frontiers will be how to unlock the collaboration benefits for small and medium-sized places, which is explored in Chapter 5. The report closes in Chapter 6 with a series of implications and recommendations for cities and SNGs.

## 2

# The short story of subnational collaboration so far

---

Intentional collaboration among SNGs, and especially cities, has boomed in the last 30 years. It has evolved through at least four economic and geopolitical phases into a rich landscape of institutionalised networks and agile partnerships serving a mixture of self-confident locations, eager new participants and passive recipients.

Amid reduced budgets and signs of network duplication and fatigue, there has been more focus on which collaborations merit strategic attention. Collaborations themselves are developing clearer narratives and value propositions, and COVID-19 is triggering partnership reforms and adaptations that provide greater value. There are now many varied 'types' of collaboration, and SNGs face distinct choices given partnerships' different core objectives, operating models and leverageable resources.

There are signs that in the next phase, small and medium-sized places may be able to take advantage of reduced

information barriers, financial and coordination costs, and tools that really build a genuine learning and innovation process.

International partnerships in the post-COVID-19 landscape sit within a wider universe of opportunities that include domestic networks, expert laboratories, corporate solutions, philanthropic missions and technology platforms. These all serve related goals and crowd the space for attention and resources. Peer-to-peer collaboration has to add specific value to the SNG endeavour to improve their policies, systems and partnerships.

Cities and SNGs have been forging relationships with each other for centuries, but intentional partnership across international borders has really taken off in the last 50 years. There has been rapid, almost exponential growth in identifiable partnerships, with some evidence indicating that more may have already been founded in the 21st century than in the whole of the 20th century.<sup>16</sup>

Taking this partnership activity as a whole, its rate of growth is striking – whether in terms of the number of participating governments, the sponsoring and convening entities, the logics of cooperation or the ambitions pursued. There are now at least 200 city networks alone, enlisting over 5,000 cities and local

governments, quite aside from the hundreds of other bilateral partnerships, missions and exchanges. The majority of medium-sized cities and regions in upper-income nations now collaborate internationally in some form.

Over recent decades, we may observe four fairly distinctive phases where different activities and behaviours prevailed, punctuated by major crises and geopolitical events. The implications of COVID-19 and its economic and political fallouts are still emerging, but based on interview and research insights, there are signs that it may represent a new juncture where existing partnership trends are accelerated and new experiments adopted.

**Table 3: Illustrative timeline of four discernable phases of SNG partnership, and the potential character of the next phase**

	Main modes of collaboration	How innovation is conceived and enacted	Dynamics at play
<b>1970-1990</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sister cities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic and cultural exchanges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal twinnings and reciprocal partnerships</li> <li>• Universalist principles</li> <li>• Donor-recipient interaction</li> </ul>
<b>1990-2008</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergovernmental 'big tent' networks</li> <li>• IFI-led programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchange best practices</li> <li>• Technical guidebooks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaigns and advocacy for more autonomy</li> <li>• Expert driven</li> <li>• North-South</li> <li>• Voice to growing cohort of mayors, especially those in big cities</li> <li>• Passive networking, conferences, bulletins</li> </ul>
<b>2008-2016</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergovernmental 'big tent' networks</li> <li>• IFI-led programmes</li> <li>• Agile 'high hurdle' networks</li> <li>• Peer-to-peer (bilateral and multilateral) partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector-specific 'capacity building'</li> <li>• Challenges</li> <li>• Study tours</li> <li>• Model or demonstrator cities</li> <li>• Thought leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philanthropic challenge to incumbents</li> <li>• Fragmentation and competition for niches</li> <li>• Participant driven</li> <li>• Working groups</li> <li>• Perceived nation state leadership vacuum</li> <li>• Some networks evolve to become service providers</li> </ul>

<b>2016-2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergovernmental 'big tent' networks</li> <li>• IFI-led programmes</li> <li>• Agile 'high hurdle' networks</li> <li>• Peer-to-peer (bilateral and multilateral) partnerships</li> <li>• Business-intermediary models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilots</li> <li>• Co-produced solutions</li> <li>• Tech transfer</li> <li>• Addressing structural bottlenecks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network fatigue</li> <li>• Private and civic sector participation</li> <li>• Limited-membership peer groups forming</li> <li>• Virtual platforms (WhatsApp) and convening</li> <li>• Networks of city districts and city assets</li> <li>• South-South, North-North and triangular</li> </ul>
<b>Post COVID-19?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reform and renewal of existing modes</li> <li>• Growth of bespoke peer-to-peer models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid communication</li> <li>• Tactical liaison and deployment</li> <li>• Institutional capacity</li> <li>• Citizen and civic relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urgent agendas: public health, public services, energy transition, cybersecurity</li> <li>• Innovation and commercialisation to the fore</li> <li>• Funding, financing and bankability</li> <li>• More networks of secondary cities and regions</li> <li>• Greater focus on in-country outcomes</li> <li>• Role of anchor universities</li> </ul>

## Box 2: The ongoing importance of subnational partnerships *within* nations

With the expansion and globalisation of international partnerships, many domestic collaborations have started to play a central and stabilising role in the knowledge and advocacy ecosystems for SNGs.

Domestic platforms are now seen as very skilful in organising across cities and local governments, including the UK Core Cities Network, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, VNG International in the Netherlands, the Scottish Cities Alliance, the United States Conference of Mayors and the Association of Flemish Municipalities. These organisations help smaller localities learn from much larger places and

develop appropriate tools and advocacy tactics within a shared national legal framework. These platforms also lead to the rise of important shared capabilities and infrastructure, such as in Mexico where city planning and research institutes sitting within city government have spread to more than 50 cities, establishing informal peer-to-peer networks and competences.<sup>17</sup>

Domestic networks are where many places first learn, informally, about how to 'go global' and with whom as well as how to shift their mindset on international exchange from a transactional one to a strategic one.

### 1<sup>st</sup> phase (1970–1990) – Universalist but uneven cooperation

By about 1970, the post-war tradition of twin cities and sister cities had become widespread. In this phase, cities and local and regional governments paired up with entities in both developed and developing countries.<sup>18</sup> The activities were often light touch and universalist in outlook, galvanised by broad

statements of principle rather than specific goals or objectives.

Much of the partnership work took place between the Global North and Global South. SNG officials often undertook formal and programmatic provision of technical services, with national government acting as liaison – they were not strongly focused on questions of governance, strategy or win-win opportunities.

The hue of collaboration was often assumed to be North to South, rich to poor, donor to recipient, with financial transactions flowing between single stakeholders. Meanwhile, as domestic networks were forming to mediate local-national relationships, larger issue-specific collaborations, such as Mayors for Peace and the World Health Organization's (WHO's) European Healthy Cities Network, emerged, pointing the way to more specialisation.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> phase (1990–2008) – Globalisation, regional networking and first mover advantage**

The geopolitical transformations of 1989–1991 triggered a big jump in the volume of peer-to-peer networking and collaboration, especially among cities, with international financial institutions (IFIs) playing a key role in their formation. This period marked the beginning of an emphatic rise in regional and continental collaborations like CityNet and Eurocities (one analysis observes they account for 62% of all city networks created since 2001).<sup>19</sup>

This was a phase marked by so-called 'big tent' collaborations, those that incorporate a large number of actors of different sizes and maturities. The EU became an important connector, allowing second- and third-tier cities and regions in countries like the UK to gain some experience in international collaboration. Its suite of all-inclusive networks and working groups provided indirect incentives to engage (for funding, regional partnering or even research cooperation). The LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale; in English, Links between activities for the development of rural economy) programme also became an important vehicle for rural areas to connect up and pursue joint projects.

During this phase, as re-urbanisation and deindustrialisation became major phenomena in upper-income nations, larger cities became the most active participants in collaboration: they had the advantage of larger municipal government budgets, deeper presence of supportive urban services companies and the urgency of complex urban governance problems to address.<sup>20</sup> Metropolitan reform and devolution processes often added to this momentum to work together overseas.

In the academic literature, this phase has invited some objections about the Eurocentric headquarters, character and principles of collaboration. Some scholars have noted that only certain ideas, policies and templates became widely shared and that the process of discovery was not neutral.<sup>21</sup> Influential cities or networks also have their own inherited preferences, which may have led to narrow or self-interested formulations around how places grow sustainably and inclusively, rather than leading to open co-creation.<sup>22</sup> The risk that collaborations co-opt local insights in order to promote particular leaders or legitimise institutions has also been widely acknowledged. These critiques continue to have implications for how international partnerships are composed, what goals they seek and the kinds of positive disruption they can trigger.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> phase (2008–2016) – Crisis, fragmentation and insurgent platforms**

The 2008–2009 financial crisis set in motion a whole set of new partnership dynamics. The landscape of networks grew exponentially and became more fragmented. Many new collaborations emerged to disrupt the status quo. More became professionalised – for example, the majority (62%) of city networks were now producing regular reports. Commentators noticed that there was more 'self-sorting' of cities as they sought out places with similar shared attributes.<sup>23</sup> Some places have become highly familiar and fluent with the collaboration options, while others still arrive into this space quite unversed.<sup>24</sup>

Bilateral collaborations, often benefiting from intergovernmental sponsorship, also started to evolve beyond the outdated model of mentor-mentee, donor-recipient relationships. They moved towards peer-to-peer learning activities, motivated by innovation and effectiveness. These engaged a wider stakeholder base and created partnerships that had a unified, 'whole of place' perspective rather than seeking solutions for single departments or politically defined geographies. IFIs in particular expanded their coordination of this approach – experiments such as the IDB Cities Network in Latin America and the World Bank MetroLab enlisted more medium-sized cities around key planning and growth management issues.

Decentralisation and duplication defined much of this period. More networks became federal with regional secretariats or other more decentralised structures.<sup>25</sup> City networks, technical non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and bilateral partnerships started to move more prominently into each other's terrain. Although many predicted collaborations would ultimately merge and join forces in the future, this has happened more slowly than expected.<sup>26</sup>

In this period, cities in particular also started to use international collaborations to market their own best practices and policy successes.<sup>27</sup> Some positioned themselves as champions of advice, learning and consultation. These include Bilbao as a champion for inclusive growth and culture and Singapore as a laboratory for Asian cities to learn and share. Other SNGs became attracted to the opportunity to learn from places they perceive as 'pioneers' and the partnerships and sense of mission they inspire. Meanwhile media platforms such as the Rockefeller-supported Guardian Cities, founded in 2014, helped to cement some cities' status as 'success stories' and thus desirable as places to learn from.<sup>28</sup>

Many small and medium-sized cities all around the world became much busier in terms of engaging with peers beyond their national boundaries.<sup>29</sup> Cities started to develop distinct stances towards international partnership and policy harvesting: a first group became highly proactive and organised;<sup>30</sup> a second group showed eagerness to engage but were disjointed in their deployment; a third group of proceduralist cities were driven more by institutional obligations than by strategic ambition; and the fourth and perhaps largest group of cities has been operating as casual learners, engaging on a passive and ad hoc basis through attending conferences and digesting bulletins.

By the mid-2010s, the UK's second-tier cities had developed more of a presence in networks such as Eurocities, ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability), the Covenant of Mayors, the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, the Atlantic Arc Cities or the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. Often where there was more engagement, this was put down to bold elected and non-elected

leaders: 'Imaginative civic leaders, those who are open minded to new possibilities, are in the vanguard when it comes to city-to-city learning and exchange.'<sup>31</sup>

## **4<sup>th</sup> phase (2016–2020) – Renewed agendas and the search for inspiration**

A new phase of international subnational partnership began in 2016, precipitated by the signing of new global development and climate goals, the urgency to succeed in the innovation economy and widening concerns about waning commitment from national governments.

The signing of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has prompted many more collaborations around climate change and social cohesion, often with mayors at the forefront. The SDGs created a shared language and set of reference points for more SNGs to relate to each other. One global assessment of formalised networks finds that although most collaborations are multipurpose, sustainability had become the largest driver of collaboration (29%), with inequality (19%) and culture (12%) also common themes. Agendas around public health and technology have been much less prevalent.<sup>32</sup>

The array of opportunities and activities available for SNGs to participate has led to signs of network fatigue and appetite for reset. With greater choice and reduced budgets, there is more need to be selective over when, where, how and for what purpose to engage in an international partnership. In response, networks themselves are developing clearer narratives about the distinctive approaches and value of their offer.

In this phase the divergence became clearer between the 'big tent' networks, that draw in many governments of varying size, policy maturity and collaboration know-how,<sup>33</sup> and the smaller-membership 'high hurdle' networks, typically composed of ambitious cities.<sup>34</sup>

Giovanni Allegretti distinguishes the former as the 'heavy networks', because of their procedural character, administrative membership and largely self-funded system, versus the latter 'lighter networks', that are more informal and agile and sometimes have more opaque decision-making processes.<sup>35</sup>

The newer, lighter platforms are widely viewed by participants as having a lot of momentum because their exclusivity creates profile and performance accountability and due to the calibre of leadership and staff and their coordination of well-funded joint projects. They are also seen as being more positive about private sector roles in cities. They are viewed by the larger 'heavy' networks as competitors, ostensibly because of (1) suspicion about hidden profit motives, (2) the non-inclusive structure and (3) the risk of deeper fragmentation of the efforts of SNGs to collectively achieve their goals.

A clear difference has opened up between SNGs who leverage their nation state governments to team up internationally and those that are collaborating in part to circumvent the state.<sup>36</sup> Several countries have multi-stakeholder platforms to guide cities and regions on what collaborations and networks to join (e.g. Spain) or provide national sponsorship to peer-to-peer economic cooperation (e.g. Germany). In these nations, subnational outreach is a fairly formalised, regulated and mature activity with budgets and agencies allocated to the task.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile SNGs in many other nations (from the US to Taiwan, from Australia to Brazil) see international cooperation as an alternative form of advocacy

and diplomacy due to dissonance and disillusionment with the progress and policy positions of higher levels of government.

Meanwhile, leadership outside of government has become the fuel for many more partnerships, especially those with a technology and innovation focus. Some of the more proactive and reform-building collaborations between city or regional governments increasingly rely on the inspiration, facilitation, memory and reach of civic and business partners operating in and for cities.

While SNG collaboration approaches have certainly matured, overall the OECD has diagnosed major 'bottlenecks, duplication of efforts, an inadequate flow of resources and transaction costs'.<sup>38</sup> Cities and regions are the subject of intense competition for niches among the networks themselves, and they frequently latch on to new concepts. But the appetite to partner up is still profound, and there is still a lot of unmet demand for genuinely collaborative learning, both in the Global North and the Global South.<sup>39</sup> In nations whose local levels of government are under-powered, higher tiers of government often still play the chief coordinating role in any international exposure, visits or knowledge-sharing. COVID-19 now presents a new set of imperatives for how and why SNGs team up with others.

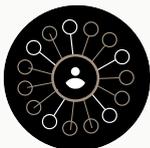
## Towards a new cycle? The effects of COVID-19

---

The economic and travel impacts of the current crisis have now brought to a head questions about how to make the most of what is out there and how SNGs can engage strategically and sustainably with each other. Despite the huge public health and fiscal strains, there are already many signs that COVID-19 is stimulating unprecedented demand for

subnational policy responses, shared advice on tactics and strength in numbers to argue for urgent and longer-term reforms.

From the interviews with collaboration participants and the desk research undertaken for this report, we can observe three common initial responses.



### Changes to how collaborations are organised

- Partnerships have rapidly moved to being virtual; new online liaison platforms, repositories and resources that can be used on cities' own terms.
- Greater use of real-time communication platforms to enable cities to stay 'in the loop' – e.g. WhatsApp groups of city leaders and international officers.
- New task forces that are pooling the knowledge and reach of multiple large networks.
- Attempts to enrol major businesses and civic groups to spearhead a joined-up, regional recovery effort.



### Revised content

- Greater appetite to convene around specific themes that were not as widely present before, including social inequality, resilience, mental health, cybersecurity and effective tech deployment.
- More rapid-response thought leadership, including frequent blogs and live streams.
- A live learning experiences stage that encourages leaders to share processes.
- More policy response toolkits and long-term planning frameworks.



### Increased urgency and information flow

- Larger networks are receiving more enquiries because they can 'cut through the noise' and rapidly discover other cities that have addressed a similar problem with a workable solution.
- In many nations, networks are filling a gap in terms of sharing information about discoveries, data and tools.
- Knowledge from more partnerships is being made more widely accessible to other cities – e.g. the Global Resilient Cities Network has chosen to open up webinars and communities of practice to those outside the network.

Lauren Sorkin, Acting Executive Director, Global Resilient Cities Network, said that 'COVID[-19] has reinforced the need to make knowledge accessible to cities around the world'. According to Carme Gual, Director of the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation: 'The climate emergency and COVID[-19] are changing the way that people work together, as they are global problems. There is a growing sense of interdependency among cities and regions.'

Looking ahead, based on the insights of interviewees, COVID-19 is also likely to alter the partnership landscape for SNGs in the following ways:

- **Innovation of agendas and coordination.** Many interviewees anticipate that more nimble networks, including C40, are adapting quickly to put subnational leaders on a positive footing in the next 12 months, because they have an eye for how institutions operate in different cities and a strategic mindset and are continually translating their remit into innovative practice. These networks are continuously reassessing their *raison d'être* and their impact in target geographies, including post COVID-19.
- **Reform and renewal of established collaborations.** Representatives from within the larger established networks recognise the need for their own 'generational change'. To remain relevant, they need to 'produce ground-breaking proposals and new perspectives on how to tackle them collectively'. Many are focused on 'revising their mindset and routines' to respond to the new challenge.<sup>40</sup>
- **Increased role in some regions for development finance institutions.** Organisations like the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank and others are highly immersed in SNG contexts and so have accumulated know-how about how and when to engage leaders in peer-to-peer collaboration. They also have tended to shift from issuing prerequisites for North-South learning towards a preference for South-South or triangular-South-South learning, and they are increasingly becoming go-to sources of networked knowledge.

- **Consolidation and amalgamation.** Leaders within the system say that because of the surfeit of networks and side initiatives, 'the signs are starting to show of exhaustion and ineffectiveness', and they call for new models to pool capability and effort.<sup>41</sup> There may be some impetus to merge certain networks to achieve more scalable cross-sector work.
- **The rise of new partnership models** with an intentionally different model around membership size, external partners, communication skills and policy packages. The trend towards peer groups or 'clubs' of like-minded or similarly endowed cities is strong, as the OECD notes, and involves a wider range of leadership partners beyond city government.<sup>42</sup> Partnership is now 'seldom ... only city-to-city or region-to-region', and the knowledge and financial inputs of universities, corporations, small and medium-sized enterprises and NGOs is often substantial and is expected to grow.<sup>43</sup> In many cases it is SNGs that promote the network, but partners who lead and implement.

*Cities increasingly trust a peer more than a consultant. The learning journey with a peer may not be so smooth or articulate, but there is a natural inclination to listen to peers with whom a city has a non-competitive relationship. There is trust in the dialogue with a peer, and often more so than learning from the very best.*

Interviewee, global financial institution

- **Enhanced role of universities and civic bodies.** These are repeatedly viewed as critical and under-tapped intermediaries in peer-to-peer collaboration, because they have additional and more durable capacity as well as the ability to pedagogically transmit key principles, codify lessons and develop processes for distributed on-the-ground implementation.
- **Innovation policy and partnerships.** There is now more of a shared recognition and urgency across both OECD and non-OECD countries about the need to redistribute innovation capacity more effectively and to empower city and

regional ecosystems through integration and internationalisation. More places are likely to build ecosystem-wide structures and approaches to engage internationally, promote their niches and specialisations, and learn about and apply appropriate policy and ecosystem interventions.

## The choices for cities and subnational governments

For cities and SNGs now looking to cultivate new collaborations or to reassess existing ones, there are many options to choose from. As we highlighted at the outset, the core types are (1) managed networks, (2) peer-to-peer partnerships and (3) expertise and solutions platforms:

- **Managed networks** include the larger 'big tent' networks, the smaller 'high hurdle' or invitation-only networks, platforms specifically for mayors and others established by think tanks, NGOs or local place leaders.
- **Peer-to-peer partnerships** include strategic collaborations with one or more place(s) or with more opportunist projects or trade collaborations.
- **Expertise and solutions platforms** include knowledge platforms established by intergovernmental institutions; labs and demonstrators set up by single cities to share know-how; and business-led platforms.

There is no hard and fast definition or distinction between these types – in fact, there is some fluidity between them. Certain smaller networks, for example, have evolved into peer-to-peer partnerships, while some solutions platforms have evolved into more decentralised networks. Rather, observing these three types

helps to understand the different formats and functions through which collaboration can unfold, which we explore in Chapter 3.

No one type is superior or more innovation-oriented than another. Each has its place in bringing SNGs together, helping them to organise collectively, build confidence and drive positive change, both locally and nationally. Indeed there are many SNGs with the depth and breadth of administrative capacity to be engaged at the same time in collaborations of each of these three types.

An SNG will benefit from a review of all its collaborations, exploring the breadth and balance between different types. This balance shapes the number of peers an SNG may partner with, the intensity of the learning and discovery relationships, the range of available solutions and pathways on the table, the reputational and advocacy advantage derived from collaboration, the financial resource implications and the propensity these partnerships have to seek new stimulus or adapt to new horizons. For SNGs already well versed in collaboration, it is useful to consider these implications when recalibrating which ones best serve future strategic goals. For smaller places, including second- and third-tier cities, it can be useful to reflect on what the new hopes and expectations are for international collaboration and how to prioritise the settings for collaboration and find the true value that can drive innovation in the post-COVID-19 period. To do so, it is necessary to map more precisely the different stages through which partnership can serve an agenda of innovation, covered in Chapter 3.

# 3

## How does subnational collaboration promote innovation?

---

Innovation is not yet a discrete policy area for collaboration. For SNG leaders, the innovation goals of collaboration really lie in the space it opens up: first, to devise, deliver and disseminate improved policies (policy innovation); second, to work with and orchestrate partners (partnerships innovation); and third, to adjust to larger systemic issues (systems innovation).

Collaborations themselves support an iterative and non-linear process of innovation that has six identifiable stages. These stages – and the activities in each – help SNGs to discover the art of the possible, apply learnings, find a path to implementation and then leverage the outcomes for wider improvement and influence. No single collaboration can provide an ‘end to end’ service across all stages in a given policy area, so SNGs should map partnership strengths against local needs.

The benefits of partnership can materialise through short-term joint ventures, but it is the cumulative effects of consistent collaboration and serious joint work that builds up informal, trust-

based leadership networks and then the muscle memory about how to tap into, organise and deliver innovations at home.

The innovation promise depends a great deal on the span of powers and responsibilities that lower-tier governments have. For some weakly empowered cities, for example, it is still logical to engage only to share know-how on urban service delivery, while others are able to focus on integrative and structural goals, innovation systems and norm building. Many interviewees point out that higher-level government support and reforms will remain key for many SNGs if they are to scale up partnership impacts.

Why do cities and SNGs reach out to their peers and invest precious time and attention in partnerships and alliances? Where does the value really lie?

While there are clear logics and value propositions behind certain types of collaboration and networking, SNGs are often left wondering how best to participate in them to serve a mission of improvement and innovation.

Leaders face a series of nuanced choices about which collaboration formats best align with a place's existing processes and ambitions; which pull enough disruptive levers to open up meaningful change; and which will allow them to scale up innovations in a targeted way.

### **Innovation for what?**

To understand the opportunity for innovation, it is first necessary to clarify, from an SNG perspective, where and how innovation can really happen.

Currently, a large portion of an SNG's visible international activity is motivated by short-term opportunities for business-to-business trade and investment opportunities. Joining national or state-government-sponsored trade missions is one of the few occasions when SNG leaders may feel licenced to travel abroad to work in any capacity with others. Some collaborations, such as the Asia Pacific

Cities Summit and Mayors' Forum, explicitly build business opportunities into a week of peer-to-peer collaboration. And although not collaborations as such, large global property industry gatherings such as MIPIM and EXPO REAL also see SNGs and their private sector partners enter into arrangements designed for mutual benefit and transaction.

Summing up the North American scene, the Brookings Institution observes that 'city leaders are increasingly shifting from a sometimes scattershot approach pursuing opportunistic or headline-grabbing global opportunities to a more proactive, deliberate, and data-driven approach concentrating resources in markets and sectors'.<sup>44</sup>

The Brookings Institution's 2019 report cites examples such as a logistics corridor agreement between Atlanta and Amsterdam, a life sciences cluster strategy between Minneapolis and Melbourne, and an economic partnership agreement between Halifax (Canada) and Aberdeen (Scotland). However, as it points out, many such commercial partnership activities do not yet have wider innovation targets, capacity to implement at scale or the clout to penetrate wider governance systems. Often, as well as the immediate job creation or investment won, it is the relationship that helps to achieve consistent outcomes and improvements.

Many collaborations are inspired by opportunities for transaction or for diplomatic influence. Although most do not directly identify innovation as a primary goal, our review of the processes and impacts of subnational collaboration has observed three kinds of innovation impact they can aim for and achieve.

1. **Policy innovation.** These are the tools, practices and service designs that help governments in the here and now make progress and address complexity. Collaborations that support this kind of innovation are pragmatic and principally motivated to empower the existing public leadership apparatus to discover improved approaches and deliver quick wins.
2. **Systems innovation.** These are the longer-term upgrades of institutional capacity, delivery, integration and capability. Collaborations oriented to this kind of innovation are interested in patiently growing the underpinnings and the norms. They are often aided by pilots and demonstration projects that can eventually lead to different behaviour or wider reforms with a 'whole of place' impact rather than being solely within individual authorities or siloes (see Case Study 7, the DC Network, for an example).
3. **Partnerships innovation.** These are the improved relationships between government, business, institutions and civic leadership that produce more commercialisation, faster uptake, more distributed leadership and wider participation. Collaborations that foster these kinds of innovation recognise that a city is not the same as a local government and that a region is not the same as an SNG. They see these territories in terms of all the key stakeholders in the leadership ecosystem: neighbouring governments, residents, infrastructure owners and providers, academic institutions, civil society organisations and major businesses and employers. The collaboration is part of an effort to orchestrate this ecosystem and make it more responsive and coordinated.

These three kinds of subnational innovation are not exclusive, and, when we observe the trajectories of cities and regions such as Medellín, Flanders and Greater Manchester, there is clearly a synergy between them. Policy innovation increases the confidence and ambition of government and creates a track record to advocate and 'win' the case for additional system-wide tools, competences and reforms (e.g. devolved budgets, integrated authorities, expanded span of powers). Partnerships innovation gives policies more edge, buy-in and deliverability. Practical exchanges expand trust and relationships within the small public-private coalitions that attend them, creating informal, trust-based leadership networks that help to apply and deploy new insights.<sup>45</sup> And innovation at the level of systems also enhances the appetite to partner up effectively.

From our interviews and research on cities, regions, network leaders and long-time stakeholders, these three purposes broadly capture the range of innovation intentions that subnational partnerships seek. In general, innovation as a discrete outcome or a piece of technology does not capture the complexity and banality of the improvement journey that cities go on.

*Innovation is something that happens in the breach ... cities need to stop looking for the magic and instead focus on the boring stuff of good governance and putting in place the systems and infrastructure that support this.*

**William Cobbett, Director, Cities Alliance**

## The innovation process

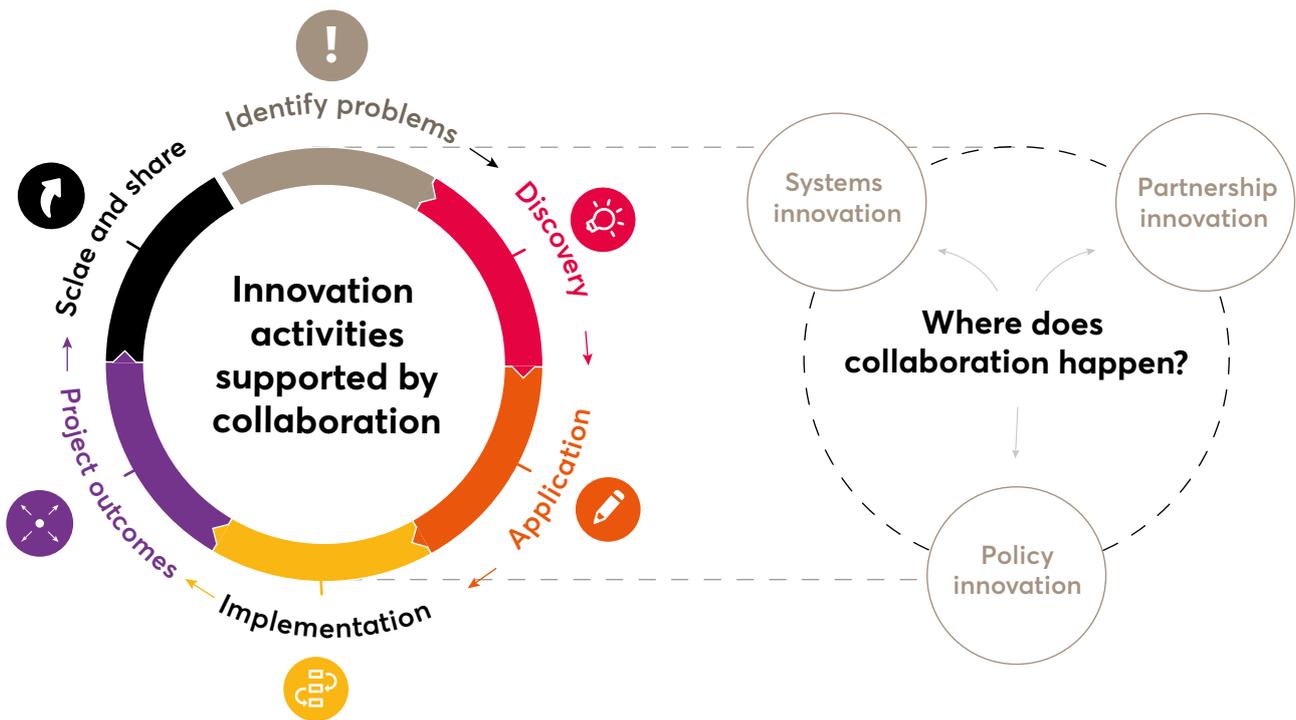
We have explored the discrete practices and activities through which collaborations train SNGs and how these can propel a process of innovation in a given policy sector. The literature, and participants interviewed for this report, observe that there are multiple stages of the messy process of policy origination, development and dissemination where subnational collaboration shifts places out of business-as-usual approaches.

The process for building collaborations for innovation can be distilled into six core stages, as SNGs first discover the art of the possible, apply and then implement learnings, and later leverage the outcomes for wider improvement and influence. Figure 4 captures these six stages.

This process is almost never a linear one for participating governments. No collaboration provides the full suite of tools, and the path from problem-solving to implementation is complex, fraught and protracted. Even so, mapping partnership contributions helps clear some of the fog for current and prospective partners about where, why and how to participate.

In this section, we observe the dynamics at play in these six stages of partnership endeavour and feature case study examples of partnerships that illustrate how each of the six stages can unfold.

**Figure 3: The six stages of an innovation cycle enabled by international SNG collaboration**





## Stage 1: Identifying the problem space

---

### Questions answered for SNGs:

- ① What are the objectives and challenges in our place?
- ② Are these comparable to other cities?
- ③ Where is an innovative response needed? Where is it possible?
- ④ Where is international engagement required?
- ⑤ Is there an international cohort of experts in this field?
- ⑥ Do we need to gear up to compete and succeed?

International exchange can be essential for SNGs to fully grasp where their most pressing problems lie and to calibrate their objectives.

The settings, stories and data they encounter help them interpret the implications of global phenomena for their own region. When they are able to see examples of how others have been affected by specific growth issues or externalities in similar or different ways, they become better able to crystallise the scale of – and solution to – their own problems. In this sense, international partnerships are a powerful channel to help SNGs understand their place in the world, providing practitioners and policymakers with ‘reassurance and comfort’ about where their plans or policies sit vis-à-vis international practice.<sup>46</sup> Partnership interactions both explicitly and implicitly cultivate an identity about the ‘type’ of place they are and what aims and approaches are realistic, or inefficient.<sup>47</sup>

This is especially important for places just starting to internationalise or which face new challenges as a result of unmanaged growth or economic change. For instance, cities looking to join existing conversations around a specific urban development agenda (e.g. circular economy or smart cities) find that certain networks can help to rapidly upskill them in the central themes, dynamics and concerns as

well as helping to spot where key capability and knowledge gaps exist. The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Smart Cities Network is one illustration of how this problem-solving and objective-framing function is executed in the South East Asia context (see Case Study 1).

For many places newer to international arenas, a group of trusted peer partners provides a superb resource to assess the validity of an approach that leaders and decision makers are contemplating. Many practitioners and policymakers derive reassurance and comfort from their plans or policies being in sync with international practice. Aided by rapid communications platforms like WhatsApp, leaders can receive formal and informal peer review on strategies, press releases and project choices as well as soft recommendations about what to pursue and avoid.

This is especially valuable when an official is the sole practitioner (or one of very few) within their own authority and, therefore, does not have much opportunity to develop a community of interest or expertise locally. For innovative projects or portfolios, a critical mass of overseas experts can offer specialist advice on proposals and plans.



# ASEAN Smart Cities Network

CASE STUDY 1

Empowering cities to achieve smart and sustainable urban solutions

▶ – **Founded:** 2018

👥 – **Number of members:** 26

📍 – **Membership footprint:** Regional

🔍 – **Innovation focus:** Policy and partnerships innovation

🔍 – **Overarching focus:** Science, innovation and technology

## Introduction and background

How do you curate a collaborative platform in a region so diverse in terms of city development and with relatively limited resources to expedite city projects?

The ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) has been working hard for more than two years to help the region's cities calibrate their objectives, synergise their development efforts and become more strongly coordinated in how they enhance their planning, technology and infrastructure.

Convened by Singapore during its ASEAN chairmanship in 2018, the main aim has been to synergise these efforts and explore collaboration on smart city development, which in turn contributes to ASEAN Community Building. The network facilitates discussion at both the national and city government levels on addressing urban development using technology as an enabler. This is important in the ASEAN context, where centralisation of resources and capacity is common and few cities have a wide span of established competences. In particular, the network seeks to address challenges surrounding city-industry collaboration, financial resourcing and institutional capability in the development of scalable solutions for urban development, through three main channels:

- Facilitate cooperation through encouraging member cities and national representatives to convene approximately twice a year to explore complementarities, share best practices, develop city-

specific action plans and craft a regional framework for a more efficient city development model unique to ASEAN.

- Catalyse bankable projects by linking member cities with private sector solution providers.
- Secure funding and support from ASEAN's external partners by linking cities to organisations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Global Infrastructure Hub via voluntary partnerships (see also Summary and implications).

## Journey, evolution and Unique Selling Point (USP)

Core to the ASEAN Smart Cities Network vision is to bring awareness to the network's proposition of the role of technological and digital solutions in resolving the challenges brought about by rapid urbanisation and fostering city-level economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability and citizen quality of life. The network helps to frame the innovation imperative – and encourage implementation of city-specific initiatives – in six identified focus areas: civic and social; health and well-being; quality of the environment; safety and security; built infrastructure; and industry and innovation. The focus is on kick-starting projects that would likely not have been possible without ASCN support.

The ASCN has a small yet diverse membership, spanning smaller cities and capital cities, that provides room for learning and exchange of best practices

within as well as across nations in ASEAN. Its participation model promotes a more coordinated approach between national and city governments. Each ASEAN member state is represented by a National Representative and each ASCN member city is represented by a Chief Smart City Officer (CSCO). The latter act as a conduit between the city and external stakeholders; the former ensure that city projects are aligned with strategic visions and progress at the national level, recognising that, more often than not, city-based projects materialise as a result of tacit or direct support or endorsement at the national level.

Finally, the ASCN explicitly encourages member cities to be proactive – not only in terms of exploring capital opportunities for social and economic impacts and accessing global markets, but also in connecting with global experts and exchanging knowledge with other cities. There is a focus on understanding specific local and regional challenges before solutions and projects are implemented, and on making the solutions ‘real’ and relatable for policymakers at different levels. As Budi Santoso, Head of Informatics, Banyuwangi Government, put it: *‘The ASCN has really helped us to be an open-minded city. We have the opportunity to discuss how to address urban challenges and share best practices among the participants.’*

## Summary and implications

Early into its evolution, the ASCN is already an example of how a capable curation of network and external expertise can facilitate the kind of dialogue that helps cities crystallise their imperatives. It illustrates the value of:

- **A shared framework to organise around.** One of the ASCN’s founding documents and primary organising devices is the ASEAN Smart Cities Framework, which allows member cities to collectively work out development principles, to identify the main strategic outcomes, focus areas

and enablers of smart city development efforts, and to develop strategies in line with national plans. The framework also helps members to guide their monitoring and evaluation efforts and track project implementation at both city and national levels.

- **Pre-emptive adaptation to highly varied local contexts.** The ASCN framework provides room for members to focus on areas that matter to them, in line with their own resources, specific needs and potentials, and local and cultural contexts. Cities retain a degree of autonomy over the challenges they choose to prioritise (e.g. transport, water quality, energy, healthcare, etc.) and the means for addressing them. This helps to show the way forward for second- and third-tier cities through highlighting that solutions do not need to be highly technological.
- **Building a base of external partners.** The ASCN enables member cities to pair up with external partners on a voluntary basis in order to draw on wider technical expertise and potential funding. The US, Australia, Japan, China and South Korea are all already committed external collaborators. Singapore, the initial shepherd of the initiative and the regional infrastructure financing hub, was key in enlisting multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank and large private sector players like Aecom and Dassault Systems, which now feature prominently in the network. But the ASCN also links regional solution partners to other pilot cities. For example, Enterprise Singapore signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the City Government of Makassar to build the city’s digital service platform, which includes smart cards, intelligent transportation and street lighting, and flood detection mechanisms. Since the launch of the network in 2018, more than 40 partnership MoUs and letters of intention have been signed.<sup>48</sup>



## Stage 2: Discovery

---

### Questions answered for SNGs:

- ② Which places have made real progress in this area, and how?
- ② Why did others fail?
- ② What evidence can we draw on?
- ② What are the demonstrable impacts and spillovers?
- ② How can I harvest and sift ideas?
- ② What policy and strategy templates can we adapt?

As cities and subnational authorities look for the levers of development that might be available to them, they require an interface to explore the full range of innovative approaches, best practices and practicalities that can open up possibilities for action. This can involve formal peer-to-peer knowledge exchange via in-person gatherings and virtual meetings, but also best practice databases and case study collections that allow members to identify the problems that other cities have faced and the steps taken to overcome them. Thought leadership and events that encourage cities to showcase achievements, share future plans and demonstrate positive impacts can also be useful mechanisms for discovery. More recently, many networks have begun to open up their online case study, policy and data repositories to the public, as COVID-19 has reinforced the need for cities the world over to be able to rapidly discover and deploy new ways of responding to crises.

The exchange of information and sharing of examples of success and failure are among the most critical drivers to improve policies, systems and partnerships.<sup>49</sup> Sharing novel solutions to

common problems, and practical advice on the business models and financing mechanisms that made them viable, helps SNGs to uncover new possibilities from places with different mindsets or institutional latitude. This discovery part of an innovation process is about stretching the administration's imagination: What are the possibilities?

Participants remark that knowledge sharing of this kind is more effective when it takes place in a trust-filled setting that encourages honest reflection rather than mutual self-promotion. As such, 'safe' environments for this type of discussion are often 'closed door', and relationships are built up over time rather than through one-off events or rapid-exchange sessions. When well marshalled, knowledge is also a tool that can be used by a partnership to create internal obligations and virtuous competition. This is exemplified by C40, which demonstrates the importance of institutionalising and formalising pathways for knowledge exchange and adopting new communications channels to enable members to take stock of what others have achieved and what made the difference (see Case Study 2).



## C40

### CASE STUDY 2

# Multiplying discovery to drive collective accountability

▶ – **Founded:** 2005

👥 – **Number of members:** 96

🌍 – **Membership footprint:** Global

🔍 – **Innovation focus:** Policy innovation

🔍 – **Overarching focus:** Climate change, sustainability and related areas

## Introduction and background

Originally an agreement between 18 mayors of large global cities, C40 evolved into one of the world's most successful and high-profile subnational networks, that has honed the art of rapid discovery. It has achieved a high coordination, high knowledge-flow equilibrium that helps cities establish new policy norms around climate change.

Funded primarily by Bloomberg, Realdania and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, C40 was conceived to respond to perceived deficits in the speed and direction of climate change policy. There is a two-way commitment: the network's 96 member cities commit to active participation in the networks, knowledge sharing and pursuit of climate action plans, and, in turn, C40 supports them to harness their pooled knowledge and profile to drive meaningful and measurable action on climate change. It does so through highly curated direct policy assistance, facilitation of peer-to-peer exchange, and thought leadership and events that encourage cities to showcase achievements and share future plans. These tools enable C40 members to learn more about which policy and strategy templates they can adopt and adapt, and which places have really succeeded in driving climate action.

## Journey, evolution and USP

Over time, C40 learned the importance of higher coordination among members and improved information flow and consensus among financing partners, NGOs

and consulting providers. C40 observes that underlying barriers such as access to capital, bankability and institutional investment portfolios have to be proactively addressed.<sup>50</sup> The high-quality C40 Good Practice Guides have proven to be an effective route to softly govern the member cities and create a set of 'normative and cognitive pressures' to raise standards and keep up with international practice.<sup>51</sup>

C40 has gradually become more regionalised in its capacity allocation. Dedicated regional directors serve as active conduits between regional cities, city staff and the organisation, while regional offices in Beijing, Rio de Janeiro, Copenhagen, Paris and New York give the network more agility to respond when local priorities and region-wide opportunities arise.<sup>52</sup>

## Summary and implications

C40's success as an 'insurgent' network on the global stage may be attributed in part to:

- **Demands placed on the membership**, which helps to ensure consistent and accountable participation among members. C40 maintains a rigorous set of conditions for ongoing membership and measures members' participation levels annually, recognising the most active cities in each region.
- **Its data-driven character**, which allows it to focus resources on the highest-impact mechanisms to reduce emissions and achieve resilience. Most of C40's key programmes are driven by data-based research reports that assign quantifiable

targets. The research creates the underpinning logic for prioritising projects with cities and regions where there is greatest demonstrated need.<sup>53</sup>

- **Transparency and accountability of city-to-city interactions.** Prior to 2013, there was a sense among C40 staff that connections made at C40 events were difficult to trace. Most interactions were ad hoc and informal, between mayors and key advisors, and relied on personal engagement. This in turn limited

their ability to produce convergence and generate coordinated action. As a result, C40 officials took measures to formalise the various C40 subnetworks to gain a better understanding of who was involved and what was being achieved.<sup>54</sup> New communications pathways, including WhatsApp groups and an internal communications platform or virtual exchange, have helped to facilitate, measure and monitor inter-city relationships across these different areas.



### Stage 3: The application

#### Questions answered for SNGs:

- ① What specifically is holding us back from embracing an innovation?
- ② What systemic or structural barriers are in place, and how might we circumvent them?
- ③ How do we turn ideas into viable approaches and tactics?
- ④ How do we ensure projects convert into longer-term and sustainable impacts or process change?
- ⑤ How do we scope projects, map options and find the right implementation partners and vehicles?

The diagnostic and tactical stage of collaboration allows participants to reflect on how key elements of their existing delivery architecture need to be transformed in order to make way for new possibilities. Sustained joint work focused on applied experiences can help to formulate a set of tactics to this effect. Collaboration creates a venue to reassemble know-how for specific applications, get 'stuck in' to the design task and then mock up and test novel activities.

SNGs gain a lot from partnerships that foster more detailed engagement, which can inform how certain initiatives are really enacted. Study tours and site visits are often the backbone to a week or more of 'experiential learning' that provides immersion and inspiration. First-hand observation of the operations and

effectiveness of innovative city and regional programmes, including technology-related programmes, equips learners with the know-how and confidence to replicate.<sup>55</sup> This also applies to basic urban systems; study tours to Bogota, for example, have informed widespread adoption of Bus Rapid Transport systems and bicycle policies in Global South cities such as Johannesburg and Jakarta.<sup>56</sup> Study tours also create the space for more informal tactics to get key stakeholders on board, negotiate with business partners or identify tips and tricks for overcoming expected hurdles.

In recent years, the focus on how to support cities to turn ideas into financially and politically viable approaches has also shifted. More recent approaches focus on providing financial and technical assistance to ensure

cumulative impacts can be maintained long after initial support comes to an end. This often requires more systematic attempts to help cities navigate the policy and legal frameworks to stimulate action. The Partnership for Healthy

Cities (see Case Study 3), whose primary focus is on helping cities to broaden their horizons in terms of how to take action on non-communicable injuries and diseases, provides a distinctive model for this type of work.



## Partnership for Healthy Cities

CASE STUDY 3

### A fast track to applying evidence-based policies

▶ – **Founded:** 2017

👥 – **Number of members:** 70

🌍 – **Membership footprint:** Global

🔍 – **Innovation focus:** Policy innovation

🔍 – **Overarching focus:** Health

#### Introduction and background

The Partnership for Healthy Cities stands out for its commitment to supporting cities to use evidence-based policy interventions to address common health challenges. While guidelines on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and injuries are well established at the global and national levels, their adaptation and application at the city level has historically received less focus.

Launched in 2017 with \$5 million in Bloomberg funding, the partnership provides cities with financial and technical assistance to support the development of policies and/or projects to prevent NCDs and injuries. It is a tripartite collaboration between Vital Strategies, a global public health organisation, the WHO and Bloomberg Philanthropies, the foundation established by former Mayor of New York Michael R. Bloomberg.

The partnership works with mayors, as the city leaders who set strategic direction, and their local public health teams, who lead implementation. It provides small grants (up to \$100,000) for cities looking to plan or implement an intervention relating to one of a set of areas related to NCD or injury prevention, such as creating smoke-

free spaces, improving the quality of the food served and sold in public venues or creating safer roads. The financial and direct technical assistance are complemented by workshops and other collaborative opportunities that bring cities together to build relationships and exchange learnings as peers. The focus on prevention connects the work with broader issues of urban planning, such as the design of city streets to improve road safety and encourage safe active mobility. It also strongly emphasises the role of robust communication campaigns to raise public awareness of NCD and injury risk factors and related policies, and to encourage behaviour change.

The partnership works with cities with metropolitan populations of over 1 million, spanning all income groups; but around 75% of member cities are from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This mirrors the global burden of disease: in 2016, over 75% of deaths from NCDs occurred in LMICs.<sup>57</sup>

#### Journey, evolution and USP

In 2019, Bloomberg announced a \$12 million reinvestment, increasing the size of the network from 54 to 70 cities. Under this second phase of work, the partnership has supported an expanded agenda of 14 intervention areas,

including the new topic of opioid overdose prevention. Although many of the city projects begin as pilots, they are structured to be taken to scale so as to confer cumulative impacts on urban policies that can continue long after partnership support has ended. Moreover, strategies that are used in one city can provide examples of successful approaches that other cities may want to adopt. In Ghana, the city of Accra supported neighbouring Kumasi to join the network and work on road safety, sharing its own experiences and transferring strategies and solutions.

In 2020 the partnership has responded to the new needs created by the global COVID-19 pandemic with initiatives, including the launch of an online resource centre, several webinar series for city technical leads and mayors, and additional mini-grants to support COVID-19-related activities. With growing awareness of the link between NCDs and increased risk of severe cases of COVID-19, the partnership intends to continue supporting the NCD and injuries agenda alongside COVID-19 in the future.

The partnership shows that innovation is not necessarily technological, but can include the adaptation of existing ideas to a new context. From their experience, urban health programmes excel when they have strong political commitment, use an evidence-based design and engage closely with local stakeholders and citizens to bring about change.

## Summary and implications

The Partnership for Healthy Cities illustrates the value of:

- **Supporting city-specific interventions that optimise national policies.** While many health interventions are designed for use at the national level, cities play a key role in supporting the implementation and enforcement of national policies. Depending on legislative authority, a city may also be able to follow a number of other actions, such as introducing its own health policies, designing a healthier built environment and collecting local data to support the introduction of new health measures.
- **City ownership.** Guidance is crucial, but cities should ultimately own and champion their programmes. Building local capacity should be a consistent element to ensure sustainability and longer-term value to a city.
- **Targeted assistance but flexible focus.** Cities working with the partnership choose from a set 'menu' of areas of intervention expertise, including tobacco control, food policy, road safety and safe active mobility. However, within these they can request different types of assistance across policy development, implementation, enforcement, monitoring and communications. This helps to ensure consistency and promote sharing of best practices while also leaving room for local innovation and interpretation.



## Stage 4: Implementation

---

### Questions answered for SNGs:

- ② Are we executing pilots and prototypes optimally?
- ② Are the financial and procurement levers working?
- ② Do we need to unlock or invent others?
- ② Which trusted advisors, delivery partners and problem-solvers can we turn to?
- ② Are we making room for co-creation and iteration?

A growing number of platforms are tapping into shared expertise to focus directly on the projects, pilots and prototypes that can help SNGs make significant changes. They marshal senior city leaders, delivery experts and system providers to create an environment where 'easy wins' can be applied at scale and where rapid iteration can happen to improve particular solutions.

Some sustained partnerships can eventually provide a route to collective problem-solving of live issues. The collaboration setting, and the professional and personal connections they give rise to, evolve into pooled skill sets to address a project, an experiment or a dilemma.<sup>58</sup> These activities can occur when cities or subnational regions develop trust and shared interest in achieving goals via a different modus operandi or business model. Participants note that the shift from knowledge transfer to co-produced solutions happens when partner places have 'skin in the game'.

One of the observed examples of co-creation is in the peer-to-peer learning Dialogues for

Change between German and American medium-sized cities. Here, partnership was oriented around specific projects that each city team was in the process of implementing. This enabled participants to test out ideas and to continually update a cross-sector peer group over a two-year period during five two-and-half-day workshops and ongoing virtual peer platforms.<sup>59</sup>

One of the most striking examples of implementation at scale is the City Possible collaboration launched by Mastercard, which has brought together city leaders with leading experts and solution providers to enable cities to co-create, test, implement and scale projects relating to public transport, access to services and urban quality of life (see Case Study 4). The Mastercard case study, among others, also shows how the landscape of collaboration is evolving to favour evidence-based decision-making, pilot projects and systematic efforts to understand barriers to implementation as key tactics to improve co-creation and iteration.



# Mastercard City Possible

A platform for implementing innovation at scale

CASE STUDY 4



– **Founded:** 2018



– **Number of members:** 165



– **Membership footprint:** Global



– **Innovation focus:** Partnership innovation



– **Overarching focus:** Science, technology and innovation

## Introduction and background

Designed first and foremost as a people-focused alternative to the one-off smart city vendor model, Mastercard's City Possible represents one of the most disruptive subnational collaborations in recent years. It uses Mastercard's convening power to bring together city leaders with leading experts and technology providers to promote the sharing of best practices and the adoption and scaling of innovative solutions that drive inclusion.

It effectively works through three related mechanisms:

1. Cities and communities working to surface challenges and problems they have in common.
2. A global network of urban leaders, businesses, NGOs and academics who can share knowledge and co-develop and pilot solutions.
3. Access to the expertise and resources needed to scale and sustain those solutions.

City Possible primarily enlists city mayors and chief technology officers or chief innovation officers. Participants also have access to an online community that enables them to continue dialogue with their peers. As a key component of the programme, Mastercard has entered into an unusual partnership with Harvard University's Technology and Entrepreneurship Center, which convenes urban leaders in a series of regular learning exchanges, produces co-owned white papers and co-runs a member portal that allows cities to share knowledge.

Since its launch in 2018, City Possible's main objective has been to '#MakeTechWorkForPeople' by helping cities to streamline public transport, enhance access to urban services and inform urban planning in a way that improves quality of life for urban communities. The biggest impacts so far have been in terms of a move towards a cashless society, emergency preparedness and cybersecurity, with one of the programme's most notable achievements being the creation of an alliance to mobilise financing to help upgrade public transport payment systems through the use of technologies such as contactless payments. The COVID-19 pandemic has raised demand for this type of intervention, for example with Mastercard entering into a partnership with the City of Los Angeles to provide prepaid debit cards to expedite financial assistance to the most vulnerable residents.<sup>60</sup>

## Journey, evolution and USP

The City Possible initiative has moved straight to the 'win-win' opportunity, which allows cities to participate cost free while maintaining financial durability and also promotes a deep understanding of cities' individual journeys. Mastercard does not charge money for cities to be a part of the network, and early on in the programme, it embarked on a 'listening tour' to understand common challenges and identify specific gaps.<sup>61</sup> The projects deployed to tackle these specific challenges provide a route to reinvest money into the network, its capacity and its skills, strengthening financial durability.

Having discovered an unexpected level of interest, City Possible is open to all types of city. The initial 16 members have rapidly grown to 165 in less than two years. For example, in 2020, Thailand's Digital Economy Promotion Agency signed an MoU with Mastercard to bring 27 Thai candidate Smart Cities into the programme, the largest cohort of its kind to join the expanding community of members.<sup>62</sup> According to Jamie Cudden, Smart Cities Lead Dublin, 'City Possible *'has allowed us to move to an evidence-based approach to urban development. This will help our city go further, faster and ultimately do more to support the communities we serve.'*

### Summary and implications

As City Possible has evolved from a niche player to a disruptor since its launch, it has illustrated the value of:

- **Prioritising collaborations that work at all stages of cities' innovation journeys.** The initiative not only allows cities to surface challenges they have in common, but also to test and scale solutions to

those challenges. City Possible provides a framework for co-creating, testing and scaling solutions by connecting cities with private sector players that are also committed to people-centred design.

- **Using pilot projects as a means to gauge demand before scaling up.** Dublin, Helsinki and London all piloted City Insights, a new tool to enable evidence-based decision-making relating to the impacts of planned and unplanned events on local economies.<sup>63</sup> The tool has now been made available to member cities, demonstrating the importance of first using pilots to gauge demand.
- **A non-prescriptive agenda.** There is no set annual agenda, and members themselves now set most of the priorities. The focus is on convening, listening and creating a forum for open dialogue and conversation with other cities.



## Stage 5: Outcomes and impacts

### Questions answered for SNGs

- ① How do we use outcomes to empower leadership teams and the wider ecosystem over the longer term?
- ② What new software, technology, law or regulation does this innovation validate?
- ③ What is the way to communicate impacts with citizens and create wider civic ownership and participation?

New approaches produce new skill sets, software, technical apparatus, relationships and sense of momentum among SNG leaders and stakeholders. The question is how to consolidate these benefits in a context of embedded short-termism, distraction and capacity limitations.

One way that SNG collaboration helps to do this is by mobilising a wider cohort within the city or region in sustained engagement with other places and organising interactions and 'missions' that require wider civic engagement and ownership. Some networks, such as the DC Network (see Case Study 5), have become

experienced at using first-hand collaboration to consistently connect and inspire a broad base of experts, entrepreneurs, public servants and policymakers around shared agendas. This helps to create a durable set of norms and relationships, but also encourages SNGs to think about how to apply innovations across more than one silo or policy area.

Partnerships also provide a vehicle for SNGs to make sense of cumulative progress with internal and external audiences. This is important if they are to gauge the effectiveness of new interventions, build wider buy-in across different

silos and make the case for greater investment or scale to initiatives. Many collaborations have become quite specialised at helping their constituents to showcase success more effectively, helping leaders to grasp and communicate the value of what has been achieved and bringing together disciplines and sectors to understand synergies. In this sense, the innovation is not only about the new technologies, systems or capacities acquired, but also the cohesion with which policies and experiments are monitored and evaluated and the platform this creates for bilateral dialogue and opportunities.



## Districts of Creativity Network

### Planting ecosystem-wide outcomes

CASE STUDY 5

▶ – **Founded:** 2004

👥 – **Number of members:** 13

🌍 – **Membership footprint:** Global

🔍 – **Innovation focus:** Systems innovation

🔍 – **Overarching focus:** Science, technology and innovation

### Introduction and background

Primarily a subnational rather than a city partnership, the Districts of Creativity (DC) Network is an example of an integrated learning and dissemination approach that helps to achieve medium- and long-term outcomes of altered norms and improved confidence about how regions can unlock entrepreneurship.

Founded in 2004 by Flanders DC, an NGO set up by the Flemish government to make the Flemish economy more competitive, the DC Network has brought together 13 member regions, united in their focus on cross-disciplinary innovation as a route to a more sustainable economic model.

### Journey, evolution and USP

The current members of the network are spread across four continents and span small cities like Tampere up to the Yangtze River Delta region with a population of 100 million. Each pays an annual membership fee of €2,500, which is used for marketing and communication purposes and to coordinate the network. Members convene quarterly. Initially a political network, DC has since transformed into a more content-driven and technical undertaking as it has progressed on a journey to understand what does and does not work.

One of a small number of global networks focused on strengthening creativity and entrepreneurship, the DC Network has a distinctive membership base. It unusually includes not only metropolitan areas (e.g. Tampere, Rio de Janeiro) but also regions

(e.g. Central Denmark, Flanders), states (e.g. Oklahoma, Karnataka) and devolved nations (e.g. Scotland). Members are represented not only by regional ministries and state governments, but also arm's-length government organisations, research institutions and intermediaries.

The DC Network is underpinned by two major yearly gatherings. Both are multidisciplinary. The annual Creativity World Forum brings together over 1,500 people via an unusual programme of high-level talks, interactive breakout sessions, co-creative activities and satellite events spread throughout the host region that encourage participants to really experience the city and create wider civic participation. And 'reverse mission' study visits hosted by member regions invite leading experts, entrepreneurs, public servants and policymakers to gain first-hand insights into the ways the hosting region fosters innovation.

The network collaboration mechanism therefore empowers hosting members to choose the theme, focus and approach. This ranges from high-tech aerospace innovation, innovation ecosystems and rural creative thinking (Karnataka, 2020) to place-making as a strategy for urban development (Baden Württemberg, 2019). Study visits typically incorporate business meetings, site visits, presentations and workshops. While providing inspiration, practitioner insights and useful contacts, they also create opportunities to initiate bilateral cooperation projects between members. One example is collaboration between Karnataka, India, and Catalonia, Spain, who have together launched a collaborative project on design.

The Creativity World Forum frames creativity as a 'kind of aviator of success' that can simultaneously promote talent, productivity and more imaginative urbanisation. A core theme is how to use creativity to promote sustainable growth in cities. The DC Network also extends beyond business innovation to promote cultural, societal, organisational and education-led innovation. For example,

in Antwerp it set up a festival – SuperNova – to showcase to 40,000 people what innovation means for daily life (in relation to work, food, leisure, etc.).

*" From small-scale experiments to large urbanisation projects, this reverse mission has shown the impact innovative solutions and creative industries can have on urban place-making throughout a range of impressive projects.*

**Jane Jenkins, President/CEO,  
Downtown OKC, Inc**

*" For me, the interesting thing with this network is that it's not the usual suspects like London, Berlin and New York – the creative tops of the pyramid. What the DC regions have in common is that they are upcoming cities, or 'cities on the rise' as we call them.*

**Adrian Fey, Concept and  
Communication, Creativity  
World Forum**

## Summary and implications

The DC Network illustrates the value of:

- **Focus on committed membership with capacity to deliver and diversity of experience.** Members are selected on a competitive basis. The DC Network receives applications, but given its relatively small size, most members are sourced through proactively approaching regions that are deemed to be the right 'fit' in terms of having the appetite and ability to invest effort in the collaboration and the relevant expertise and decision-making powers to drive change. No more than two-thirds of members are from the same continent, and to enhance diversity, there is a two-member cap on the number of regions allowed from the same country. The DC Network is at its core an 'impact-fluid' network, where members get out of the network what they put in.

- **Sustained efforts to pass down knowledge and experience.** The DC Network features a specific programme for students and alumni (the DCLivingLab) that gives young people worldwide the opportunity to work hands-on in an international team on societal challenges and learn from world-leading innovation experts.
- **Adopting digital tools to foster collaboration.** As membership and the number of initiatives have grown, the DC Network has turned to internal digital collaboration platforms to help formalise and keep track of events and networking. The Basecamp collaboration tool is helping Scotland, Catalonia and Baden-Württemberg to be more responsive, interactive and creative in suggesting partnership ideas.
- **Institutional buy-in and longevity.** As the DC Network has evolved, it has recognised the need to engage businesses, educational institutions and cultural groups as well as policymakers. Many members are now hands-on organisations with a single point of contact, which helps to ensure longevity beyond political timescales.



## Stage 6: Sharing and establishing combined influence

### Questions answered for SNGs

- ① Who should we advocate, amplify and influence?
- ① What kinds of campaigns and outreach are needed?
- ① Who are our allies on our key priorities, and who do we need to influence to support our agenda and activities?
- ① How do we multiply the success of our programmes? What larger reforms or adjustments are now required that sit outside the authority of any one SNG?
- ① How can we expand our cooperation capacity for shared and long-term opportunities?

Partnerships are also a vehicle for cities and subnational regions to spread values, share success stories and become more influential. In this respect, they are one route to develop 'soft power'.

This has been a particular priority for mayor-led platforms, one intensified by COVID-19 and the desire to maintain a united front and set of asks. One study shows the biggest single reason mayors join networks is to amplify their message by uniting around common interests (32 per cent). On top of ensuring local priorities are represented in the global arena and gaining

influence over global agendas like the SDGs, partnerships provide a way to influence internal stakeholders by leveraging the reputation of the international network.

For strategic peer-to-peer partnerships, this stage is also about expanding the range of problems and solutions to address. This happens through reciprocal transfer of knowledge products, templates and know-how, but also increased investment in pooled cooperation around scientific deployment, trade, industry specialisation and data sharing.



# Barcelona and Catalonia

CASE STUDY 6

## Innovation as a source of soft power

### Introduction and background

Catalonia is among the SNGs with the richest experiences of working with other regions worldwide. It has long viewed internationalisation as an important instrument of regional economic development and of soft power or 'paradiplomacy' in the Mediterranean, Latin America and beyond.<sup>64</sup>

### Journey, evolution and USP

Catalonia is distinctive in that it has a Secretariat for Foreign and European Affairs and the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation, which are responsible for development cooperation. Together, they manage a comprehensive portfolio. Catalonia's international partnership efforts synergise with those of Barcelona, which accelerated in 1996 under Mayor Pasqual Maragall, as the city started to seek global leadership in urban regeneration and planning and, later, mobile technology, smart development and the SDGs. These are reinforced by Barcelona being an important headquarters of international collaborations such as United Cities and Local Governments, Medcités, Union for the Mediterranean and Metropolis.

Catalonia's Secretariat for Foreign and European Affairs prioritised three core kinds of bilateral subnational activity:

1. Neighbouring regions such as Languedoc-Roussillon and the Midi-Pyrenees
2. State governments with pre-existing economic relationships, such as California, Massachusetts and New York

3. Regions with strong cultural affiliations or common interests, such as Nuevo León, Quebec, Guangdong and Flanders<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, Catalonia's approach to cooperation for development policy collaboration is funded by the public sector and not primarily a business or innovation-oriented undertaking. It provides governance and capacity building for technical projects to less-developed partners in countries such as Colombia, El Salvador, Senegal and Mozambique. Its model of collaboration prioritises the relationship and the common interest. It deploys its expertise on issues such as violence against women and social and economic inclusion. The region's aim is to use these agendas to gain information about who to partner with and build long-lasting relationships. It has not substantially diversified its funding sources or translated its cooperation into a commercial proposition, partly because of media and political scrutiny.

Partly because of this divide, a broad base of institutions in Barcelona have recently set up SciTech DiploHub as a lean way to enable the region to conduct 'science diplomacy' with other cities and ecosystems and project its soft power globally. The aim is to tell the world about Barcelona's knowledge and innovation ecosystem, connect with Barcelona's entrepreneurial diaspora and create opportunities for commercialisation of Barcelona's scientists and technology strengths. This is a fairly pioneering model that we can expect other cities and regions to adopt.

## Summary and implications

The Barcelona and Catalonia experience illustrates the importance of:

- **Cultivating open-ended partnerships defined by humility.** Multiple partnership leaders have patiently carved out spaces for meaningful interaction by prioritising trust and friendships and ensuring that the technical roles of partners are not disadvantaged by the political dynamics. Carme Gual, Director of the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation,

said that *'Adopting a more personal approach often leads to more honest, granular conversations that can really make a difference'*.

- **Shifting from top-down, siloed knowledge dissemination to a more ecosystems-based approach.** Catalonia has institutionalised a culture of two-way learning where cooperation can directly shape policy in Catalonia, while new technology partnerships illustrate the potential of harnessing local universities, NGOs, science institutes and startups.

## Conclusion

On balance, more international SNG collaborations have become specialised in the early, exploratory innovation stages than in the more protracted, costly and localised later stages of delivering and scaling change.

Yet collaborations can now be found across all six innovation stages, and together they are steadily helping more cities and regions become more ambitious, more agile and more responsive to citizens and to markets, despite often being under-resourced and at times ignored by national decision-making. In policy sectors such as climate mitigation, mobility systems and digital services in particular, many

leading cities and regions have now embarked on multiple cycles of incremental innovation through collaborative work, each time becoming better equipped to make the most of shared activities and alliances.

Of course this process of innovation is never smooth or fully explicit, even for the most adept SNGs in the most collaboration-friendly policy sectors. At the same time, many other less proficient SNGs have in practice encountered big barriers to working with partners for innovation goals. How can these be overcome by more places after COVID-19? We explore the opportunities and imperatives in Chapter 4.

# 4

## Getting it right: Beyond the barriers to subnational collaboration

---

The constraints that have prevented international collaborations from achieving their innovation goals are starting to be more actively confronted. There is now more attention on aligning an SNG's long-term aims with strategic choices about which partners to work with, what capacity is really required, what external stimulus is necessary and what formats can underpin permanent innovation and improvement.

For SNGs reviewing their opportunities to collaborate in light of COVID-19 and other disruptors, and for partnerships seeking to expand or evolve, there are a number of common principles that can optimise the innovation impacts of collaboration in the medium and long term. Learning from others who have embarked on this journey of optimisation is an important task.

The next frontiers of international SNG collaboration will be driven by wider social and political demands; namely, to connect more meaningfully with citizens and to tackle the imbalances of power and productivity within nations.

The value and promise of international collaborations have become clearer over the last four phases of evolution, but have still to materialise for too many SNGs in too many policy sectors. The activities they stage for innovation and improvement do not always translate into long-term or permanent subnational improvements in capacity, outlook or autonomy.

Our interviews and the wider literature point to seven fundamental gaps that still constrain collaborations' effectiveness, purchase and reputation. Importantly, cities, regions and the partnerships they are part of are learning from these gaps to improve the way they organise for the future.

# 1. Selecting the places and collaborations to work with

---

Leaders and policy directors are confronted with a vast range of networks and partnerships to learn about and choose from. At first glance these are not always well differentiated – their self-descriptions rarely make it clear in what way one partnership is practically different to another. Many cities and regions are subject to almost weekly invitations, for which they find it hard to distinguish the added value. Others do not know what collaborations are open to new entrants or which ones work on the kind of problem-solving they need.<sup>66</sup>

In practice, the process of selection is often random, ad hoc and path dependent, based on the contacts within leaders' existing networks and the whim of individual policymakers. In some centralised governance systems, SNGs are enlisted to collaborate by higher levels of government and have limited sway.

In the current period, more cities and regions are recognising that they should carefully choose collaborations that have the best fit and that they should join up with a coherent cohort of peers, to avoid discovering too late that they are at a very different stage. Practitioners seek to 'speak the same language' as their partners and find a shared policy vernacular among comparable types or calibres of cities.

Careful selection also extends to the policy sectors where two-way knowledge transfer can thrive. Only in some sectors will the levers enacted in one place correspond strongly with those in another national system. SNGs need support to grasp factors such as institutional make-up, cultural norms, regulation and legislation in order to identify suitable counterparts.

## > Key learning for participating cities and SNGs:

- There is a vast landscape of partnership and networking opportunities which can produce many different types of value and that require varying levels of commitment. Being selective about which to participate in, how to participate in them and for what purposes can be key to success.
- SNGs might consider developing a formula and checklist for current and prospective partnerships; working with others to scan all options and identify who your real peers and learning partners are; and being open to new opportunities as they arise.

## What it means for the partnerships:

- The value proposition and mode of delivery should clearly align with future SNG needs and priorities, and be clearly differentiated from other collaboration opportunities.
- Partnerships might consider: ensuring the USP is precise and distinctive; building a wider web of relationships with SNG decision makers to be responsive to new innovation needs; and composing the roster of cities and thematic agendas according to the strongest learning and innovation potential.

## 2. Corresponding internal capacity to make the most of partnerships

Most collaboration takes place with very low internal and external budgets attached (e.g. around a quarter of city networks have total annual budgets of less than \$250,000), offering limited resources to work together, follow up or implement.<sup>67</sup> A common refrain among dedicated collaborators is that the activity is '1% of my job but 20% of my time'. This can be a deterrent to many local and SNG officials. The majority of SNGs also report little to no staff training on how to undertake, monitor or share collaboration effectively.<sup>68</sup> The resulting picture is one of siloed activity where time-pressed leaders and officials give up what time they can in their preferred settings, sometimes unaware of the full spectrum of international outreach the city as a whole is involved in.

The constraints of time and money do however compel many partnership activities to become more organisationally efficient – both in terms of staging effective in-person gatherings and creating useable digital and virtual environments. An emerging view is that to allow room for deep attention to be paid to specific achievable goals, it is preferable to limit the number of international collaborations any given place is involved in.

The EU's International Urban Cooperation (IUC) initiative illustrates how the task of empowering pairings and peer groups of cities, especially among inexperienced international operators, requires significant dedication and on-the-ground support (see Case Study 7).

### > Key learning for participating cities and SNGs:

- The amount of internal resources required to make the most of collaboration is often underestimated and sometimes unknowingly duplicated across an SNG authority.
- SNGs might consider: leveraging the capacity of other city departments and institutions where benefits can be shared and combined; and eliminating coordination and information failures about existing partnership work.

### What it means for the partnerships:

- Partnerships have a role to play in minimising the intensity of SNG requirements or in upskilling and supporting participants to engage effectively and efficiently.
- Partnerships might consider: seeking continuous, honest feedback on preferable models of interaction; investing in capable relationship facilitation; and demanding compelling partnership agendas.



## International Urban Cooperation programme

The groundwork for pairings to thrive

CASE STUDY 7



– **Founded:** 2016



– **Number of members:** 155 (soon 300+)



– **Membership footprint:** Global



– **Innovation focus:** Policy innovation



– **Overarching theme:** Cross sector

## Introduction and background

Since its launch in 2016, the EU's IUC programme has shown the horizon-lifting value of sustained one-on-one partnerships across continents.

Financed by the Partnership Instrument under the EU's External Relations policy and managed by the European Commission, the IUC programme was designed to build on previous successful pilot actions, such as World Cities. It also draws on the urban networking programme, URBACT, which is part of the EU's own regional and urban policy. These actions developed the concept of international city-to-city cooperation using the EU's Urban Agenda and the United Nations' New Urban Agenda as frames of reference. As well as promoting pairings, and clusters, of cities working on sustainable development themes, the IUC programme has incorporated two additional actions: the creation of a Global Covenant of Mayors initiative as an international network of cities to achieve targets in the fight against climate change and a region-to-region component for Latin America on the theme of regional innovation strategies.

## Journey, evolution and USP

The city-to-city component involved a matchmaking process between applicant cities in Europe and other continents – often involving national government liaison and MoUs – and saw pairings established between places that were generally unfamiliar with one another. The programme then contracted a small number of experts within international consortia on each continent to foster the relationships in person and digitally. As Ronald Hall, Principal Adviser on International Relations at the EU Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, said: *'We knew we needed experts who live in the field. Cities need concrete objectives and deliverables, plus the follow-up. It's very labour-intensive to create the platforms for exchange, even between two cities.'*

With the framework of the EU's Urban Agenda and the United Nations' New Urban Agenda, the city partnerships have been

given the flexibility to evolve in their own direction, according to their own needs and priorities. Cities and regions learn and share with each other on topics that include sustainable mobility, technologies (smart cities, innovation in products and processes), ecosystems (whole value chain approaches) and regional coordination and advocacy.

Participant cities have engaged in study tours, staff exchanges, training and seminars with their peers, creating widely drawn partnerships involving the business sector, universities, etc. All paired cities jointly produce action plans, and some also influence public policy. The collaboration is relatively lightly funded and relies on leverage. Notwithstanding occasional challenges of identifying a good governance fit – for example, when a strong city government is paired with a weaker metropolitan authority – overall there has been widespread success in sustaining uptake and appetite among small and large cities alike to lift their horizons, learn from different perspectives and use acquired friendships to inform new policy approaches.

From 2020 to 2021, the IUC programme will expand, add a regional dimension and work primarily in five thematic cluster groups, rather than operating bilaterally, in a new programme known as International Urban and Regional Cooperation.<sup>69</sup> The themes will span (but not be limited to) circular economy, culture, digitisation, health and mobility. Feedback from participants indicates that strict two-city pairings can at times be hampered when their major differences in population, resources and executive capacities limit opportunities for working together in a sustained and mutually proactive way.<sup>70</sup>

## Summary and implications

Facilitators within the IUC programme have observed the value that the partnership can create by:

- **Fostering collaboration on an equal footing between EU and non-EU cities**, shifting away from Global North/Global South learning paradigms. The

programme has revealed, for example, that the process of citizen engagement is an important area where European partners can learn from their Mexican counterparts.

- **Facilitating a balance between discretion and direction.** The non-prescriptive character of the partnership is fairly unusual and has been very attractive to city pairings, providing freedom and flexibility about what they choose to work together on. The benefits of this openness have been balanced against the need for

smaller cities in particular to have clear guidance and a support structure.

- **Encouraging ownership on the ground of policy and policy targets** set nationally and supranationally.
- **Promoting efficiency in public policy** by engaging all the key actors in the public and private sectors as well as universities, specialist research institutes and civil society.

### 3. The fundamental purpose of the collaboration

Many collaborations do not have a clearly defined purpose or objective etched into their identity. As a result, the city-to-city or region-to-region learning is not explicitly designed to advance a mission or reach a goal. Vague or aspirational statements dilute the concrete accountability for supporting SNGs with their development and innovation journey. Without agreed problems and objectives, participants report a weaker sense of affiliation, commitment and urgency. There is a small but strong conviction among the participants we interviewed in these collaborations that

the partnerships themselves should dissolve once goals have been reached, rather than existing in perpetuity.

SNGs find that their own purpose can be strengthened when embedded in a wider strategy for internationalisation. As cities such as Bristol have shown (see Case Study 10), when an SNG has a clear and agreed logic to partner up and this animates a broad base of its leadership, activities become less ad hoc and opportunistic, and more likely to survive political and cost-benefit scrutiny.

#### > Key learning for participating cities and SNGs:

- Many collaborations have loosely defined goals, which can often result in ambiguous aims and fewer incentives for intensive collaboration.
- SNGs might consider: integrating partnerships into a wider intentional approach; and developing clear targets for collaborations and reviewing progress (both tangible and intangible) against these regularly.

#### What it means for the partnerships:

- Participants may lose energy and interest in the collaboration as time goes on if the purpose becomes increasingly diffuse and new sources of momentum are missing.
- Partnerships might consider punctuating collaboration with defined projects and clear (preferably measurable and accountable) objectives.

### 4. Partnership design to spur catalytic engagement

Experienced officials in international partnerships testify to the importance of clarity and narrowness of focus, both in the policy sector agenda and for the specific projects

and interactions that are organised.

One of the major criticisms of SNG 'networking' is that it is too often supply side driven or personality driven rather than curated

around shared priorities and shared problems. This sometimes leads to nebulous gatherings, anchorless thought leadership and elevation of issues where there is no pressing demand or operationalisable agenda. Insiders and outsiders alike notice that for some collaborations, the focus can subtly move from *'solving the problem'* to *'keeping the institution alive'* and *'generating work for the sake of it'*.

Part of the design task is how many peers is optimum for any given partnership. This will naturally vary depending on the mission. Often there is a clear preference for smaller collaborations. Some partnerships that depend in part on alliance building observe that *'more than 15–20 cities is complicated if you want to be quick and agile'*. Others which are more focused on innovative policy replication explain that *'we could not stretch to more than 80 without compromising our dedication to each city'*.

Some SNG networks address the issue of collaboration size by creating subnetworks or working groups. This structure can support participating SNGs to be part of a large alliance whilst also providing the level of focus needed for genuine problem-solving and innovation opportunities.

Another design question is which levels of leadership and officials should participate. Much depends on whether the ultimate purpose is internal capacity or wider political buy-in. Partnerships have to work carefully to ensure leadership personalities drive the partnership's profile while also enrolling the right staff to work on actionable change.<sup>71</sup>The Urban Housing Practitioners Hub in Latin America is an example of a collaboration that has had success fostering the environment for technical and political levels to participate seriously (see Case Study 8). According to Marek Gootman, Brookings Institution Senior Fellow who has led global problem-solving networks: *'To have real impact, collaboration requires ongoing immersion with and among the teams actually delivering the change over time – engaging layers below political hierarchy to find practical, localized solutions and institutionalize action. Easy to promise, but executing needs expertise, budget, patience.'*

Designing meaningful exchange requires time and immersion among participating SNGs. There are many signs that partnerships are experimenting with how to use the raw material of shared PowerPoint presentations, speeches and case studies to curate the breakout sessions, working groups and soft settings that really tease out the granularity required to empower leaders.

### Key learning for participating cities and SNGs:

- The operational model of any given partnership affects its ability to deliver an innovation outcome. This includes how much involvement there is within and across different tiers of government as well as by wider business and civic stakeholders.
- SNGs might consider: assessing whether the collaboration has the right people 'around the table' with the appropriate authority and capability to drive the desired changes; seeking highly specific objectives and choosing representation carefully; and exploring some collaborations of two to five partners that organise rapidly.

### What it means for the partnerships:

- Participants may not have the tools to engage with the partnership in the intended way. This may be because of institutional concerns, learning barriers or transaction pressures – all need active attention.
- Partnerships might consider: streamlining the 'what?'; exploring ways to enlist subject-matter experts, field staff and other national experts; and aiming for clear communication about who can and should participate.



# Urban Housing Practitioners Hub

CASE STUDY 8

## Designing for collective innovation

- ▶ – **Founded:** 2016
- 👤 – **Number of members:** 40
- 📍 – **Membership footprint:** Regional
- 🔍 – **Innovation focus:** Systems innovation
- 🔍 – **Overarching theme:** Housing

### Introduction and background

The Urban Housing Practitioners Hub is an example of a platform that has created tailored, evidence-based environments for exchange on how to innovate collectively for urban housing. Established in 2016 in Latin America, its hands-on virtual and in-person sessions for exchange and learning have cultivated much greater depth of understanding on how to discover, research, organise and formulate shared visions.

Established in 2016 to accelerate exchange and stakeholder trust building around housing, the Urban Housing Practitioners Hub has been funded primarily by the Cities Alliance, Habitat for Humanity and UN Habitat. It was initially designed to address the untapped tacit knowledge of practitioners and allies in order to draw together fragmented knowledge among organisations such as national ministries of housing and urban development, regional and local associations and networks. As Anaclaudia Rossbach, Latin American and Caribbean Regional Advisor, Cities Alliance, said: *'[The value] is much richer if there is a diverse range of stakeholders. What happens otherwise is that government knowledge gets lost, and there is no scope to scale or replicate.'*

### Journey, evolution and USP

The hub's work spans 'whole of place' agendas such as urban resilience, inclusive housing, metropolitan governance and densification. Slum upgrading is also a major focus. The hub is distinctive in that

in-person presence complements virtual engagement, rather than the other way around. A best practice database brings together information from sources around the region and consolidates it into a single place where practitioners can access details on robust experiences. In addition, there is a virtual space enables everyone involved in housing in the region to connect with peers and share knowledge relating to specific challenges. Virtual forums permit learning and sharing of ideas, best practices and policies in real time, and an easily searchable directory of housing practitioners allows members to schedule coffee meetings with others.

One of the biggest design achievements of the hub so far has been the assembling of both technical and political stakeholders across housing and land use via demand-driven, practical and research-oriented workshops. These have helped to provide on-demand technical assistance and build critical mass and consensus around how to address specific topics, well linked to implementation capacity. Each year, there is also a biannual forum that brings together all of the different interconnected modules, including the database, virtual discussions and in-person workshops.

Since the onset of COVID-19, the hub has been mainly working to facilitate exchange to support crisis responses in informal settlements. It is using its mechanisms to promote disruptive long-term perspectives

on sustainable urbanisation and gender equality in housing.

## Summary and implications

The hub illustrates the value of:

- **Making knowledge a collective and shared mission to overcome silos and address fragmentation.** The hub's network module allows all people and organisations that work on housing in Latin America and the Caribbean to join free of charge and to link up and connect with housing and urban housing practitioners across the region.

- **Unlocking participation of community stakeholders to accelerate sharing of practical knowledge and insights.** The hub is at its core a coalition promoting a community of public, private and civic housing practitioners and experts in cities. The advantages of the network's broad stakeholder base have become even more visible since the onset of COVID-19, as community-based networks have become vital for learning and communication. The breadth has also enhanced credibility with national governments when advocating for legal and financial support for the housing sector and for vulnerable populations and settlements in member cities.

## 5. Leadership and management of collaboration

The landscape of collaboration surveyed for this report reveals highly variable quality of leadership, brokerage and facilitation. Firstly, the capability and coordination power of the chief executive officer or designated 'owner' of the activity need to be well aligned to a mission of improvement and innovation. It is a big advantage when leaders are able to spot the common interests that can mobilise and ignite disparate groupings of cities or regions. In a context where there are so many political nuances and sensitivities, these qualities create a formula for buy-in and purposeful joint work. According to Eugen Antalovsky, CEO of Urban

Innovation Vienna, *'to make a city collaboration successful, the leadership needs a "broker and driver of interests" rather than a "manager of a network"'*.

Secondly, in-person facilitation of larger partnerships requires art and skill to identify the nub of the issue and tease out real obstacles and options for improvement. Thirdly, partnership that aims to better equip decision-making usually requires thoughtful follow-up after all sessions to continually provide resources, connections and co-creation opportunities beyond the in-person workshops. This is labour-intensive work and often takes a lot more resources than anticipated.

### > Key learning for participating cities and SNGs:

- The quality of leadership, both from the partnership and the participants, is key to the success of collaboration.
- SNGs might consider: making a leadership contribution through active and reflective participation; and encouraging iteration and experimentation in partnership activities.

### What it means for the partnerships:

- Effective leadership and facilitation of relationships is a highly advanced skill which often builds on years of experience.
- Partnerships might consider investing in experienced, world-class facilitation, brokerage and follow-up.

## 6. The durability of partnerships

Surviving beyond one political or funding cycle is a critical litmus test of many partnerships where long-term system innovations are the goal. Many are very vulnerable to changes in political leadership or revised priorities of philanthropic benefactors. Appetite to engage is often highest at the start of a new term or when an opportunity or a crisis provides fresh impetus for SNG leaders, but the challenge lies in maintaining participation and energy as other priorities arise.

Diversification of operational and project finance can be a key aim, which is tricky if the partnership has a single source of 'startup' capital. Even in the resourceful example of C40, almost two-thirds of climate actions are funded solely from individual city budgets or savings.<sup>72</sup> Small and low-income cities in particular need external sources of investment to execute

innovative programmes.

A new wave of collaborations has started to recognise that a city is not the same as a local government and that a region is not the same as an SNG. They see these territories in terms of all the key stakeholders in the distributed leadership ecosystem – neighbouring governments, residents, infrastructure owners and providers, academic institutions, civil society organisations, major businesses and employers – and the collaboration as part of an effort to orchestrate this ecosystem.

Perhaps the most high profile example of partnership fragility and reinvention in recent years is 100 Resilient Cities; although the envelope of funding expired in 2019, its model has been modified via the Global Resilient Cities Network (see Case Study 9).

### > Key learning for participating cities and SNGs:

- Partnerships are time-bound and are vulnerable to volatile funding and/or political environments.
- SNGs might consider: creating roles and owners that create institutional memory and 'stickability' around the partnership; and translating key learning from the partnership into the operational day to day of the authority so that the value of participation is not lost if the partnership expires.

### What it means for the partnerships:

- Partnerships might consider: building wider civic or business buy-in so that there are co-champions, co-owners and ambassadors even when political and financial conditions become less favourable.



## Global Resilient Cities Network

Partnership reborn from the cities up

CASE STUDY 9

▶ – **Founded:** 2013 (100 Resilient Cities), 2019 (Global Resilient Cities Network)

👥 – **Number of members:** 98

🌐 – **Membership footprint:** Global

🔍 – **Innovation focus:** Policy innovation

🔍 – **Overarching theme:** Climate change, sustainability and related areas

## Introduction and background

The Global Resilient Cities Network is an example where the institutional seeds planted by a large network are being leveraged to drive a new cycle of agile partnership from the group up.

The network was originally established as 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) in 2013 by the Rockefeller Foundation as a challenge to help city governments build broad-based urban resilience. The network's first six years of funding provided the initial capital to hire a chief resilience officer as a recognised public position, responsible for resilience strategy and stakeholder mobilisation, in each city. As Piero Pelizzaro, Chief Resilience Officer, Milan, put it: *'[Those relationships] were the most powerful thing that [100RC] created. Our daily exchange with other [chief resilience officers] and the mutual learning that went on let us make improvements every day.'*

## Journey, evolution and USP

In July 2019, after the first phase of funding for 100RC came to an end, Rockefeller provided \$9 million in funding to the successor, Global Resilient Cities Network, to support the continued work of the city officers within a lighter-touch city-led model of partnership. By necessity and careful re-design, the Global Resilient Cities Network approach is now:

- **More city-led at all levels**, with greater emphasis on harnessing accumulated know-how within the network. A lean 25-strong team of former 100RC executives, working out of regional offices in London, Mexico City, New York and Singapore, provide tools and resources to empower practitioners in all existing member cities plus up to 10 new members in 2020. The officers form a global steering committee.
- **Based on demand-driven third-party partnerships** that respond to varied city resilience priorities by working with organisations such as Visa (to drive digitalisation) and impact investor Circulate Capital and non-profit Ocean Conservancy (to build circular economies and reduce plastic waste).<sup>73</sup>

- **Aiming to engage academia as an ally and advocate.** The network more closely recognises the importance of engaging academia early on in cities' resilience journeys to help city officers themselves develop conceptual underpinnings, assemble evidence, make a case and act more purposefully and decisively.

The Global Resilient Cities Network now adopts a very intentional approach to making space for all types of cities, including those at very different points in their journey, and commits to working with cities over long timescales and to sourcing partners that understand cities as whole systems. As such, the network's impact is especially visible in secondary cities, where participation is opening the eyes of city leaders and practitioners to the potential for collaboration. Attention to which strategies and partners best suit the size, experience and political appetites of cities has been well honed.

## Summary and implications

The evolution and rebirth of the Global Resilient Cities Network illustrates the value of:

- **Patient building of capacity before launching projects.** Cities have taken several years for coordination building and, in some cases, institutional readjustment to reach a stage where they can viably implement at any scale.
- **Insulating primary partners as much as possible from political cycles.** The network has found success in prioritising the chief resilience officers' status and soft power, to allow them to better withstand political leadership changes.
- **Self-assessment of how to improve a network's value.** During the preparation of the new network, chief resilience officers communicated regularly via regional committees and working groups, and they took the time to see what works and what could be improved in other networks. Sharper alignment with other multi-city partnerships and the SDGs has been an important area of focus.

## 7. Communication and demonstration of partnership impact

---

Most partnerships have to justify their existence to external stakeholders. One of the difficulties they have is demonstrating or quantifying impact internally. Participants point out numerous 'intangible benefits', such as different horizons and mindsets, a changed perspective in the second and third tiers of staffing (including the engineering and financial teams) and a fresh narrative that motivates the leadership system to demand excellence in decision-making, planning and coordination. However these impacts are almost impossible to quantify, especially financially, leaving activities susceptible to criticism. The business case in terms of jobs, enterprise and saved

costs is often indirect. One consequence of this is that cities combine partnership work with wider trade missions that create a 'deal-making' focus, rather than an innovation focus.

The creation of informal or formal mechanisms to link partnership insights or innovations to nation state decision-making may become a more critical priority. Most activities happen almost entirely 'below the radar' of national governments. How to unlock the visibility and profile of networks and open up channels to influence senior government processes is part of the creative and leadership imperative for several partnerships in the coming years.

### > Key learning for participating cities and SNGs:

- The benefits of networking and partnership activities are often intangible or difficult to quantify. Therefore, justification of resource provision or sustained investment and expenditure on these activities can be a challenge.
- SNGs might consider: aggregating third-party endorsement for the activity from leaders in other locations; promoting positive partnership impacts in national fora and processes; and developing compelling policy narratives and anecdotal evidence of 'success stories' that demonstrate the less tangible benefits of participation.

### What it means for the partnerships:

- Partnerships have a role to play in minimising the intensity of SNG requirements or in upskilling and supporting participants to engage effectively and efficiently.
- Partnerships might consider: creating visuals and bringing to life impacts that are not quantifiable for external stakeholders; and leveraging partners' marketing, public relations and engagement tools and capabilities.

## Conclusion

---

The pressure to overcome each of these barriers has risen with COVID-19. Looking ahead, partnerships have their own challenges of internal reform and adaptation, and SNGs have to figure out which collaborations are well configured for the set of challenges they now face.

One of the most important frontiers is creating new modes of engagement and inspiration with citizens. Even the most high profile collaborations are currently nearly invisible to citizens, and this limits both their influence and their innovation potential. Equally, the potential to use peer-to-peer partnerships to connect with and inspire citizens about how systems work and how policy discoveries have material

outcomes in other contexts is almost totally untapped. Many leaders in the field anticipate this to be a priority area in the next decade.

A second frontier is ensuring that these barriers can be overcome at all levels, not only by the larger, more successful cities and agglomeration economies. There is now a political imperative in many OECD and non-OECD countries to 'level up' national economies, and part of this depends on more distributed innovation capacity among SNGs in second- and third-tier cities and regions. The opportunity to use international collaboration as a vehicle for policy innovation, systems innovation and partnerships innovation in these SNGs is explored in Chapter 5.

# 5

## The opportunity for second and third-tier cities and regions

---

The signs are that collaborations involving second- and third-tier SNGs around the world will grow in the next decade. More locations are realising they share common experience of economic and demographic trends, complementary specialisations and high appetite for visibility in crowded markets. At the same time, business and investment partners are recognising that small and medium-sized places can provide a simpler decision-making environment and potential for large-scale impacts.

For small second- and third-tier cities and regions, the return on investment on collaboration needs to be high and verifiable, especially in a post-COVID-19 fiscal context. For these places, partnerships can be catalytic – they can ‘open up the box’ and demonstrate that there are different and new ways of dealing with old problems. The value of nimble and agile collaborations that are mission led and welcome new participants for different objectives as resources shift is becoming clearer.

Some secondary cities have shown how an intentional approach to their collaboration activity can elevate internal standards, promote niches internationally and diversify sources of connection and investment. Their small scale makes it even more important to mobilise and orchestrate a cross-sector leadership base, rather than treating collaboration as a single-sector public administration responsibility.

International collaboration 'beneath' the nation state has been primarily the preserve of large cities, state governments, devolved nations and cities in small and tightly coordinated national systems. A lack of resources, short attention span and constant 'firefighting' has made it difficult for smaller, less advantageously positioned cities to engage. The innovation opportunity is made harder by what the OECD calls the 'proliferation of actors ... and small project sizes'.<sup>74</sup>

*" Smaller and even medium-sized cities often don't have the technical capacity, the teams in-house who know whether to judge whether new technology is appropriate or not. They find that actual hand-holding is the most helpful [assistance from] entities who can prepare and review local documents, provide advice on the right technologies and understand the manpower involved.*

#### **Interviewee, International Development Institution**

As disparities in income between countries decline, there are now many more small cities, metropolitan regions and indeed rural areas that have similarities. This includes similarities both in terms of economic specialisations, demographic realities, inherited assets (natural, physical and human), social dynamics, governance and procurement conditions, and in terms of identities and aspirations. There is therefore a growing logic to SNGs partnering up internationally in well-curated settings. For these places, collaborations are a route to:

- Inspiration, insight and confidence building, as they learn to enter international markets and arenas
- Visibility and niche positioning in crowded markets, as specialisation and differentiation becomes key to attracting business and talent
- Borrowed scale and advocacy, as small places seek to influence national and international decision-making by working together
- And this is also a time when small cities

in particular are seen by business and investment partners, and by prospective city partners, as:

- Having easier and simpler access to engage the city leadership directly, because there is less municipal fragmentation and often a single point of contact
- Being less time-consuming to work with, having potentially more agile processes and quick procurement
- Allowing for easier demonstration of large-scale, whole city impacts of particular technologies or innovations that can then be scaled up or applied to other places

Collaboration does not only have to be between cities of similar size or powers. Cities with greater 'hard power' – span of control, fiscal tools and political consensus – can and do learn a lot about the effective use of 'soft power' from cities that have had to learn to innovate within a low-autonomy environment. On this basis, leadership in Singapore learns a great deal from experiences in Sydney, and leaders in Hamburg learn a great deal from what has happened in Manchester. The opposite is also true – cities with fewer 'hard' competences are learning how to develop and advocate for improved tools from those who have won them. So second- and third-tier cities and regions can also learn from those with a different set of powers to leverage. One example is the New Urban Champions initiative, that specifically assembles medium-sized cities as well as businesses, startups and universities through an annual conference series, learning expeditions, thought leadership and broadcasts.

Many small SNGs have built a highly intentional process for their collaboration activity and have used this to drive internal raising of standards, international promotion and diversified investment. Curitiba, Brazil's ninth city, has an independent International Co-operation Office that has evolved into a hub of data, tech and know-how operating outside of formal political structures. Yokohama in Japan has a well-established public-private partnership to provide international technical cooperation to cities in Asia, that both exports urban development know-how

and situates Yokohama's environmental technologies business expertise for export and brand opportunities. Louisville's mayor has used the Compassionate Cities network to help the city adopt a more distinctive citizen-minded identity and encourage better social and institutional norms.

These experiences highlight the importance of mobilising and orchestrating the whole ecosystem, rather than treating collaboration as a single-sector public administration responsibility. As international SNG collaboration shifts into a new phase after COVID-19, finding the right ways to enlist and empower the wider stakeholders will become a leading priority.



## Bristol, UK

CASE STUDY 10

### A whole city approach to unlocking collaboration

#### Introduction and background

Bristol is an example of a city with a very strategic approach to collaborating with cities internationally. It pioneered the idea of city twinning in the UK following the end of the Second World War, and it has long fostered meaningful international exchange on progressive, forward-looking policy agendas.<sup>75</sup>

A series of important milestones have added impetus to a more confident phase of partnership building. These are the establishment of a directly elected mayor, nomination as European Green Capital in 2015, being the first UK city to declare a climate and ecological emergency and to commit to a net zero carbon approach, being a prizewinner in the EU's Capital of Innovation award, having the largest international development cluster outside of London and gaining recognition as one the country's most productive technology and engineering clusters. These landmarks have reinforced Bristol's self-identity as a 'beacon' city. City leaders, civic institutions and business have observed that one route through which Bristol can seize this momentum and better shape its own destiny is to learn and share globally with other forward-looking cities with which it shares common agendas and aspirations.

The current phase of partnership activity

is enshrined within Bristol's 10-year International Strategy. Bristol's original seven twin cities remain part of its international work, but the scope of its international collaboration ambitions now encompass collaborative education and innovation projects, targeted global outreach and networking, cultural exchanges and events, mayoral representation abroad, hosting of international summits and many others.<sup>76</sup>

#### Journey, evolution and USP

Bristol's approach to international collaboration is distinctive in at least three important ways:

**A highly selective approach to international collaboration.** In order to invest appropriate attention and resources, Bristol prioritises a very small core group of networks and certain types of cities and regions with whom it will partner strategically. It looks to peer cities with some comparable assets and outlooks (such as Bilbao and Boston), to its twin cities and to cities already in mature business, university, cultural or government relationships. It prioritises four networks for mayoral engagement and only a handful more for officer-level input.

**A legible framework customised for strategic goals.** Bristol's International Strategy is much broader than just international trade and investment

or tourism. It also seeks to provide an integrated framework, that everyone can understand, for using international collaboration in order to address specific challenges within the city – such as inequality, cost of living and congestion – and to promote the city's values. Partnership opportunities are evaluated according to clear merits and can be pursued proactively when they fit. The four strategic goals relate to: (1) demonstrating leadership on shared global values and development goals, including inclusivity, sustainability and resilience; (2) strengthening Bristol's economy and promoting the city as an international gateway to the UK; (3) celebrating the city's international communities and global citizens and how they link Bristol to the world and help create a culturally vibrant, cohesive and welcoming city; and (4) rebalancing of sovereignty by giving a stronger voice to cities (via a global agenda working with national and international partner cities).

**Input from local private and civic sectors into the partnership approach.** The International Strategy is overseen by a strategy board of around 20 members, made up of representatives from public, private and voluntary sectors, including universities, non-profit entities and destination management organisations. Members of the International Champions Group (which includes international ambassadors and an alumni network), composed of unpaid experts from various sectors, also act as key representatives for the city when travelling or collaborating abroad. This has enabled Bristol to spearhead a more tactical, market-informed and coordinated approach to developing overseas relationships.

## Summary and implications

Bristol's evolving approach to international collaboration illustrates the value of:

- **Distilling strategic collaborations to areas where they can really build local insight and capability.** For example, Bristol has earmarked Bilbao for a strategic partnership collaboration around urban regeneration, housing and young people, and it is setting its sights on entering into more strategic partnerships with other cities with progressive mayors that espouse the same values.
- **Monitoring and review.** The city's International Strategy is underpinned by specific actions and performance indicators to review progress. Progress reviews and monitoring exercises are undertaken annually, board meetings are held quarterly, and detailed feedback sessions with partners allow more stakeholders in the city to understand and internalise the value of peer-to-peer collaboration.<sup>77</sup>
- **Adopting the One City Approach.** Working on international collaboration as a city-wide effort enables more strategic and coordinated activity and helps organisations speak about the city in a consistent way abroad. Adopting this approach has also helped Bristol to become the first city in the UK, and one of the first cities internationally, to successfully undertake a voluntary local review for the SDGs and to use the SDGs as a framework for its response to COVID-19. This, in turn, has led to it becoming part of online conversations with much larger cities such as New York, Los Angeles and Paris on how to deliver local renewal sustainably and effectively.<sup>78</sup>

# 6

## Implications and recommendations for cities and subnational governments

---

Based on the insights from the broad range of case studies of international collaborations reviewed for this report, and the reflections of experienced senior practitioners and expert observers worldwide, gathered via interviews, three sets of recommendations emerge for officials in SNGs looking to maximise the value of international partnerships for innovation. These are outlined below.

---

## **1. Take a 'whole of place' approach to international engagement**

- Understand the landscape after COVID-19, fully catalogue all your place's existing commitments, and regularly reassess their value and objectives.
- Seek a more integrated approach that looks beyond political boundaries, siloes and timescales. Work in a way that maximises knowledge flow and coordination across departments, makes collaboration choices accountable and licenses civic and business partners to lead, shape and participate.
- Don't treat different collaboration networks as optional or interchangeable. Rationalise what you do, learn who your peers and learning partners can be, and spend time to align with your whole city's or region's long-term innovation goals and aspiration for continual improvement.

---

## **2. Concentrate on collaborations that are innovation-ready**

- Ensure credible leadership and expert facilitation to negotiate international differences, provide challenge and rigour, and tease out local implications and innovation potential.
- Set tight definitions, durations and objectives, with a clear account of what is required of members in terms of commitment, responsibilities, ambitions and measurable outcomes.
- Create the profile and appetite to engage a wider stakeholder base, including citizens, business, investors, universities and other levels of government.

---

## **3. Pursue national-level policy reforms, allies and partnerships that will unlock capacity for internationalisation and innovation at scale**

- Identify the national catalysts and resources that can enable a more systematic and innovation-focused collaboration agenda. Organise more strategically with existing domestic networks and peers, including to assess global partnership opportunities.
- Connect international collaboration to national strategies: Look for synergies between international partnerships and wider nationwide efforts – for example, to create more centres of productivity and distribute innovation capacity.
- Leverage the national government innovation initiatives operating across borders, find allies within them who grasp the distinctive imperatives for SNGs to work internationally, and seek to access personnel and development opportunities alongside them.

## Endnotes

- 1 Acuto, M. et al. (2017) 'City Diplomacy: Towards More Strategic Networking? Learning with WHO Healthy Cities', *Global Policy*, 8(1): 14-22.
- 2 Acuto, M. and Rayner, S. (2016) 'City networks: breaking gridlocks or forging (new) lock-ins?', *International Affairs*, 92(5): 1147-1166; Clark, G. & Moonen, T. (2016) *World Cities and Nation States*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- 3 Johnson, C. (2017) *The Power of Cities in Global Climate Politics: Saviours, Supplicants or Agents of Change?* London: Palgrave Macmillan; Davidson, K. et al. (2019) 'Reconfiguring urban governance in an age of rising city networks: a research agenda', *Urban Studies*, 56(16): 3540-3555.
- 4 Hafteck, P. (2003) 'An introduction to decentralized cooperation: definitions, origins and conceptual mapping', *Public Admin. Dev.*, 23: 333-345 (p. 336).
- 5 OECD (2018) *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-operation: The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda*. Paris: OECD (p. 26)
- 6 de Losada, F. (2018) 'Cities in the International Arena', Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (Opinion) [online] Available at: <[https://www.cidob.org/ca/publicacions/series\\_de\\_publicacio/opinio/ciudades\\_globales/cities\\_in\\_the\\_international\\_arena](https://www.cidob.org/ca/publicacions/series_de_publicacio/opinio/ciudades_globales/cities_in_the_international_arena)> (Last accessed: 14/08/20) (p. 2)
- 7 Hoornweg, D. (2011) 'A League of their Own: Cities Working Together for a Better World', World Bank Blog Series [online] Available at: <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/sustainablecities/a-league-of-their-own-cities-working-together-for-a-better-world-0>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
- 8 See, for example, Ayres, A. (2018) 'The New City Multilateralism'. Expert Brief, Council on Foreign Relations [online] Available at: <<https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/new-city-multilateralism>>. (Last accessed: 23/02/20); Curtis, S. & Acuto, M. (2018) 'The Foreign Policy of Cities', *The RUSI Journal*, 163(6): 8-17; Surmacz, B. (2018) 'City Diplomacy,' *Barometr Regionalny*, 16(1): 7-18.
- 9 Acuto, M. et al. (2018) 'Toward City Diplomacy: Assessing capacity in select global cities' [online] Available at: <[https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/toward\\_city\\_diplomacy\\_report\\_180207.pdf](https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/toward_city_diplomacy_report_180207.pdf)> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
- 10 Lusk, K. and Gunkel, N. (2018) *Cities Joining Ranks: Policy Networks on the Rise*. Boston: Boston University [online] Available at: <<https://www.bu.edu/ioc/files/2018/04/Cities-Joining-Ranks-Final-Report.pdf>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20); Ma, L. (2017) 'Site Visits, Policy Learning, and the Diffusion of Policy Innovation: Evidence from Public Bicycle Programs in China', *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 22(4): 581-599.
- 11 Acuto, M. and Leffel, B. (forthcoming) 'Understanding the global ecosystem of city networks', *Urban studies* [online] Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/s/10.1177/0042098020929261?journalCode=usja>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
- 12 Campbell, T. (2012) *Beyond Smart Cities: How Cities Network, Learn and Innovate*. Routledge: New York; Acuto, M. et al. (2017) 'City Diplomacy: Towards More Strategic Networking? Learning with WHO Healthy Cities', *Global Policy*, 8(1): 14-22.
- 13 Acuto, M. et al. (2016) 'City Diplomacy' and Twinning: Lessons from the UK, China and Globally', *Future of Cities: Working Paper* [online] Available at: <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326438072\\_City\\_Diplomacy\\_and\\_Twinning\\_Lessons\\_from\\_the\\_UK\\_China\\_and\\_Globally](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326438072_City_Diplomacy_and_Twinning_Lessons_from_the_UK_China_and_Globally)> (Last accessed: 23/02/20)
- 14 Harding, A. (2019) 'Greater Manchester's International Collaborations' (unpublished). For Greater Manchester.
- 15 OECD (2019) *Enhancing Innovation Capacity in City Government*. Paris: OECD (p. 19)
- 16 Acuto, M. and Leffel, B. (forthcoming) 'Understanding the global ecosystem of city networks', *Urban studies* [online] Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/s/10.1>

- [177/0042098020929261?journalCode=usja](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/s/10.1177/0042098020929261?journalCode=usja)> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
- 17 Peña, S. (2012) 'Recent Trends and Practice in Spatial Planning in Mexico The Municipal Planning and Research Institutes', *Gestión y Política Pública*, 21(2): 407-450.
  - 18 Ouchi, F. (2004) 'Twinning as a Method for Institutional Development: A Desk Review', WBI Evaluation Study. Washington DC: World Bank [online] Available at: < <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/717271468320671286/pdf/312970EG04185.pdf>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
  - 19 Acuto, M. and Leffel, B. (forthcoming) 'Understanding the global ecosystem of city networks', *Urban studies* [online] Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/s/10.1177/0042098020929261?journalCode=usja>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
  - 20 Acuto, M. and Leffel, B. (forthcoming) 'Understanding the global ecosystem of city networks', *Urban studies* [online] Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/s/10.1177/0042098020929261?journalCode=usja>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
  - 21 Montero, S. (2017) 'Study tours and inter-city policy learning: Mobilizing Bogotá's transportation policies in Guadalajara', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 49(2): 332-350.
  - 22 Hambleton, R. (2018) 'Let's ban the lazy language of 'best practice'. An exploration of how to enhance the effectiveness of international city-to-city learning', *Paper for the European Urban Research Association Conference, Tilburg, 21-23<sup>rd</sup> June 2018* [online, unpublished] Available at: <<https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/867164>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
  - 23 Kosovac, A. et al. (forthcoming) *Conducting city diplomacy: a global survey of 53 cities*. Melbourne: Connected Cities Lab, University of Melbourne.
  - 24 Acuto, M. et al (2019) *Networking City Leaders: Understanding the Global Landscape of City Networks*. Melbourne: Connected Cities Lab, University of Melbourne.
  - 25 Acuto, M. and Leffel, B. (forthcoming) 'Understanding the global ecosystem of city networks', *Urban studies* [online] Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/s/10.1177/0042098020929261?journalCode=usja>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
  - 26 Campbell, T. (2012) *Beyond Smart Cities: How Cities Network, Learn and Innovate*. Routledge: New York
  - 27 Acuto, M. and Leffel, B. (forthcoming) 'Understanding the global ecosystem of city networks', *Urban studies* [online] Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/s/10.1177/0042098020929261?journalCode=usja>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
  - 28 Montero, S. (2017) 'Study tours and inter-city policy learning: Mobilizing Bogotá's transportation policies in Guadalajara', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 49(2): 332-350.
  - 29 Acuto, M. and Leffel, B. (forthcoming) 'Understanding the global ecosystem of city networks', *Urban studies* [online] Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/s/10.1177/0042098020929261?journalCode=usja>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20); Acuto, M. et al. (2018) 'Toward City Diplomacy: Assessing capacity in select global cities' [online] Available at: <[https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/toward\\_city\\_diplomacy\\_report\\_180207.pdf](https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/toward_city_diplomacy_report_180207.pdf)> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
  - 30 Campbell, T. (2012) *Beyond Smart Cities: How Cities Network, Learn and Innovate*. Routledge: New York
  - 31 Hambleton, R. (2018) 'Let's ban the lazy language of 'best practice'. An exploration of how to enhance the effectiveness of international city-to-city learning', *Paper for the European Urban Research Association Conference, Tilburg, 21-23<sup>rd</sup> June 2018* [online, unpublished] Available at: <<https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/867164>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20) (p. 8)
  - 32 Acuto, M. and Leffel, B. (forthcoming) 'Understanding the global ecosystem of city networks', *Urban studies* [online] Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/s/10.1177/0042098020929261?journalCode=usja>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)

- 33 Such as climate mayors.
- 34 Such as the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance, C40, Under2 Coalition and 100 Resilient Cities. Lusk, K. and Gunkel, N. (2018) *Cities Joining Ranks: Policy Networks on the Rise*. Boston: Boston University [online] Available at: <https://www.bu.edu/ioc/files/2018/04/Cities-Joining-Ranks-Final-Report.pdf> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
- 35 Allegretti, G. (2019) 'Cities, citizens and demodiversity: an overview of two generations of city networks' in A. de Losada and H. Abdullah (eds.) *Rethinking the ecosystem of international city networks: challenges and opportunities*. Barcelona: Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (p. 42)
- 36 Engagement Global (n.d.) 'Municipal partnerships: The ten most important questions and answers' [online] Available at: <https://skew.engagement-global.de/zehn-fragen-zu-kommunalen-partnerschaften.html> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
- 37 OECD (2018) *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-operation: The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda*. Paris: OECD
- 38 OECD (2018) *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-operation: The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda*. Paris: OECD (p. 30)
- 39 Campbell, T. (2012) *Beyond Smart Cities: How Cities Network, Learn and Innovate*. Routledge: New York
- 40 Roca, F. (2019) 'Networks of cities or networked cities? Eight theses' in A. de Losada and H. Abdullah (eds.) *Rethinking the ecosystem of international city networks: challenges and opportunities*. Barcelona: Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (p. 67)
- 41 De la Varga Mas, O. (2019) 'Entangled: A reflection on the current state of the ecosystem of local government networks' in A. de Losada and H. Abdullah (eds.) *Rethinking the ecosystem of international city networks: challenges and opportunities*. Barcelona: Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (p. 85)
- 42 OECD (2018) *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-operation: The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda*. Paris: OECD (p. 5)
- 43 OECD (2018) *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-operation: The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda*. Paris: OECD (p. 29)
- 44 Gootman, M. et al. (2019) *Metro-to-Metro Economic Partnerships: How to network global assets to fuel regional growth*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution (p. 2)
- 45 Montero, S. (2017) 'Study tours and inter-city policy learning: Mobilizing Bogotá's transportation policies in Guadalajara', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 49(2): 332-350; Campbell, T. (2012) *Beyond Smart Cities: How Cities Network, Learn and Innovate*. Routledge: New York
- 46 Gonzalez, S. (2011) 'Bilbao and Barcelona "in motion": How urban regeneration models "travel" and mutate in global flows of policy tourism', *Urban Studies*, 48(7): 1397-1418 (p. 1412); Montero, S. (2017) 'Study tours and inter-city policy learning: Mobilizing Bogotá's transportation policies in Guadalajara', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 49(2): 332-350.
- 47 Kosovac, A. et al. (forthcoming) *Conducting city diplomacy: a global survey of 53 cities*. Melbourne: Connected Cities Lab, University of Melbourne.
- 48 Ludher, E., Sharda, N., Lal, R., Xu, Y., Chow, C., & Ng, J. (2018). *ASEAN Smart Cities Network*. Singapore: CLC Publications; Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016) *MFA Press Statement: Singapore-Indonesia Leaders' Retreat in Semarang*. [online] Available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Statements-Transcripts-and-Photos/2016/11/MFA-Press-Statement-SingaporeIndonesia-Leaders-Retreat-in-Semarang-Indonesia-on-14-November-2016> (Last accessed: 20/08/20); Matinus, M. (2020) '2020 ASEAN Smart Cities Network: A Catalyst for Partnerships' Singapore: ISEAS Perspective (p. 1)

- 49 Lusk, K. and Gunkel, N. (2018) *Cities Joining Ranks: Policy Networks on the Rise*. Boston: Boston University [online] Available at: <https://www.bu.edu/ioc/files/2018/04/Cities-Joining-Ranks-Final-Report.pdf> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
- 50 C40 Cities (2016) *Unlocking climate change in megacities*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.c40.org/researches/unlocking-climate-action-in-megacities>> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)
- 51 Gordon, D. (2020) *Cities on the World Stage: The Politics of Global Urban Climate Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (p. 82)
- 52 C40 Cities (2020) *What we do for cities*. [online] Available at: <[https://www.c40.org/what\\_we\\_do\\_for\\_cities](https://www.c40.org/what_we_do_for_cities)> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)
- 53 C40 Cities (2020) *C40 Research, Measurement and Planning* [online] Available at: <<https://www.c40.org/research>> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)
- 54 Gordon, D. (2020) *Cities on the World Stage: The Politics of Global Urban Climate Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- 55 Ma, L. (2017) 'Site Visits, Policy Learning, and the Diffusion of Policy Innovation: Evidence from Public Bicycle Programs in China', *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 22(4): 581-599.
- 56 Montero, S. (2017) 'Study tours and inter-city policy learning: Mobilizing Bogotá's transportation policies in Guadalajara', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 49(2): 332-350.
- 57 WHO Global Health Observatory NCD mortality and morbidity: [https://www.who.int/gho/ncd/mortality\\_morbidity/en/](https://www.who.int/gho/ncd/mortality_morbidity/en/)
- 58 Ma, L. (2017) 'Site Visits, Policy Learning, and the Diffusion of Policy Innovation: Evidence from Public Bicycle Programs in China', *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 22(4): 581-599.
- 59 German Mashall Fund of the United States (2019) *Dialogues for Change 3.0: A U.S.-German Cities Exchange for Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development* [online] Available at: <<https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/Dialogues%20for%20Change.pdf>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
- 60 Wray, S. (2020) *LA rolls out pre-paid cards for Covid-19 financial assistance*. *Smart Cities World* [online] Available at: <<https://www.smartcitiesworld.net/news/news/la-rolls-out-pre-paid-cards-for-covid-19-financial-assistance--5189>> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)
- 61 MasterCard Center for Inclusive Growth (2016) *Bridging America's Economic Divide with Inclusive Innovation* [online] Available at: <<https://www.mastercardcenter.org/insights/bridging-americas-economic-divide-inclusive-innovation>> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)
- 62 Leesa-Nguansuk, S. (2020) *Mastercard takes in 27 potential smart cities*. *Bangkok Post* [online] Available at: <<https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1840094/mastercard-takes-in-27-potential-smart-cities>> (Last accessed: 20/08/2020)
- 63 Mors, B. (2019) *Mastercard Expands Global Network for Urban Co-Development* [online] Available at: <<https://mastercardcontentexchange.com/newsroom/press-releases/2019/november/mastercard-expands-global-network-for-urban-co-development/>> (Last accessed: 20/08/2020)
- 64 Tavares, R. (2016) *Paradiplomacy: Cities and States as Global Players*. Oxford: Oxford Press
- 65 Duran, M. (2015) *Mediterranean Paradiplomacies: The Dynamics of Diplomatic Reterritorialization*. Leiden: Hotei Publishing
- 66 An imbalance between the size, capability, know-how and departmental capacity of the cities has, for example, been observed as a major reason why collaboration between Vienna and Central European cities in the Centrope project did not take off.

- 67 Acuto, M. and Leffel, B. (forthcoming) 'Understanding the global ecosystem of city networks', *Urban studies* [online] Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/s/10.1177/0042098020929261?journalCode=usja>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
- 68 Kosovac, A. et al. (forthcoming) *Conducting city diplomacy: a global survey of 53 cities*. Melbourne: Connected Cities Lab, University of Melbourne.
- 69 European Commission (2020) EU International Urban Cooperation programme is expanding and reinforcing with cities and regions worldwide [online] Available at: <[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/02/02-10-2020-eu-international-urban-cooperation-programme-is-expanding-and-reinforcing-with-cities-and-regions-worldwide](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/02/02-10-2020-eu-international-urban-cooperation-programme-is-expanding-and-reinforcing-with-cities-and-regions-worldwide)> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)
- 70 Kulikauskas, P. Lenz, A. (2020) How International Urban Cooperation supports the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, UN-Habitat. [online] Available at: <[https://iuc.eu/fileadmin/templates/iuc/lib/iuc\\_resource//tools/push\\_resource\\_file\\_resource.php?uid=wlvdN5NF](https://iuc.eu/fileadmin/templates/iuc/lib/iuc_resource//tools/push_resource_file_resource.php?uid=wlvdN5NF)> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)
- 71 German Mashall Fund of the United States (2019) *Dialogues for Change 3.0: A U.S.-German Cities Exchange for Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development* [online] Available at: <<https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/Dialogues%20for%20Change.pdf>> (Last accessed: 14/08/20)
- 72 Acuto, M. (2016) 'Give cities a seat at the top table', *Nature*, 537(7622): 611-613.
- 73 Ocean Conservancy (2020) Network Announce First Cohort of Partner Cities for Urban Ocean Program [online] Available at: <<https://oceanconservancy.org/news/circulate-initiative-ocean-conservancy-global-resilient-cities-network-announce-first-cohort-partner-cities-urban-ocean-program/>> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)
- 74 OECD (2018) *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-operation: The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda*. Paris: OECD (p. 74)
- 75 The Bristol Magazine (2020) It's a twin thing: Bristol's twin towns and sister cities [online] Available at: <<https://thebristolmag.co.uk/twin-thing/>> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)
- 76 Bristol City Council (2017) Bristol: Global City Working with the world for local and global benefit [online] Available at: <<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/2053023/Bristol+International+Strategy/da9a5464-4f28-5591-715c-27d401ab4992>> (Last accessed: 20/02/20)
- 77 Bristol City Council (2017) Bristol: Global City Appendix: Implementation Plan [online] Available at: <[https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s12102/13c%20Appendix%20A%202%20Strategy%20Appendix\\_Implementation%20Plan.pdf](https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s12102/13c%20Appendix%20A%202%20Strategy%20Appendix_Implementation%20Plan.pdf)> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)
- 78 Neuner, J. (2019) Bristol first UK city to publish Voluntary Local Review. Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics [online] Available at: <<https://www.sdsntrends.org/blog/2019/7/17/bristol-first-uk-city-vlr>> (Last accessed: 20/08/20)



**nesta**

58 Victoria Embankment  
London EC4Y 0DS

+44 (0)20 7438 2500

[information@nesta.org.uk](mailto:information@nesta.org.uk)

 [@nesta\\_uk](https://twitter.com/nesta_uk)

 [www.facebook.com/nesta.uk](https://www.facebook.com/nesta.uk)

[www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)

Nesta is a registered charity in England and Wales with company number 7706036 and charity number 1144091.  
Registered as a charity in Scotland number SCO42833. Registered office: 58 Victoria Embankment, London, EC4Y 0DS.

