'Just Cities: Civil Society Innovation and Urban Inclusion'
2020 Innovation Report Concept

February 2020

Our 2020 Innovation Report will highlight successful innovations in complex urban contexts to deliver inclusive solutions for marginalised communities in cities.

Urbanisation is an influential trend and driver for CSO innovation and impact

The accelerating population shift from rural areas to urban areas, and accompanying social and economic changes, is one of the most critical global trends influencing the trajectory of other major megatrends. Cities are increasingly likely to be on the frontlines of climate and humanitarian crises as populations are displaced there seeking more secure lives. This fast-moving phenomenon will increasingly impact global sustainable development efforts, and the work of international and national civil society organisations (CSOs) for decades ahead.

These organisations have made important contributions towards implementing the UN New Urban Agenda and supporting progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Acting as bridges between community capital and prioritised needs, and linking urban dwellers to duty bearers, CSOs both create and build on new opportunities to improve the prosperity and resilience of urban communities, in particular marginalised and vulnerable groups, including slum dwellers, migrants and displaced people, women, children, older persons and people with disabilities.

However, the complex system of powerful stakeholders and rapid speed of change in urban contexts pose a number of unique innovation drivers for CSOs, with their traditional programming experience in rural settings and typical advocacy focus at national level. Powerful city administrations may become as important as or even outpace national governments, and play a growing role in pursuing climate change solutions, SDG activities and emerging technologies. To maximise their urban impact potential, CSOs need to strengthen the roles they can play, including policy-making, capacity building and facilitating learning for and between cities.

Systematic peer learning can help CSOs better navigate urban complexities
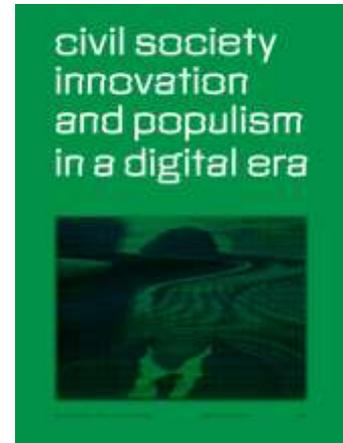
These factors drive the need for internal disruption and new operational models, partnerships, skills and capacities to strengthen impact for marginalised urban communities. Peer learning is a powerful facilitator to share resources and reduce risk, but there is still limited exchange amongst CSOs on working in urban settings. Sector practitioners are keen to jointly explore experiences, common challenges and opportunities around scaling, navigating complexity, and effective multi-stakeholder working in urban contexts. However, there is no co-ordinated space for this, as other current urban learning networks are more sub-sector- or regionally-focused.

Some ICSOs have published their own studies on urban policy, research and lessons from programming.[1] But there is still no single publication which takes a broader, more systematic sector overview – including human or environmental rights and national CSOs – collating and contrasting roles and approaches to co-produce new insights, provide a common learning agenda, and communicate effectively to wider audiences about the urban impacts these organisations are achieving.

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[1] Including ActionAid, Habitat for Humanity, Plan, Save the Children and World Vision.

Our 2020 Innovation Report on 'Civil Society Innovation and Urban Inclusion'

We define innovation as "an iterative learning process which identifies, adapts/adjusts and shares novel ideas for improving civil society action, impact and operating space". **Following on from the success of our first ever Innovation Report in 2019 on the topic of '[Civil Society Innovation and Populism in a Digital Era](#)', our 2020 edition will focus on urban inclusion.**

It will create new opportunities for civil society practitioners to share insights and good practice on urban innovation, integration and inclusion, with a strong focus on how to work effectively with multiple stakeholders in complex urban contexts. It will showcase emerging novel approaches and proven good practices from across the sector, which include citizen-led engagement to improve the safety and resilience of urban communities, and the sustainability and quality of urban services, especially for marginalised and vulnerable groups.

The report will **aim** to:
- Discuss, analyse and appraise effective solutions as well as new ways of working in relation to inclusive urban programming, by showcasing innovative case studies from leading international and national and grassroots CSOs around the world;
- Facilitate interactive exchange and develop a learning network for civil society practitioners and other interested stakeholders on urban programming approaches;
- Provide a common understanding on challenges and opportunities for CSOs in urban environments and draw conclusions about what is and is not working in response, identifying recommendations and overall innovation 'success factors' for the sector in this area;
- Highlight influential factors in the evolving external environment and interaction with other global megatrends which will continue to influence future ICSO innovation in urban contexts.

The report will **focus** on:
- What are the most innovative examples of <u>integrated</u> urban programming in our sector, particularly in relation to other current big global challenges and future crises?
- Where is the greatest need and potential for ICSOs to <u>scale up</u> integrated and inclusive urban initiatives, help build institutional capacity and resilience, and maximise the use of city assets and resources, especially to include marginalised and vulnerable groups?
- What are the best examples of how ICSOs are leveraging <u>multi-sectoral partnerships</u> (with communities, faith groups, public actors, city governments and networks, urban planners, academia and the private sector) for comprehensive and inclusive urban programming?
- What are the most promising examples of how ICSOs are leveraging enabling technology (including '[smart city](#)' solutions) and ethical data practices for inclusive urban programming?

Lessons learned from 2019

Building on the lessons and strengths from our first Innovation Report, in 2020 we will prioritise:
1. *Being steered by sector practitioners, for sector practitioners*: a Steering Group of the global urban thematic leads from five of the most experienced ICSOs working in urban contexts globally - Habitat for Humanity International, Oxfam International, Plan International, Save the Children International and World Vision International – to help focus the scope of the topic, define the analytical framework, and select case studies.

2. *Ensuring diversity and universality:* The initial estimate is for 10-15 case studies, with 75% from international CSOs - rights, environmental, development and humanitarian approaches - and 25% from national CSOs. Examples will span the Global North and South to reflect the universal nature of SDG 11, and a variety of ultimate aims for [transformational urban impact](#): healthy, safer, prosperous and resilient cities, with 'just cities' as the key enabler.

3. *Sustaining the lessons from the report in our sector:* The Centre will take forward the report recommendations in our sector leadership convening in 2021, carry out follow-up dissemination through social media and sector 'multipliers', and integrate with other new learning platforms (e.g. on child-friendly cities) and resources being developed by ICSOs in our Steering Group/network.

Opportunities to get involved

Contribute a case study from your organisation

CSOs are invited to identify and propose one innovative initiative from their urban programming portfolio as a [case study](#) for inclusion in the report. Priority criteria for case study selection will be defined and shared in early 2020 but are likely to include: integrated nature, citizen-inclusive, multi-stakeholder, leveraging and building assets and institutional capacity, novelty and creativity, transferability of lessons for others, scaleability and sustainability.
The Centre will then work with each selected case study organisation to co-create, document and illustrate as an infographic, the key features of the innovation context, approach and impact, and the main takeaways for other urban practitioners.

Join convening around the report

We plan to bring a community of global thematic leads, and other engaged urban practitioners, together in person three times in 2020 to provide safe spaces for open sharing of lessons, challenges and opportunities, develop labs for joint experimentation, establish new collaborations and influencing opportunities within and beyond our sector. These are:

- **Launch of report development process at WUF 10 in February 2020**: Official process launch at the UN Habitat tenth [World Urban Forum](#), 8-13 February 2020, in Abu Dhabi, at a formal [networking event](#)on **Monday 10 February, from 2-4pm**. This will present the ambition for the report, share initial ICSO case studies, and crowdsource content ideas from a cross-sector audience.
- **Potential workshop for CSO 'urban innovators' in June 2020**: The Centre is proposing to convene a two-day innovation workshop in Berlin, Germany, for CSO global urban leads and other contributors, including lab sessions to explore key issues and innovative collaborative solutions for topics covered by the report, and mid-point community review of content so far.
- **Report launch at Global Perspectives leadership conference in November 2020**: The event in Jakarta, Indonesia, will include presentations on the framework, emerging recommendations, and interactive workshops led by case study contributors for the audience to engage with the content. Follow-up side sessions for the 'urban innovators' to follow up from the June workshop will also be planned.

> **Find out more**
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> To express interest or find out more, please contact Vicky Tongue, Programme Manager – Futures and Innovation, at vtongue@icscentre.org or visit [icscentre.org/our-work/innovation-report/](#).

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