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A socially innovative city – where are we getting stuck?

The complex social challenges we face can no longer be solved by traditional planning methods and technocratic approaches. In response, cities all over the world are embracing collaborative, bottom-up approaches to develop new solutions.

Social innovation in cities is characterised by urban co-creation projects, which allow the people running our cities to access the collective knowledge of NGOs, social enterprises and of everyday citizens, but these new approaches are not easy. They require the skills and resources of all sectors - they require new kinds of co-creation, they require new skills. Whilst there are fantastic examples all over the world of cities embracing social innovation, from a Social Innovation Mayor in Seoul to transformational infrastructure projects like the metrocable in Medellin, a socially innovative city needs more than just labs, innovation spaces and temporary experiments. It needs new capabilities that enable us all to make the most of a city’s diversity so citizens and government officials come together to work on pressing issues effectively, not tokenistically. But most of all they require us to embrace new values, new ways of living and being together. How do we build those values? How do we make a movement around values? And what is the sticky part preventing us to make truly innovative cities?