

EMERGENCY GOVERNANCE FOR CITIES AND REGIONS

Emergency Governance Initiative
July 2020



POLICY BRIEF

THE INITIATIVE

This Policy Brief is part of the Emergency Governance Initiative (EGI) led by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the World Association of the Major Metropolises (Metropolis) and LSE Cities at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

This Initiative investigates the institutional dimensions of rapid and radical action in response to global emergencies.

The Emergency Governance Initiative aims to **provide city and regional governments with actionable information, suitable frameworks, knowledge and resources to navigate the new demands of leading emergency responses.** In that respect, its goal is also to inform the governance of grand challenges that are increasingly framed as complex emergencies: above all, pandemics or climate change. In this context, governance is understood as the process by which public policy decisions are made and implemented. This includes the exercise of political and administrative authority to manage a jurisdiction's affairs. Key aspects range from issues of power, representation and democracy to legal and institutional frameworks, coordination, multi-level administration, finance and stakeholder participation. Urban and territorial governance cuts across a variety of coordination models among different actors responsible for governing cities, metropolises, regions and wider territories.

THE POLICY BRIEFS

This Policy Brief is the first in a series of quarterly publications that are complemented by the more data-driven and more frequently published Analytics Notes. While these notes collate and analyse information relevant to local and regional emergency governance, the Policy Briefs focus on forward-looking propositions, reform agendas, governance innovation and critical perspectives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the local government officials who provided critical inputs to this Policy Brief during this exceptional time, including all the cities that responded to the scoping survey. We are particularly grateful to the local government officials from Barcelona, Bogotá, Seoul and Gauteng who took time out of their busy schedules to speak to us about the governance innovations they have been trialling as part of their emergency response efforts. We also thank Diane Davis and Graham Denyer Willis for contributing their thought-provoking piece on urban sovereignty in the age of pandemics.

INTRODUCING POLICY BRIEF #01

As the world moves from the early stages of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic into a new phase it is time to identify emerging lessons from the various governance initiatives that city and regional governments introduced over the last six months.

This policy brief combines a broad global overview on the different types of emergency governance innovations and initiatives that have been developed by cities and city networks around the world with profiles of four specific cases. The first part includes lessons that emerged from a series of global Live Learning Experiences alongside a summary of global COVID-19 monitoring initiatives and insights from a scoping survey. The second part explores emergency governance innovations that have been trialled over the past months in Barcelona (stakeholder engagement), Bogotá (communication), Gauteng (multi-level governance) and Seoul (big data and technology). In addition, this edition includes as a special feature a critical perspective on 'urban sovereignty in the time of pandemics' by Diane Davis of Harvard University and Graham Denyer Willis of Cambridge University.

Main findings

The scoping survey of the Emergency Governance Initiative included 57 cities in 35 countries and revealed:

- Innovation as part of the COVID-19 response was particularly common for the emergency governance domains of **(1) leadership and authority**, **(2) cooperation and collaboration across key stakeholders** and **(3) information technology and data management**.
- The need for additional information and references to innovative practices as part of emergency responses is greatest for the domain of **finance and resources**.

Insights from the four case profiles of emergency governance innovation offer the following key lessons across four major emergency governance domains.

- **Cooperation and collaboration across key stakeholders:** Barcelona experimented with a new form of consensus-based decision-making to guide its COVID-19 recovery strategy, using an informal governance mechanism that did not require any changes to existing municipal laws. The Barcelona Deal aimed to overcome partisan divides and ideological differences to bring together more than 200 urban stakeholders in a co-creative, participatory process using crosscutting themes rather than a sectoral approach. One of the trade-offs of involving such a wide range of stakeholders is that it can be difficult to move from high-level visions to concrete policy proposals. Barcelona has demonstrated that political

will and embracing the value of compromise can provide opportunities for new participatory decision-making tools, even in times of crisis.

- **Communication and consultation:** Bogotá has framed its COVID-19 communication strategy around a new public policy approach known as 'citizen culture' that aims to empower citizens to become part of the solution to the city's problems. It focuses on sharing information and data in a transparent and accessible way while prioritising listening to and learning from citizens. The city is actively using social research to understand people's needs and concerns and adjusting policies in response to that. This has engendered a sense of co-responsibility for the lockdown measures between the government and the public. Trust has also been strengthened by centralising communication channels and being honest about the successes and failures in relation to the emergency response.
- **Coordination and integration:** Gauteng has successfully established a new operational model for multi-level emergency governance that addresses the challenge of coordinating the coronavirus response across a heavily decentralised system of governance. This approach is innovative in that it supports a cohesive and unified strategic direction at the provincial level while still facilitating context-sensitive local-level implementation. The strategy is enabled by existing governance structures but also supported by new ones such as the Provincial and District Coronavirus Command Councils. The granular local responses are enabled by high levels of data collection and analysis and flexible approaches to emergency budgeting to rapidly address local vulnerabilities.
- **Information technology and data management:** Seoul took advantage of institutional flexibility and the absence of excessive bureaucracy to adapt existing technological capacities and structures and develop a rapid, accurate and transparent contact tracing strategy in response to the COVID-19 emergency. By using big data, collaborating closely with other spheres of government, and engaging the public via innovative technologies, Seoul has managed to keep transmission of the virus under control. Protecting users from infringement of privacy rights will remain a key issue for the next innovation phase in cities leading big data analytics.

PART 1 – GLOBAL OVERVIEW: COVID-19 AND THE URBAN GOVERNANCE RESPONSE

The first part of this policy brief presents the point of departure of the Emergency Governance Initiative (EGI). It builds on findings from three different global insights that each shed light on different elements of the COVID-19 emergency response in cities and regions.

First, lessons from the Live Learning Experiences, which were hosted by UCLG, Metropolis and UN-Habitat over the initial months of the current crisis. This includes a personal reflection by UCLG's Secretary General Emilia Sáiz alongside a brief overview of governance challenges and innovations referred to during these sessions. Second, insights from 60 prominent COVID-19 monitors offering information on cities that are frequently referenced as part of emergency responses as well as on the most frequently covered themes. Third, findings from the EGI scoping survey, highlighting the emergency governance domains where the greatest degree of innovation is currently taking place alongside an identification of the specific demands by cities and regions for more information on emergency governance.

1.1 LESSONS FROM THE LIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

In March 2020, UCLG, Metropolis and UN-Habitat launched a new initiative to provide a platform for open information exchange between local government decision-makers grappling with the COVID-19 emergency, known as the Live Learning Experiences. Over the course of several months, this new platform provided a virtual environment where regional, city and local governments were able to share their experiences of responding to the crisis. More than 40 hours of these conversations have been made available online, featuring 268 speakers from 97 cities and regions across 50 different countries.

Below, Emilia Sáiz, Secretary General of UCLG, reflects on the most important lessons for the future of local governance that have emerged out of the Live Learning Experiences.

Throughout the pandemic, local and regional leaders have been at the forefront of maintaining the provision of essential public services, ensuring that their cities, towns and territories continued to operate and to prevent the health emergency from spiralling into a severe social crisis. They have safeguarded the implementation of national and global policies, adapted their government operations and, above all, they have been the sentinels of the communities' expectations and concerns.

The Live Learning Experiences were designed to provide a space to discuss the immediate and urgent challenges that communities have been grappling with in the context of the pandemic. They called attention to agendas that might not be seen as a priority in the midst of a health crisis but that are nonetheless

critical, such as addressing urban violence, gender equality, food systems and mobility. Local and regional leaders confirmed that building pathways to greater social equity will need to be a priority, and that they are prepared to pick up the mantle in the face of insufficient action by national governments.

If local and regional governments are working to provide rent moratoriums, if they are endeavouring to ensure that people can stay at home, and if they are at the front line of service delivery, what does this say about their roles in the recovery? Local governments have been continuously implementing directives handed down to them from other government levels, and yet national discussions on the recovery often disregarded this critical implementation role. These debates also pay insufficient attention to the investments that will be required to ensure that local governments can continue to effectively support their communities in the difficult months that lie ahead.

Rather than waiting for national governments to take action, cities and regions are teaming up to find solutions, sharing their successes and failures and advocating for a seat at the table of international deliberations. These efforts have been guided by a spirit of solidarity among territories, ensuring that smaller cities and towns are not left behind, and everyone works together in the face of this shared crisis.

What emerges clearly from the Live Learning Experiences is that we need greater clarity on what constitutes an emergency – a question that the Emergency Governance Initiative will directly address. A better understanding of this question will shape reforms of existing institutional structures and allow us to develop new governance instruments to ensure that local and regional governments are included in the decision-making processes, so that urban areas are prepared to respond appropriately to these challenges.

The mid- and long-term consequences of emergency policies will need to be carefully studied based not only on how they are received by the public but also based on their actual impact and how they are reshaping established institutions. The effect of the pandemic on democracy and how it has been undermined in the service of emergency decision-making is a clear source of concern not just for local and regional leaders but also for the people they serve.

The role of intermediary governments, such as provinces and regions but also metropolitan areas, has proven to be unclear in many parts of the world, potentially undermining effective crisis responses. Gaps in the use of local and territorial data and weak consultation mechanisms are also a theme that emerged frequently in the conversations. Finally, the relationship between governments of all sizes and civil society, including the organisations that represent workers at the frontline of the crisis, needs to transform in the immediate future to secure a recovery that responds to the needs of our communities.

With all of this in mind, and on the back of the lessons learnt from these experiences, we have developed the [Decalogue for the post-COVID 19 era](#), which contains 10 recommendations that will guide our advocacy in the future, side by side with civil society and international partners.

The Live Learning Experiences and our Town Hall Process will lead us to develop spaces for dialogue and interaction between our political leadership and different organised civil society stakeholders. A multidisciplinary approach will be indispensable to guide us in providing a recovery that leaves no one behind.

The Live Learning Experiences also provided an early indication of priority governance challenges and innovation of participating city and regional governments. These are summarised by Figures 1 and 2, which illustrate the frequency with which different challenges and innovations emerged during the different live learning sessions. This analysis only includes broader and cross-cutting governance issues and not those only related to specific urban problems or policy sectors.

In terms of general emergency governance challenges, the difficulty of working across different tiers of government was most prominent (Figure 1). Representatives of regional, city and local governments discussed the coordination of response strategies with other government institutions, sometimes compromised by political tension, problems of disinformation, and lack of national leadership. Most other governance challenges relate to constraints for subnational governments in their emergency response resulting from a lack of resources or enabling frameworks. Lack of access to useful or reliable information, as well as inflexible bureaucracies, insufficient public budgets and lack of autonomy were common themes.

Above all, the Live Learning Experiences enabled the sharing of governance innovations in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Across the different sessions several priority emergency governance domains emerged for which new practices were particularly prominent. Communication and consultation with citizens, alongside public participation and inclusion, were most frequently mentioned. This demonstrated that even in the context of a complex emergency, city and regional governments were able to find new ways of consulting with citizens and enabling their participation as part of emergency responses.

Figure 1: Governance challenges referenced during Live Learning Experiences

Number of mentions by participating cities and regions

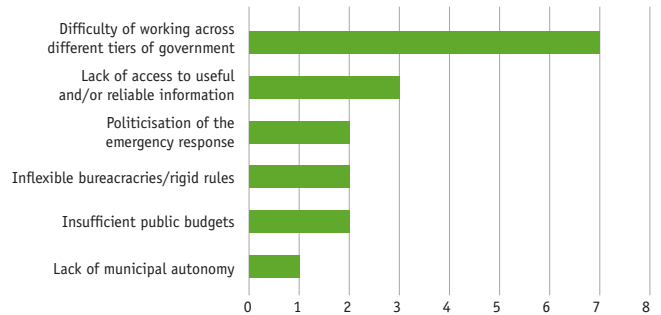
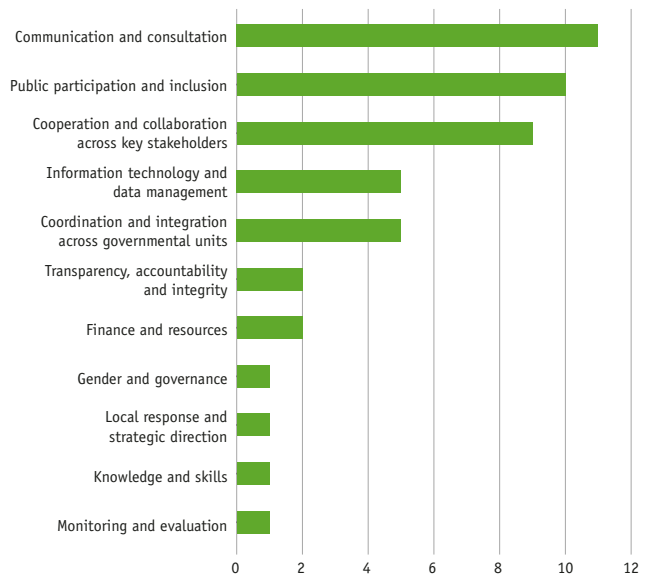


Figure 2: Emergency governance innovations referenced during Live Learning Experiences

Number of mentions by participating cities and regions



1.2 INSIGHTS FROM GLOBAL MONITORS AND THE EGI SCOPING SURVEY

This sub-section briefly summarises the geographic and thematic focus of international knowledge platforms and resources that are currently available to city and regional decision-makers to aid their crisis response. It then determines the gap between information needs and existing governance innovations, which could offer new insights and experiences related to emergency governance. The information here is based on *Analytics Notes* #01¹ and #02 of the Emergency Governance Initiative. These publications also offer a more detailed discussion of the findings covered below.

The 60 analysed COVID-19 monitors with a subnational governance component most prominently feature the experiences of cities in Europe and North America, an over-representation that could partly be explained by the fact that many of the organisations producing these resources were based in the Global North (Figure 3). Beyond this geographic imbalance and a particular under-representation of Asian cities, the cities that are most heavily reported on are early epicentres of the virus (Milan, Paris, Madrid and New York), and cities that are well connected with the monitoring organisations (Bogotá, Buenos Aires and Athens).

¹ Analytics Note #01, published in June 2020, focused on the large number of online COVID-19 resources of relevance for city and regional decision-makers involved in the emergency response. The analysis was designed to systemise these resources, to make them more coherent for decision-makers, and to identify information gaps where additional research could be of most use. The findings were based on a list of 60 prominent COVID-19 monitors with a subnational governance component.

Figure 3: Focus Cities of COVID-19 monitors

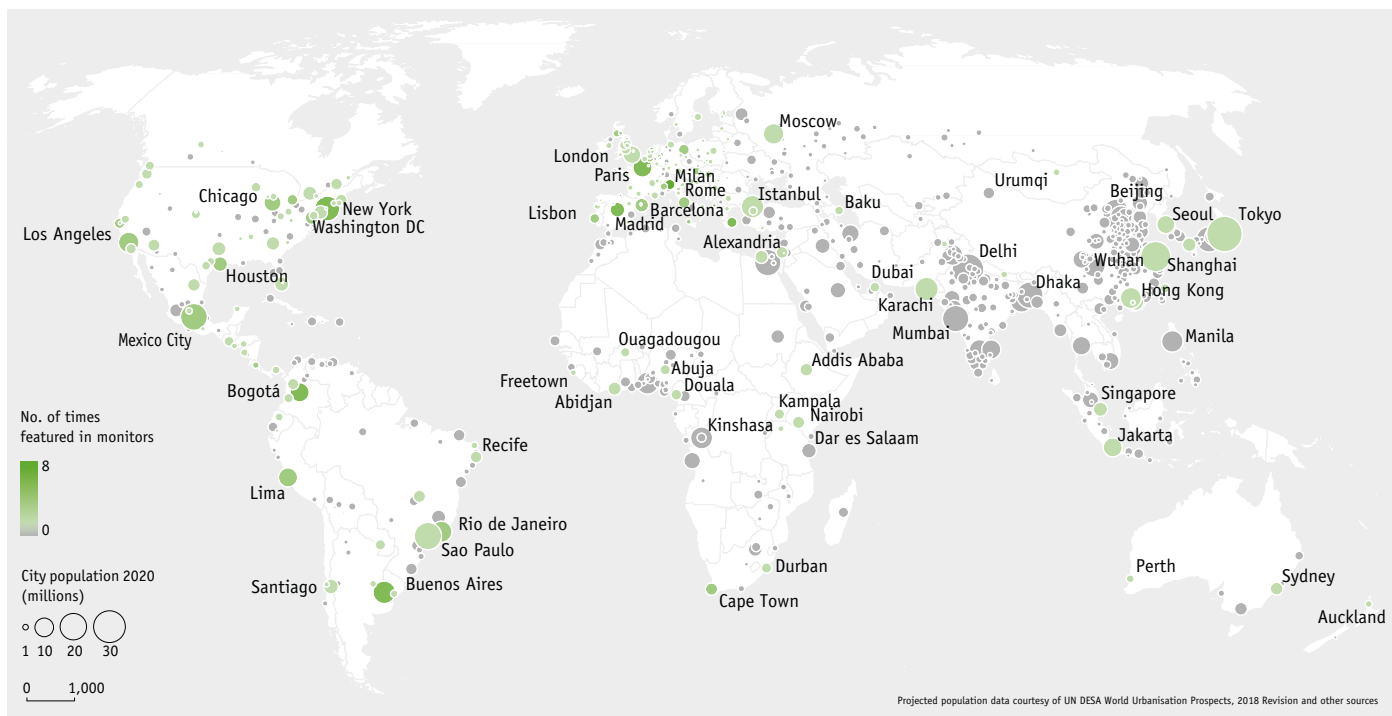


Figure 4: Thematic focus of COVID-19 monitors

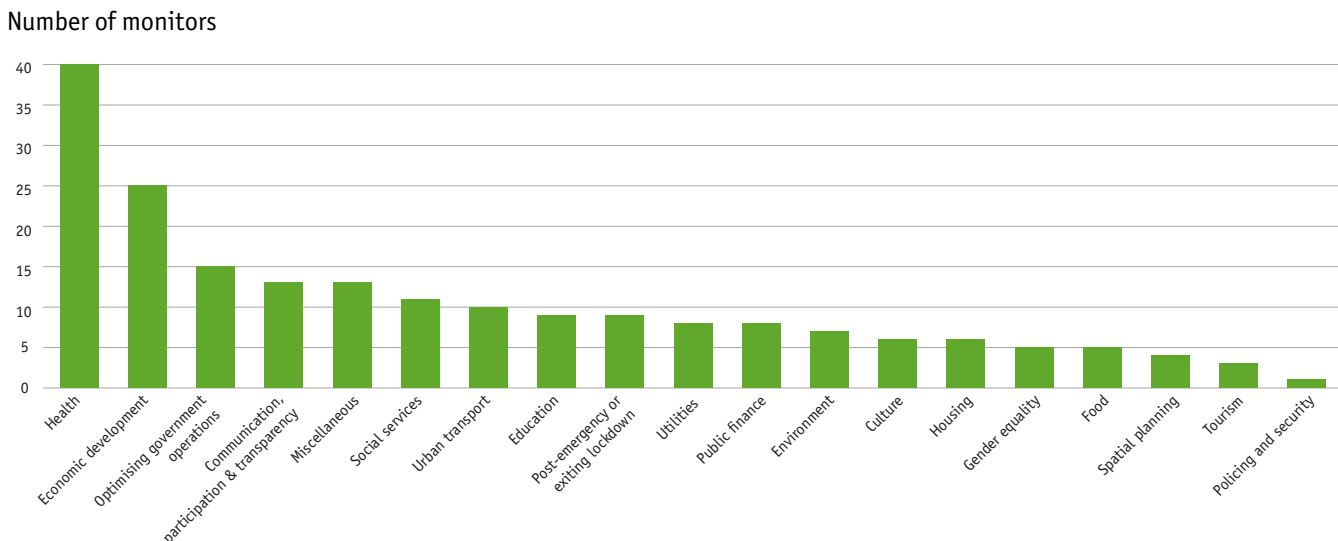
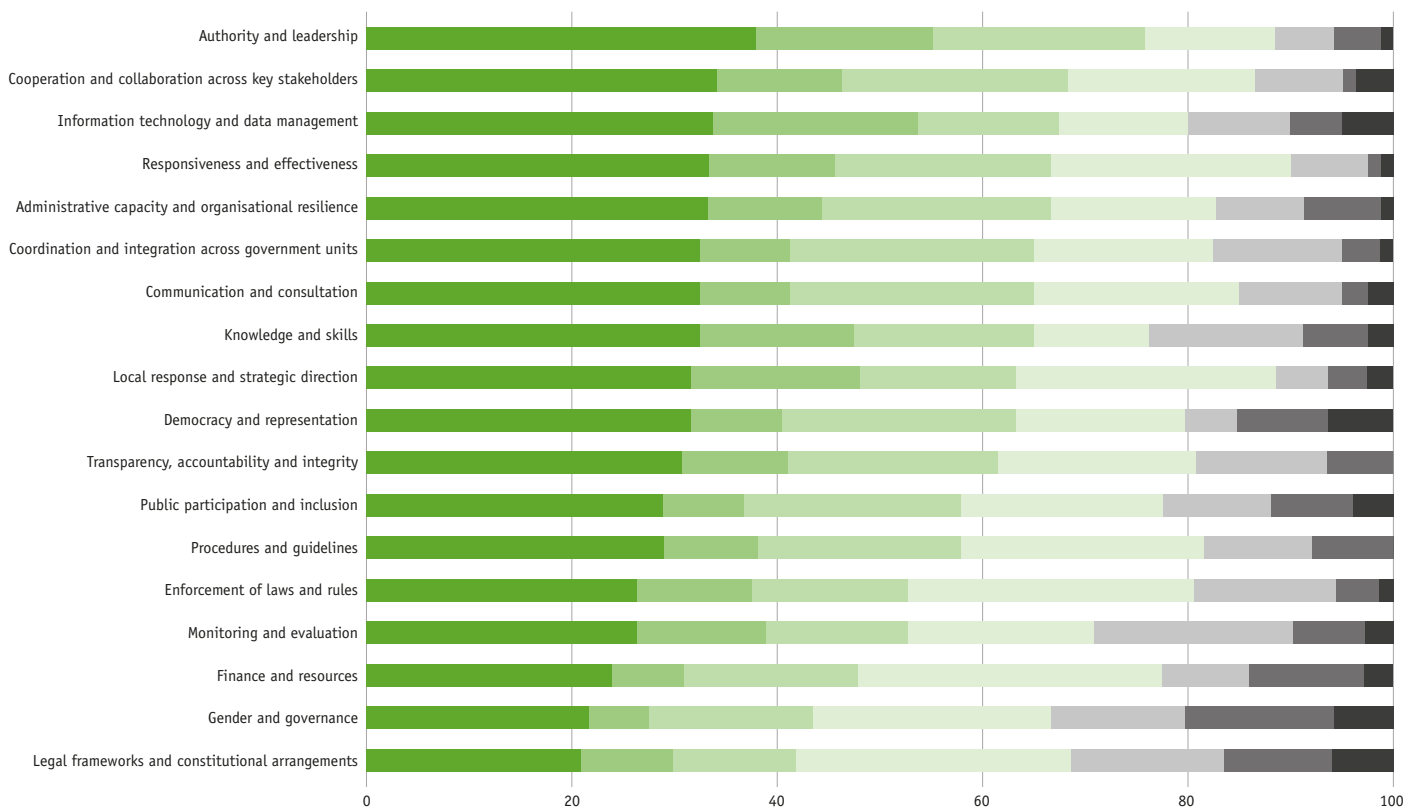


Figure 5: Innovations by emergency governance domain

Degree of innovation by surveyed cities/regions (From 0 (dark green) = not innovative at all to 5 (black) = highly innovative)



In terms of thematic focus, the monitors largely focus on policy responses to the emergency. While they covered a wide range of themes, the primary focus is on matters related to health, followed by economic development, as can be seen in Figure 4 (previous page). Most of these resources are descriptive in nature, and statistical analysis, qualitative accounts of interventions, and policy briefs were less common. There is a measurable information gap on governance, with only four out of the 60 monitors providing wide-ranging and up-to-date information specifically targeting governance and institutional arrangements.

Complementary research based on a global survey of 57 cities and regions in 35 countries offers a better understanding of urban governance innovations, which have emerged across this sample in response to the COVID-19 crisis (Figure 5).² Considerable levels of self-reported innovation relate to leadership and authority during the emergency response, which about 60 per cent of respondents identified. Such innovation relates to the display of strong leadership and authority at the forefront of the emergency response, providing assurance to citizens, stakeholders and other tiers of government. For example, it may include establishing new leadership platforms to inform and engage with citizens, and/or the building of new leadership coalitions such as using local community and religious leaders to inform people about the dangers of infection and the importance of following the guidelines.

Among the top five emergency governance domains with innovations in about half the surveyed cities and regions are: cooperation and collaboration across key stakeholders³, information technology and data management⁴, responsiveness and effectiveness⁵, and administrative capacity and organisational resilience.⁶

By contrast, far less innovation is reported on emergency governance domains such as finance and resources⁷, gender and governance⁸, and legal frameworks and constitutional arrangements.⁹ This lack of innovation might be explained by divergent political priorities and/or the nature of this particular emergency. Urban governments may have the power to prioritise certain issues, especially during an emergency, but may be particularly constrained in cases where other tiers of government take over.

² Details are covered in the EGI Analytics Note #02.

³ The introduction of effective measures for cooperation and collaboration between key stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors. For example, a joint task force dealing with safe mobility services across rail, bus, taxi and other mobility providers.

⁴ The innovative use of data and information assisted by digital technology to carry out an effective, proportional and targeted emergency response (e.g. the use of open-source data infection spread modelling).

⁵ Changes that ensure the effective, flexible and timely response of the city government to the emergency, both at the outset and as the situation develops (e.g. temporary suspension of procurement procedures to ensure that resources can more flexibly be deployed in the emergency response).

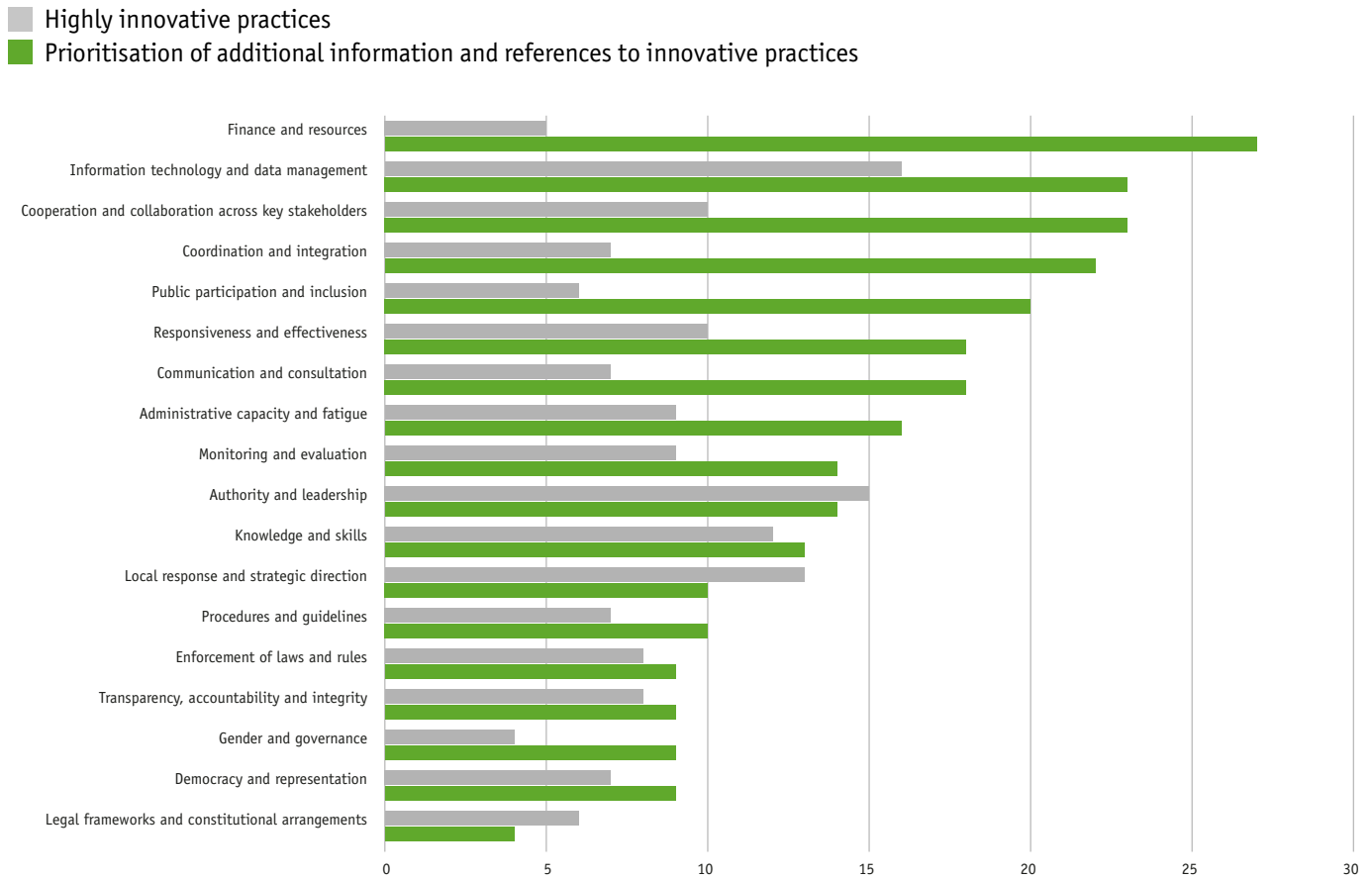
⁶ For example, changes in city government's structures (precise designation of responsibilities, tasks, functions, etc.), human resources (skill, recruitment, training, well-being, etc.), and/or systems and tools (checklists, ICT tools, manuals, etc.) that increase the ability of the city government to deal with and sustain its functioning during an emergency (e.g. offering staff working on the pandemic response well-being and support services).

⁷ The innovative and flexible sourcing of additional resources (financial, healthcare, personnel, etc.), and/or applying innovative techniques to efficiently budget these resources for an effective emergency response (e.g. negotiating with local factories to retool their production lines and switch to manufacturing medical equipment).

⁸ For example, the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in the emergency response and recovery plans to ensure a gender-sensitive response that acknowledges that women often experience the impacts of the virus and response measures differently, and to ensure that they are not disproportionately affected by the emergency (e.g. establishing a taskforce to check in on vulnerable women during lockdown.)

⁹ The addition of new emergency amendments to city- or regional-level legal frameworks that enable an effective response to emergency situations (e.g. amendments to the city charter to enable rapid reallocation of budget resources during an emergency, or permanent changes to emergency planning acts to establish a framework for managing concurrent emergencies, should they occur).

Figure 6: Priority information needs and innovative practices by emergency governance domain



Of particular interest to this policy brief is the identification of emergency governance domains for which the demand for additional information and references to innovative practices is greatest (Figure 6). Cities and regional governments report a particular need for more insights on finance and resources, a clear priority for about half of the respondents. Significant demand, and a priority for more than 30 per cent of surveyed governments, exists in relation to information technology and data management, cooperation and collaboration across key stakeholders, coordination and integration,¹⁰ and public participation and inclusion.¹¹

Figure 6 also illustrates how this demand for information matches the frequency of innovations within the same emergency governance domain. A good match exists, for example, for information technology and data management, authority and leadership, and knowledge and skills,¹² featuring similar levels of interest as well as innovative practices. By contrast, finance and resources, public participation and inclusion, and communication and consultation¹³ are characterised by considerable information needs but many fewer innovative practices and related experiences that could be shared among cities internationally.

The findings above establish an important prioritisation of future research activities by the Emergency Governance Initiative: to bridge some of the existing knowledge gaps and identify innovative practices within emergency governance domains that will be most useful to city and regional decision-makers. For this policy brief, the findings underpin the choice of the four governance innovation case profiles presented in Part 2.

¹⁰ The introduction of effective measures to coordinate and integrate emergency measures across different tiers of government (national, state-level, municipal, etc.) and different departments (health, housing, social security, etc.) For example, establishing a joint body with other subnational governments to purchase and distribute medical equipment according to regional need.

¹¹ For example, the use of innovative techniques of public participation to involve citizens in designing the emergency response and recovery, and to ensure that the emergency response is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all sections of society (e.g. the establishment of neighbourhood response committees that are in constant contact with city officials).

¹² The innovative sourcing and use of new knowledge and skills to inform the emergency response (e.g. the establishment of ad hoc virtual capacity building programmes and mentoring schemes between experienced emergency response staff and colleagues with limited knowledge and previous experience).

¹³ The use of new channels of communication and consultation with citizens and stakeholders (e.g. the regular use of online citizen surveys to come to a better understanding of the issues associated with social distancing and lockdown measures).

PART 2 – CASE PROFILES: EMERGENCY GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS

This part features four emergency governance innovations led by cities and regions as part of their COVID-19 responses. These innovations cut across consensus building around strategic recovery efforts (Barcelona, Spain), communication with citizens (Bogotá, Colombia), multi-level governance (Gauteng, South Africa) and the use of data and technology (Seoul, South Korea). Each of these cases is presented via short and standardised profiles.

The profiles are based on interviews conducted with prominent local government officials involved in the emergency response and complemented by additional desktop research. They provide a first-hand account of experiences governing the COVID-19 emergency over the past months and draw out lessons that may be of relevance for other local governments. Given the rapid unfolding of the current emergency situation, these case profiles rely heavily on the perspectives and personal experiences of a small number of individuals working on the front lines in their cities. They should therefore not be seen as comprehensive and conclusive profiles of the emergency response in that particular city or region, but rather as snapshots of emerging innovative governance approaches and how these have been experienced by key individuals involved in their design and delivery.

These profiles demonstrate that local governments around the world have responded with creativity and determination to the COVID-19 crisis. They have both **repurposed existing institutional structures** to tackle emerging challenges, and also **pioneered new ways of communicating and decision-making**. It remains to be seen how many of these governance innovations will survive the immediate emergency and become more permanent features of urban governance.

Some recurring themes that emerge across all four case profiles include the **importance of working closely with local communities**, not just to ensure that new policies are responsive to local needs but also to engender a **sense of ownership** for new measures being implemented to contain the spread of the disease. The importance of **high-quality data and analysis** was also repeatedly highlighted, not just to track the disease but also to understand the effectiveness of specific measures and the needs and concerns of individual communities.

The governments profiled recognised how essential it was to maintain a **high level of trust between the administration and the public** during this challenging and fraught time, and how quickly emergency measures may conflict with democratic freedoms, requiring a heightened level of scrutiny and a **commitment to transparency and accountability**.

Another common theme was the flexibility that local governments have shown in **adjusting existing institutional structures** to effectively support new emergency governance measures, drawing on pre-existing expertise within government to find solutions to new and rapidly developing challenges but also **openly engaging new stakeholders** from the private and third sectors. Local governments are stepping up in significant ways, but also recognising that the magnitude of the health, economic and social crisis means that they cannot do it alone – the pandemic is a **shared problem that requires shared responsibility and shared solutions**.

2.1 THE BARCELONA DEAL: BUILDING A CITY-WIDE CONSENSUS TO GUIDE THE COVID-19 RECOVERY

Key facts: Municipality of Barcelona

Population – city/metro (2019) ^a	1.3 m/5.6 m
Total area – city ^a	102 km ²
GDP per capita (2016) ^b	€43,700
City budget (2019) ^c	€2.6 bn
Percentage of budget generated by the city (2019) ^d	43%
Leadership	Indirectly elected Mayor (Ada Colau, Barcelona En Comú, 2015–present)
City council	Municipal council with 41 directly elected councillors
Voter turnout (2019) ^e	66%
People working for city government (2019) ^f	14,400
Governance spheres (local to supranational)	10 Districts, Municipality of Barcelona, Barcelona Metropolitan Area, Barcelona Provincial Council, Autonomous Region of Catalonia, Spain, European Union

COVID-19 status: Municipality of Barcelona*

First reported case – Barcelona ^g	31/01/20
Confirmed cases – Barcelona ^g	18,539
Number of deaths – Barcelona ^g	4,281
Confirmed cases – Spain ^h	272,421
Cases per 1M – Spain ⁱ	5,827
Deaths per 1M – Spain ^j	609

*as of 28/07/20

Emergency Governance Domain: Cooperation and collaboration across key stakeholders

This profile draws on an interview conducted in July 2020 with Laia Bonet, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona for the 2030 Agenda, Digital Transition, Sports, Territorial and Metropolitan Coordination, and International Relations.

Overview

The 'Barcelona Deal' (Pacte per Barcelona) is a city-wide project to develop a collective roadmap out of the COVID-19 emergency. The Barcelona Deal was launched by the municipal government in April 2020 via a series of virtual roundtables that brought together more than 200 stakeholder groups across all political parties, the private sector, unions, universities, NGOs and civil society groups. The objective is to collectively define the principles that should guide the recovery from the economic crisis over the next 18 months. Five working groups with representation from diverse sectors developed key implementation measures, which were then brought together in a single city-wide strategic plan. The Barcelona Deal was formally published on 21 July 2020, with most participating stakeholders signing the document, although there were some that criticised the document for being too broad and not having a clear budget or timetable attached to the proposed measures.

What are the main objectives?

The Barcelona Deal's objective is to **reach a consensus across a wide variety of city stakeholders** to forge a path towards recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. This decision-making structure emphasises the **importance of dialogue and co-responsibility of all participants in translating that vision for the city into concrete policies and programmes**. At the core of the Barcelona Deal are 10 principles that structure the vision, as well as 10 priority objectives defined and agreed upon by all stakeholders.¹⁴ Over the next 18 months, these 10 priorities will guide the development of recovery measures and actions, including a municipal budget for economic and social recovery of the city.

What governance challenges does it address?

The Barcelona Deal emerged out of a recognition that the magnitude of the health, social and economic crises will require bold new approaches based on a vision of the future of the city shared by a wide range of urban citizens. In Barcelona, this meant overcoming the challenges of **partisan divides and ideological differences** to create real consensus around strategic objectives. Barcelona's pre-existing participatory mechanisms of governance typically require the passage of a municipal law to decide who can sit on participatory councils and have proven too inflexible and outdated to meet the speed and scale of the current emergency. In contrast to these **often slow and rigid decision-making structures**, the Barcelona Deal has involved the successful development of a flexible, participatory mechanism that did not require any changes to existing laws or norms.

Who are the key actors involved?

The City of Barcelona brought together a wide range of city stakeholders to establish the Barcelona Deal. This included the deputy mayors, representatives of all seven political parties in the city council, and more than 200 actors from a diverse array of economic, social, cultural, educational and scientific sectors. A first group composed of the government and diverse civil-society stakeholders focused on identifying concrete measures to reactivate the economy and strengthen the social fabric of the city, and a second group made up of all seven political parties represented in the city council worked on a new consensus to draw up a municipal budget for the next 18 months.

How is it innovative?

The Barcelona Deal is a **co-creative, participatory and inclusive process** that connects diverse stakeholders who may not have otherwise collaborated on a strategic vision for the city. The city has made a particular effort to **invite new stakeholders to the table** who may not previously been involved in formal participatory processes or engaged with one another. This includes digital economy stakeholders from the private sector, community organisations and international organisations based in the city, such as UCLG and Metropolis. An important focus was to actively include smaller grassroots organisations to ensure that social cohesion across all sectors of society would be strengthened.

“The process of building consensus among all city stakeholders and political actors is as important as the output.”

To manage the complexity of coordinating this ambitious stakeholder engagement and break down traditional policy siloes, the overall task of developing a recovery roadmap was broken down into a ‘main table’ as well as **five thematic working groups** (economic recovery; digital economy; urban model; social rights; and culture, education, science, international and sports). The working groups encouraged involvement of a larger number of stakeholders, who could contribute to thematic areas aligned with their interests and expertise.

From the beginning, the city has emphasised the **ideals of co-responsibility and ownership**. Following agreement on a set of priorities, each stakeholder takes responsibility for communicating the Deal’s key messages and channelling its implementation into their own sector. To increase overall ownership of the process, Barcelona has worked to ensure that every stakeholder is given the opportunity to send in proposals and contribute to the co-creation of the Deal. As another expression of their commitment to inclusion, the municipality invited opposition parties to chair the different working groups, recognising the overriding importance of representation, collaboration and compromise in decision-making processes.

What are emerging lessons?

Barcelona has demonstrated that **with some flexibility and political will, it is possible to do things differently when it comes to participatory mechanisms of governance**. The process has allowed the city to learn new ways of working that foreground coordination, solidarity, collaboration and compromise across and between different sectors of society, political parties and departments of government. These new decision-making processes may not have been so successful had they occurred outside of the urgent context of the pandemic, but the lessons from this experience will inform other participatory processes in the city, with some of the stakeholders in the working groups requesting to keep those spaces open to enable follow-up and future exchanges.

“Even in a very difficult situation, we have found an opportunity to learn and experiment.”

Of course, trying to bring such a diverse group of voices together to create a common vision for the recovery from the crisis is not without its challenges. As Mayor Colau admitted during the publication of the final Barcelona Deal, there is a need for further dialogue to ensure the measures set out in the deal will be achievable and a concrete budget and timetable will still have to be agreed. Nevertheless, Barcelona has learnt that compromise is a useful tool and is constructing a way out of the crisis, centred around a shared vision of a green, digital, liveable and socially inclusive city.

¹⁴ The 10 priority objectives of the Barcelona Deal are: 1. Reactivate and strengthen the productive and commercial fabric of Barcelona, as the driving force of the economy and employment. 2. Foster resilient and innovative economic sectors, fostering diversification, through the acceleration of the digital transformation and technological capacity of the city. 3. Promote community action by strengthening social services and their articulation with the social fabric and network of stakeholders, to respond to the crisis and the new vulnerabilities that are being added to the existing inequalities, focusing on the role of care in our society. 4. Convert housing into an economic, social, and environmental response to the crisis. 5. Strengthen the city’s health and biomedical system, and thus contribute to improve public health and consolidate Barcelona’s status as an advanced, safe and healthy city. 6. Move towards a new urban model more based on proximity, promoting sustainable mobility, the reduction of emissions and the renaturalisation of the city, and reaffirming the commitment to addressing the climate emergency. 7. Promote the building of an education system and an educational network that ensure equal opportunities as the basic tool to ensure social equity. Promote the scientific capital of the city and its value in defining the strategies of the future and consolidating Barcelona as a research platform. 8. Promote access to culture, strengthening the city’s cultural and creative capital, as a primary asset for Barcelona, and as a factor of cohesion and international projection. 9. Ensure universal access for all citizens to sports as a tool for public health and the construction of social capital. 10. Consolidate Barcelona’s active role in the international context, focusing on city networks, cooperation and multilateralism.

2.2 BOGOTÁ'S CITIZEN CULTURE: ESTABLISHING TRUST THROUGH OPEN COMMUNICATION

Key facts: Capital District of Bogotá

Population – city ^k /metro ^k (2019)	7.4 m/10.7 m
Total area ^l	1,595 km ²
GDP per capita (2018) ^m	€7,109 (30.6 m COP)
City budget (2020) ⁿ	€4.4 bn (18.93 tn COP)
Percentage of budget generated by the city (2020) ⁿ	57.3%
Leadership ^o	Directly elected Mayor (Claudia López Hernández, Green Alliance Party, 2020)
City council ^o	Municipal Council with 45 directly elected city councillors
Voter turnout in Colombia (2019) ^p	55%
People working for city government (2020) ^q	60,500
Governance spheres (local to supranational)	20 local administrative boards, Capital District of Bogotá, Department of Cundinamarca, Colombia

COVID-19 status: Capital District of Bogotá*

First reported case – Bogotá ^r	06/03/20
Confirmed cases – Bogotá ^s	86,857
Total number of deaths – Bogotá ^s	2,307
Confirmed cases – Colombia ^s	257,101
Cases per 1M – Colombia ^t	4,893
Deaths per 1M – Colombia ^u	172

* as of 28/07/20

Emergency Governance Domain: Communication and consultation

This profile draws on an interview conducted in July 2020 with Luz Amparo Medina Gerena, Director of International Relations for the Capital District of Bogotá.

Overview

From the very onset of the COVID-19 crisis, Bogotá's communication strategy has promoted a two-way conversation between the city government and the public to increase awareness and individual responsibility for the measures that have been introduced. This builds on a wider public policy approach by the recently elected Mayor to build a new 'citizen culture'. For example, ahead of the nationwide lockdown in late March, Bogotá conducted a 'lockdown drill' to help officials and the public prepare for the implications of long-term social distancing. In addition to communicating the urgency of the situation, this also enabled the city to conduct surveys and interviews with citizens to gain an understanding of the reasons for people's behaviour and to use this learning to inform the next steps of the response. Since then, the city government has consistently liaised with the public, providing regular updates on the situation through a web portal and regular live online sessions hosted by the Mayor, taking on board citizens' feedback about new measures. By adopting a communications approach that is embedded in ideals of honesty, transparency and accountability, the city government is investing in its relationship with citizens and seeking to strengthen mutual trust.

What are the main objectives?

The Mayor's strategy from the beginning has been to make **the health and well-being of citizens** the overriding priority objective. The COVID-19 emergency has provided Bogotá with a unique moment to advance the city's wider **vision of building a new 'citizen culture'**. The idea is to empower citizens to be part of the solution to the city's problems by emphasising individual and shared responsibility in achieving social transformations. Bogotá's clear and direct communication strategy has focused on raising awareness of the COVID-19 emergency among the public and **empowering individuals to feel a sense of ownership** in relation to the measures being introduced. Sharing data with the public, to **ensure a transparent approach**, has been an essential aspect of this strategy.

"The pandemic was an opportunity to make it clear why it was important to have a deeper involvement of citizens in public affairs."

What governance challenges does it address?

The COVID-19 emergency broke out only months after the mayoral elections, challenging the new government to take bold decisions early on in its tenure and trial a new approach to citizen involvement in public affairs. The city government was faced with the challenge of **persuading the public to trust in their approach** to the pandemic, which can be challenging in a

context where trust in the state is generally low.¹⁵ Compliance with the new lockdown measures being introduced could not simply be assumed, especially given the very real economic and social consequences that these measures have had. A governance approach that requests strict adherence to a range of new rules, without thinking carefully and sensitively about the **complex and context-specific relations between the state and the people**, would probably not have been as successful in engaging the public. A survey in May suggested that 74% of the population supported the strict lockdown measures.

“The trust in the state and public services is not necessarily very high, so what we want to do is to take this as an opportunity to improve.”

Who are the key actors involved?

Bogotá’s communications strategy has been informed by engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders. The Mayor proactively connected with representatives from the construction and trade unions, show business, restaurants, news organisations and the scientific community, among others, to learn from their expertise, and collaborate on the government’s strategy.

The city government’s communication with the public in relation to the pandemic has been highly centralised. Only two senior city government officials, the Mayor and the city’s Secretary of Health, have been responsible for the delivery of key messages to citizens. As the pandemic evolved, the Secretary of Home Affairs became an increasingly important actor. The remaining cabinet members and government institutions amplified and spread the key messages for the management of the pandemic. This has embedded an important aspect of consistency and stability in Bogotá’s daily communications with citizens, which works towards building a new sense of trust between the public and the city government.

How is it innovative?

In late March, and ahead of any other city in Colombia, Bogotá staged a three-day mandatory lockdown drill to gauge the public’s understanding of the measures and to help the government understand the public’s needs. During the drill, data was collected through surveys and interviews, with the aim of understanding the challenges and fears residents faced and the main reasons why people might be leaving their homes. The drill was the first expression of Bogotá’s two-way communication strategy, which **prioritises listening and learning to ensure that there is a sense of co-responsibility** between the government and the public.

This emphasis on listening and receiving public feedback has continued throughout the city’s response. The Mayor hosts regular live online sessions using social media to engage the public for this purpose. Communication also takes place through local TV channels and radio stations, community

media, scans of social media responses, audio announcements, mobile billboards and street-level educational performance art to **make the core messages accessible to all citizens** and use a pedagogical approach that emphasises caring for oneself and for others.

“Feminism is a very specific and strategic agenda in this administration; the whole approach of taking care of people to respond to the pandemic is very feminist, if you like.”

Throughout the pandemic, the Mayor has displayed strong leadership at the forefront of the emergency response. Mayor López has **encouraged accountability of the government to the public throughout the emergency**, publicly acknowledging and taking responsibility for initiatives that did not work and committing to learning and improving.

What are emerging lessons?

Bogotá has been pioneering the **integration of ‘citizen culture’ into public policy** and has placed a real emphasis on pedagogy for behavioural change. In addition to using data and clear communication tools to engage with citizens and explain why a strict lockdown was in everyone’s interest, the city also uses social research to understand what people’s needs and concerns are and then continuously adjust its policies.

Bogotá’s communications approach has worked in various ways towards **building trust between the public and the city government** during a challenging time. The Mayor’s **acknowledgement of success and failure**, at both an individual and city level, is crucial. Early on, the city trialled a strategy of separating who was permitted to leave the house by gender, but quickly abandoned this approach when it became clear that this was not effective, and the Mayor admitted that this had been a mistake. This level of honesty is uncommon among city leaders and reinforces the city’s enduring commitment to building better relationships with citizens, while also humanising the crisis and its response. In a similar way, a strategic achievement of the municipality has been the **centralisation of the delivery of key messages on the pandemic** and the evolving situation in the city. This has ensured that a consistent voice engages regularly with the public and provides clear, evidence-based updates on the situation in ways that are easy to understand, thus further strengthening public trust in the city government during the pandemic.

¹⁵ In a public perception survey conducted in 2019, only 16% of citizens indicated that they trusted the previous mayor, and only 19% approved of his management of the city; <https://bogotacomovamos.org/encuesta-de-percepcion-ciudadana-2019/>

2.3 GAUTENG MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE: REGIONAL COORDINATION OF COVID-19 RESPONSES

Key facts: Gauteng Province

Population – province (2020) ^y	15.5 m
Total area – province ^w	18,182 km ²
GDP per capita (2017) ^x	€5,741 (R111,171)
Provincial budget (2019) ^y	€683 bn (R145 bn)
Percentage of budget generated by the Province (2019) ^z	5%
Leadership ^{aa}	Indirectly elected Premier (David Makhura, African National Congress, 2014–present)
Gauteng Provincial Legislature ^{aa}	Unicameral body of 73 members elected through party list proportional representation
Voter turnout (2019) ^{bb}	68%
People working for Provincial Government (2010) ^{cc}	163,300
Governance spheres (local to supranational) ^{dd}	Three metropolitan municipalities and two district municipalities (composed of seven local municipalities), Gauteng Provincial Government, South Africa

COVID-19 status: Gauteng Province*

First reported case – Gauteng ^{ee}	07/03/20
Confirmed cases – Gauteng ^{ff}	160,154
Total number of deaths – Gauteng ^{ff}	1,564
Confirmed cases – South Africa ^{ff}	445,433
Cases per 1M – South Africa ^{gg}	7,504
Deaths per 1M – South Africa ^{hh}	117

* as of 28/07/20

Emergency Governance Domain: Coordination and Integration

This profile draws on an interview conducted in July 2020 with Mduzuzi Mbada, Head of the Policy Research & Advisory Services Unit, Office of The Premier of Gauteng Province.

Overview

Gauteng, South Africa's most populous province, successfully established a new operational model for multi-level emergency governance, addressing the challenge of coordinating the emergency response across a heavily decentralised system of governance. This model has centred around the provision of clear strategic leadership at the provincial level through the establishment of institutional systems and multi-level reporting structures. This has been combined with a data-driven approach to decision-making that has enabled strategic responses to be appropriately tailored to local needs.

At the outbreak of the pandemic, Gauteng was in the fortunate position of having pre-established and relatively coherent coordination mechanisms for emergency governance. The Disaster Management Act of 2002 provided a comprehensive national legal framework for the coordination of emergency responses between national institutions, provincial state bodies and municipal authorities. Under this Act, each of these levels of government had been required to establish Disaster Management Centres consistent with a national framework and to prepare disaster management plans. As a result, the basic foundations for the emergence of coordination mechanisms and vertical reporting structures had been in place prior to the outbreak. This facilitated a rapid emergency governance response and early coordination with civil society and private sector organisations.

What are the main objectives?

Gauteng's approach to multi-level emergency governance aims to support a **cohesive and unified strategic direction at the provincial level**, while also enabling local decision-makers to **manage the situation in their areas with context-specific policies and strategies**.

What governance challenges does it address?

The **decentralised system of governance** in the province, and **the spread of the virus beyond administrative boundaries**, required a tightly coordinated response among various institutional levels. Gauteng is governed by a legislature and an executive constituted by a Premier and Executive Council. The Province itself is divided into two district municipalities and three larger metropolitan municipalities, which are all centres of **rapid urban growth**: the Metropolitan Municipalities of Tshwane, Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni. These municipalities are each governed by a municipal council headed by a mayor.

Who are the key actors involved?

The institutional response is led by the Provincial Coronavirus Command Council, constituted by the Premier and the Executive Council. This is supported by the District Coronavirus Command Councils, attended by each of the municipal mayors. A third, administrative group, which is made up of the Director General of the province, the heads of departments and city managers, meets on a daily basis to monitor the emergency situation, the state of readiness across the province and the impact of the emergency response plans. With this concerted effort to coordinate between the provincial and municipal leaders, a new operational model for emergency governance has emerged in the province.

The Provincial Command Council takes much of its shape from the strategies outlined by the National Command Council, and this in turn directs the work of the District Command Councils, ensuring an integrated emergency response. However, Gauteng's COVID-19 response has also been heavily tailored to local specificities.

How is it innovative?

The originality of this approach is the **combination of the central strategic direction from the provincial government and the level of granularity at which the emergency response is tailored to local contexts**. The localised element of this approach has been largely enabled by the administration's research partnership with the Gauteng City Region Observatory (GCRO), an initiative made up of academic institutions and subnational government representatives in the province.

In March, shortly after the emergence of the first cases of coronavirus in the province, the GCRO published a spatial mapping of vulnerability to COVID-19 across Gauteng to identify localised risk factors that could accelerate infection transmission and deepen the socio-economic impact of the virus. They have also created an **integrated COVID-19 dashboard** so that decision-makers can monitor transmissions at the ward level and coordinate strategic planning.

With the availability of this data, Gauteng has adopted a ward-based strategy to curb the spread of infections, particularly in informal settlements. This approach involves teams of ward-based workers who raise awareness of the virus at the local level and work with communities to stop transmission. The significant **investment into data collection and analysis** has enabled regional decision-makers to design effective localised responses at rapid speed, while in keeping with the wider strategic direction of the Provincial and National Command Councils.

“We are not just coming from the top; we are also working on the basis of what people are saying and ensuring that their concerns are being heard.”

A further element of Gauteng's localised decision-making has been an emphasis on engagement with citizens and stakeholders. Although the Command Councils have a largely top-down structure, Gauteng's leadership has made a concerted effort to ensure that citizens and stakeholders are consulted throughout the emergency planning response. The Premier has been regularly engaging with civil society organisations to understand their concerns and to better ensure that the pandemic response is working for citizens.

Gauteng has also developed a **flexible approach to emergency budgeting**, which has been used to direct resources from across the region to address problems that have arisen in one specific area. This is designed to address localised issues at their outset to prevent them spilling over and becoming larger problems that affect the whole region. The importance of this flexibility is most pronounced in relation to control of infection clusters, but it has also been applied to other social and economic problems.

What are emerging lessons?

There are two critical elements of success in this approach. First is the **emphasis on focused leadership and tight coordination mechanisms**, which is replicated throughout the governance structure to create a unified and coherent emergency response system. Second is the **data-driven, ward-based response** that was enabled by the provincial government's partnership with other tiers of government and universities in the region through the GCRO. Together, these elements have resulted in a truly innovative approach to multi-level emergency governance that both offers a clear strategic direction from the centre and facilitates a flexible context-specific response at the local level.

“COVID-19 has made it possible for people to put aside their political party ideologies and instead focus on responding to the problems that we are faced with as a country and as a region.”

2.4 SEOUL DATA ANALYTICS: DEPLOYING BIG DATA AND TECHNOLOGY TO RESPOND TO COVID-19

Key facts: Seoul Metropolitan Government

Population – city ⁱⁱ / metro ^{jj} (2020)	10 m/26 m
Total area – city ^{kk}	605 km ²
GDP per capita (2019) ^{ll}	€27,374 (38.3 m KRW)
City budget (2020) ^{mm}	€28.3 bn (39.5 tn KRW)
Percentage budget generated by the city (2020) ⁿⁿ	76%
Leadership	Directly elected Mayor (acting Mayor Seo Jung-hyup, Independent, 2020)
City council	Metropolitan Council with 110 directly elected councillors
Voter turnout (2018) ^{oo}	60%
People working for city government (2019) ^{pp}	10,530
Governance spheres (local to supranational) ^{qq}	25 Districts, Seoul Metropolitan Government, Gyeonggi Provincial Government, South Korea

COVID-19 status: Seoul Metropolitan Government*

First reported case – Seoul ^{rr}	08/03/20
Confirmed cases – Seoul ^{ss}	1,574
Total number of deaths – Seoul ^{tt}	11
Confirmed cases – South Korea ^{ss}	14,175
Cases per 1M – South Korea ^{tt}	276
Deaths per 1M – South Korea ^{qq}	6

* as of 28/07/20

Emergency Governance Domain: Information technology and data management

This profile draws on an interview conducted in July 2020 with Ji-hyun Kim, Manager of the Smart City Division of the Smart City Policy Bureau, Seoul Metropolitan Government.

Overview

The Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) has mobilised its internal resources and technological capacities while collaborating with different levels of government to develop a rapid and transparent contact tracing strategy in response to the COVID-19 emergency. Although the use of big data and technology in contact tracing is a nationwide strategy, Seoul has been able to rely on its own established institutions to drive local implementation. The Seoul Smart City Platform (SSCP) acts as the central dashboard that allows the SMG to analyse the data to inform and coordinate the emergency response across government departments. Collected data is also publicly shared to ensure the public has as much information as possible about the current risk levels across the city. As a result of the successful collection of large amounts of data in near-real time, Seoul has so far been able to avoid a mass outbreak of the virus.

What are the main objectives?

The fundamental aim of contact tracing is to rapidly reduce the transmission of the virus in the city's population by **using big data and engaging the public via innovative technologies**, such as the SSCP, to participate in contact tracing. From the beginning of the pandemic, Seoul has tried to be open with its citizens about the outbreak, disclosing all the information they had collected in a transparent manner in an effort to address concerns about data privacy.

“The coronavirus big data will be analysed with AI technology to anticipate future outbreaks and high-risk groups of the virus.”

Seoul plans to use the data collected to **prepare for the next stage of the pandemic**, learning how to live with the virus in the long term. The Big Data Division, a department within the SMG, has conducted a socio-economic analysis that will **help to predict the next outbreak**, understand which areas will be most affected and inform policy on issues such as financial support. Further investments in smart city infrastructure will also take place in the upcoming 6S projects.¹⁶

What governance challenges does it address?

The existence of **sectoral siloes in the SMG used to prevent information from being shared** across different departments. The Seoul Smart City Platform was developed in response to these challenges of departmental coordination and data sharing. The platform collects and makes accessible information from 300 administrative systems and services for all to view. This is a prime example of how Seoul uses technology to create rapid institutional coordination across government departments.

A challenge for governments responding to a highly contagious and rapidly spreading disease is to maintain a **high degree of transparency when it comes to data and information**. The situation is constantly changing, so big data and technology can help the city to recognise patterns and act swiftly to contain local outbreaks. The capacity of the SSCP has been expanded in response to the COVID-19 emergency and the **increased need for coordination and transparency with the public**. The visual dashboard is accessible at five subway stations and online. It allows citizens to access the latest data on confirmed cases and provides maps to help citizens locate local testing centres.

Who are the key actors involved?

At the national level, the Korea Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) is the focal organisation responsible for contact tracing. Seoul follows the overall guidance of the KCDC; however, at the city level, Seoul has its own Infectious Disease Control Division within the SMG that traces confirmed cases in cooperation with the Big Data Division.

How is it innovative?

The speed, accuracy and integration of Seoul's contact tracing system sets it apart. Following experiences with the 2005 MERS outbreak the city had already established a system of testing and contact management, as well as laws to access citizens' personal information and enable rapid contact tracing. The contact tracing approach in Seoul relies on a **combination of data points** – GPS, credit card records, medical records and CCTV – and has led to accurate confirmation of cases, their movements and most recent contacts to prevent further transmission of the virus. **Contacts can be traced in a mere ten minutes**. This is in stark contrast to the traditional approach to contact tracing, which requires a huge amount of human resources to interview people individually, a time-consuming and less accurate process. The high level of digital connectivity in Seoul also means that, in cases of mass infection where all contacts cannot be identified, a network connection history of nearby base stations have been used to send out emergency alerts to local citizens, notifying them of the outbreak and directing them to facilities to get tested.

In addition to the rapid deployment of contact tracing, the expanded capacity of the SSCP in the pandemic to be used as a platform for coordinating with citizens also demonstrates the city's ability to **swiftly pivot mechanisms already in place to support the emergency response**. This institutional flexibility can play an important role in enabling city governments to respond more effectively to unexpected crises and redeploy their resources and existing expertise to tackle urgent issues.

“The use of data has always been one of the big pillars of our governance, so it was very logical for us to make use of our expertise in data and technology as soon as the COVID-19 pandemic began.”

Seoul's **investments in digital data infrastructure**, together with the high level of connectivity in the city, have enabled the real-time dissemination of information to the public throughout the pandemic. Furthermore, **public participation and engagement** have been integral to the contact tracing strategy. The sharing of information collected by government officials allows citizens to track the movements of confirmed cases against their own routes and make individual decisions on testing and quarantine. All self-quarantined citizens and entrants from overseas have had to install a mobile application to report symptoms, generating additional data for the SMG to use as part of the emergency response. One of the city's next five-year goals is to bridge the digital divide, an aim driven by the idea that access to information is a public right.

What are emerging lessons?

The **institutional flexibility and absence of excessive bureaucracy** present in the SMG has been important in allowing Seoul to respond to the evolving emergency. The SSCP platform was easily repurposed to fulfil the demand for unprecedented government coordination and to produce a coordinated emergency response in the city of Seoul.

“We are using technology to be more transparent and provide more effective services to our citizens.”

Throughout the pandemic, the SMG have been careful not to infringe on the privacy of Seoul's residents and to put in place systems to ensure high standards of data protection. The data accessible to the public is anonymised and locations can only be tracked for a certain period. The public's experience with MERS and the democratic origins of these laws that allow the government access to personal data contribute to overall public support for the publishing of this information.

Despite this, privacy concerns have been raised by some researchers and human-rights activists, including the National Human Rights Commission of Korea, about the disclosure of private information and its specificity. A concern is that publishing this information could allow social stigma to become prevalent if the data identified infected individuals. Although the use of big data and technology to tackle certain urban problems has been reinforced in Seoul following its effective application in the context of the COVID-19 emergency, **protecting users from infringement of privacy rights will remain a key issue** for the next innovation phase in cities leading big data analytics.

¹⁶ The 6S Projects form part of Seoul's efforts to prepare for the post-COVID era. This involves the use of innovative ICT technology (Smart Seoul Platform – 6S) to bring about sustainable development in the city and improve citizens' quality of life.

EGI CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

The EGI Critical Perspectives are opinion pieces commissioned from international scholars and practitioners thinking about the implications of complex, global emergencies on the governance of cities and regions. They provide an opportunity for a more high-level reflection on some of the big shifts that are taking place in relation to urban governance, and complement the direct experiences and lessons emerging from the local government level.

Cities and Sovereignty in the Age of Pandemics: Scaling Governance for Effective Crisis Management

Diane E. Davis
Graham Denyer Willis

The coronavirus pandemic has thrown much of the world into disarray, with cities and their residents suffering disproportionately. To deal with the health crisis, various strategies have surfaced to address and repair ruptures in the urban social and spatial fabric wrought by COVID-19. The variegated regulatory or policy reactions to the pandemic (i.e. shutdowns, quarantines, contact-tracing, social or physical distancing, remaining 'open') bring to the forefront what scholars have long noted: cities are unequal and have different densities, all neighbourhoods are not alike, and the same health crisis will follow differential pathways to recovery or reoccurrence depending on urban social, spatial and economic specificities. Those cities that are suffering most also appear to manifest high degrees of poverty and inequality, coupled with degrees of density and spatial form that splinter along political, spatial, and even social class lines to create pockets of extreme disadvantage. In such cities, deaths are highest in impoverished communities, whether in the centre or the periphery, where natural- and built-environmental characteristics speed contagion and magnify residents' pre-existing health vulnerabilities.

The lessons are clear. Susceptibility to the virus is not universal across cityscapes. Rather, it is socially produced through historic patterns of urbanisation, exacerbated by policy failures to protect the city's most marginalised and exposed neighbourhoods and citizens.

Cities in the Global South are a distinctive category in this regard. Yet they have no monopoly on poverty, inequality and socio-spatial exclusion reinforced by infrastructural boundaries and cultural or employment borders that separate the haves from the have-nots. From London to Lagos pockets of disadvantage endure, and the nature of urban density and fluidity promotes contagion within them. Because of this, the pandemic might be seen as the great global 'equaliser' among cities that until recently have been cavalierly distinguished by their location in the North versus the South.

Whether in rich or poor countries, cities are sites of flows – of people, goods and viruses – that must be tracked, monitored and revealed if governing authorities are to effectively confront the pandemic. This is precisely why the city and not merely the 'wealth of nations' is a critical starting point for policy action,

even if national developmental context will inevitably determine the resources available to guide policy responses as well as the urgency of action at this scale, and even if global governance intelligence must also supplant these efforts.

The city, of course, is an analytically slippery concept. Urban areas grow through extractive relationships with their surrounding hinterlands, often referred to in rural–urban terms or through the lens of metropolitan and regional governance, and which also involve local–global interactions. As such, to put the city at the centre of deliberations about how governing authorities should respond to the pandemic will require a rethinking of the territorialities of sovereignty in the contemporary era.

So why have we been slow to reflect on the most appropriate 'sovereignty' or governance arrangements to address the current pandemic?

Although its definitions have varied historically, 'sovereignty' is thought to have a core meaning, which is supreme authority within a territory – with the national state usually considered the principal political institution in which formal sovereignty is embodied. Yet governing institutions that draw their authority and action repertoires from a preoccupation with the health of nations may not be sufficiently prepared to address health challenges at local, city or metropolitan scales, where the pandemic is wreaking extreme economic and social havoc for the urban economy, society and politics. Complicating matters, we are beginning to see crisis management directives emanating from national governing institutions that may even produce pushback from authorities and institutions whose mandate it is to respond to challenges unfolding at these more 'local' scales (city, suburb, state, region and so on), as well as vice versa. To the extent that conflict rather than synergy typifies relationships across various territorial scales of governance, constructive or coordinated policy action is hard to achieve. We are thus facing a crisis of governance as much as a health crisis.

To ask who should be driving the pandemic policy agenda, at what scale of governance, with what publics in mind, and on the basis of which historically mandated institutional arrangements is not only to consider the possibility that urban and metropolitan governance must be strengthened to address the current pandemic. It also calls for a reflection on the concept of subsidiarity, enshrined in European Union Law, which suggests that social and political issues should be dealt with at the most immediate (local) level that is consistent with their resolution.

In considering what a strengthened 'local' sovereignty might look like at the scale of the city or the metropolitan regions, it is useful to draw from the governance literature that focuses on just, inclusive and democratic cities, in which the concept of 'urban regime' is used to denote a set of long-term rules, institutions, identities, power relations, practices and discourses that shape citizenship and governance. It also is important to understand how such practices align with our understanding of how cities function as organisms, including their connections to other scales of determination from the regional and national to the global. Castells once described cities as distinctive nodal densities in a global 'space of flows'.¹⁷ These densities are of people, of money, of data and of a global political economy that

must flow in space even as it rests in densities. Similarly, this kind of flow inevitably transcends national borders, superseding them in both economic and political terms, rendering national state-centric politics, policies and borders weakened.

All of this underpins the paradoxes at play when juxtaposing urban against national sovereignty, particularly as refracted through the lens of pandemic policy action intended to limit virus flows spread by people moving through space. Many will assume that 'closure' is a question of governance and security at the scale of the nation-state. Indeed, resurgent populist nationalisms imply that this is the case. Yet because the space of flows transcends national borders, even as it gives life to cities and the people and goods that sustain urbanisation, the securitisation of countries at and through national borders is an insufficient response. Closing or tightening national borders deals with neither the actual spatial paradigm of the global political economy, nor with the airborne flows of aerosols and myriad virus particles.

Just as significantly, 'openness' and 'closure' butt up against each other at different scales, one more local and lived, and another more abstractly aligned with activities that flow through more extended territories. The tension between the two exists and is reproduced in the city proper, assuming materialised social and spatial patterns and reproduction. Within a single globally connected city, there is necessarily both a space of flows and a space of vulnerability, one global and 'open', the other highly local. Cities and their governing authorities must disaggregate who benefits from the global economy, and who is exploited or made vulnerable by it, even as they ask where the health of the individual versus the health of the economy will fit into these calculations. Though the answers to such questions are not always obvious, nor will consensus easily emerge, governing institutions and authorities at the urban, metropolitan, or even the regional/provincial scale will be well-positioned with both local knowledge and legitimacy to guide this conversation. This does not mean that authorities at the local scale will always do the right thing (i.e. subsidiarity itself can be questioned), or that disagreements over the trade-offs between protecting local versus national well-being will not themselves provoke a governance crisis. For precisely this reason, in addition to strengthening local sovereignties attention must also be paid to building institutional and policy relationships that connect across various territorial scales of authority, leading to agile multi-level governance frameworks that can be adapted to face the health crisis.

While highlighting the value of 'seeing like a city' as much as 'seeing like a state',¹⁸ it is equally prudent to reflect on citizenship and where this fits into any rescaled conceptualisation of sovereignty. As the days and months of quarantine, distancing and isolation drag on, and as local, national and global economies continue their downward trundle, we are beginning to see popular stirrings among individuals and collectivities who are pushing back against governing authorities when they see health-justified policy actions as undermining other aspirations like freedom and autonomy. Many of those engaging in such responses have ideological predispositions, to be sure. Yet for every right-wing group outraged that the government is

overstepping its bounds, there are collectivities of the historically disenfranchised, the oppressed and the marginalised who are clamouring for more government protection of their health and their livelihoods. The reality is that citizens in the latter category are also more likely to be the subject of punitive policing actions disguised as health measures (seen recently in the periphery of Paris). It also means, however, that citizens may be more readily mobilised to question both the governance arrangements and the historical policy failures that helped institutionalise their extreme vulnerabilities in the first place. One can only hope that democracy is the victor even if COVID-19 continues to produce victims.

The pandemic, for good and bad, has forced a rethinking of the basic enlightenment building blocks that produced modern risk society,¹⁹ built on Westphalian nation-state institutions that beat out city-states and empires in the struggle to monopolise capital and coercion. It also could unleash efforts to deepen decentralisation and subsidiarity processes in a world where globalisation and the rise of populist nationalism threaten to destabilise or undermine the influence of localities. Finally, it has put questions of individual rights versus collective obligations back on the political agenda, even as it has provoked long-simmering tensions between state- and market-driven logics. If there is anything to celebrate in the struggle towards recovery, it is the opportunity to rethink the foundational principles of the social contract and the territorial responsibilities of governing authorities, issues that have long preoccupied philosophers and humanists. Such a legacy is worth embracing, despite the hardships that have produced it. We may actually be better prepared to face a future of uncertainty and ever more risk, much of it set in motion by climate change, if we keep these questions of governance in mind. Just as in the post-medieval era that birthed much of this debate, one can only hope that in a post-pandemic world cities, their citizens and their local authorities will continue to be central to any such deliberations. Despite the planetary scale at which the climate crisis is unfolding, environmental threats will continue to be experienced locally, making it all the more important to marshal urban sensibilities and cross-territorial institutions to continue addressing the governance of everyday risk.

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The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Emergency Governance Initiative for Cities and Regions.

¹⁷ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Vol. 1). John Wiley & Sons, 2001.

¹⁸ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1999.

¹⁹ Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. Sage Publications, 1992.

Case Profile data sources

Barcelona

- ^a Statistical Institute of Catalonia – <https://www.idescat.cat/emex/?lang=en&id=080193>
- ^b Barcelona City Hall – https://www.barcelona.cat/internationalwelcome/sites/default/files/DataSheet2018Web_eng_1.pdf
- ^c Barcelona City Hall – <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/es-estrategiafinances/pressupostobert/en/resumen#year=2019>
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