

Empowering a Culture of Civic Participation



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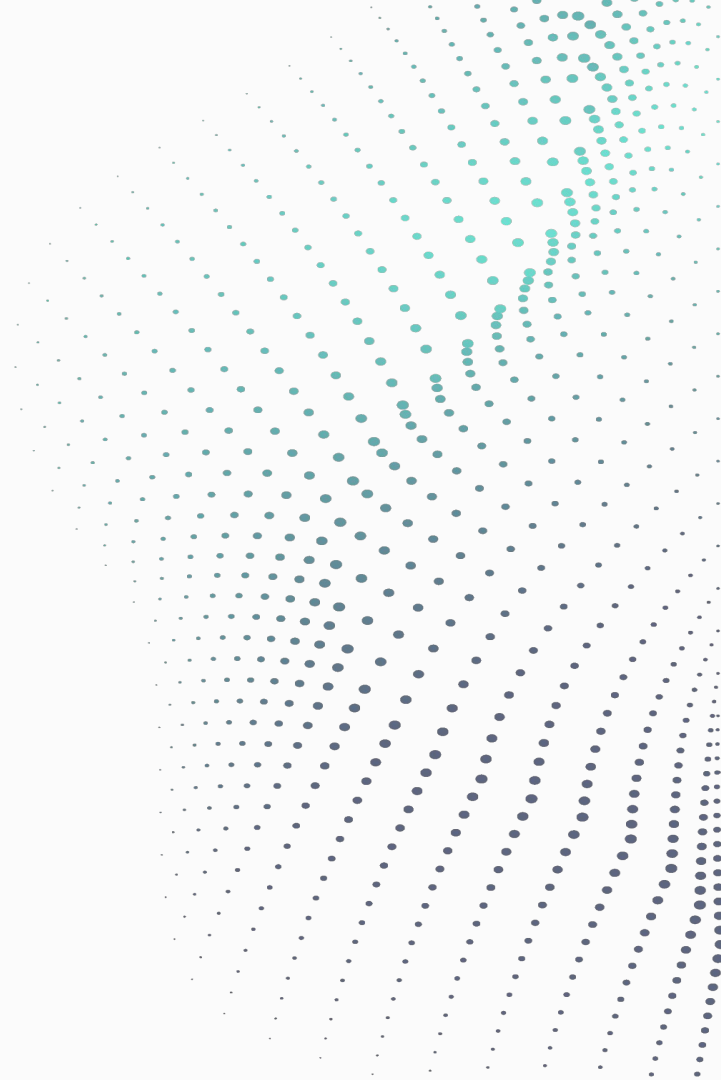
NewCities

Prague City Data Congress 2019

30 May 2019 – CAMP

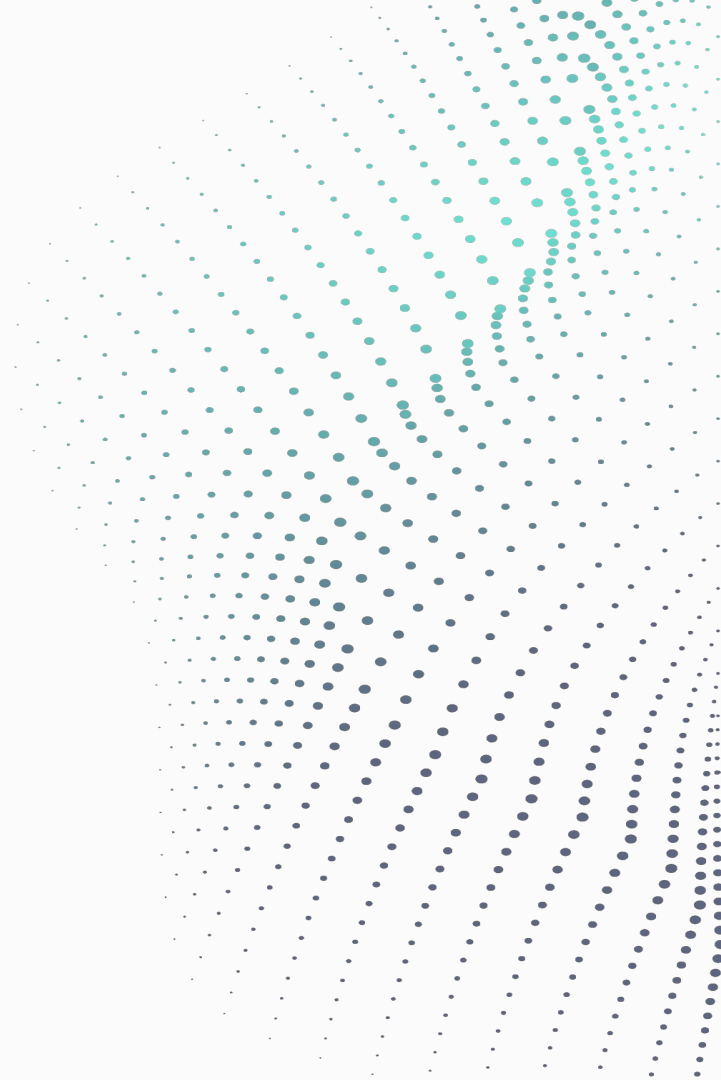
What I'll discuss

- who I am/who I represent
- the world as we see it
- what is a culture of civic participation?
- challenges + responses



About NewCities (and a little about me)

- global non-profit (HQ in Montréal)
- membership-based (members from all sectors)
- we use events, research, awards to create environments wherein new perspectives, ideas, and data emerge
- me: urban planner; city-to-city learning; schooled in traditional sustainable development



The world as we see it... data

- data is the most valuable asset in the global economy
- public sector seen as lagging on digitization
 - McKinsey (2016): Gov't 18/22 sectors for digital tech uptake
- digitization is presented as a win-win... (by the winners)
 - efficiency savings, better services, inclusion, etc.
 - McKinsey: annual US productivity gains > \$95 billion
- unfamiliarity/indeterminacy -> suspicion



The world as we see it... co-creating the city



- people are most vocal about the tangible...
- tensions exist between...
 - desire for reduced complexity of procedures
 - increasing density of statutory requirements
 - demand for full public involvement
- one-size-fits-all solutions don't exist
 - does efficiency necessitate inefficiency?
- when it comes to inclusion and equity...
 - participatory > legislative (...although both is best)

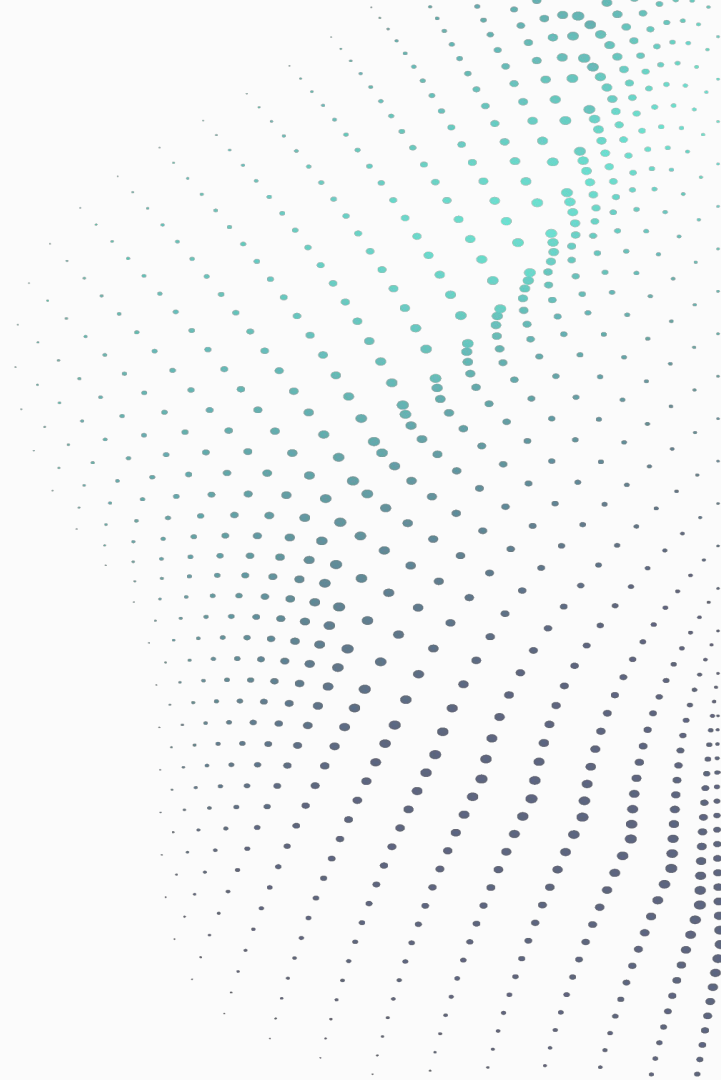
What comprises a culture of civic participation?



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- activation of all social groups
 - equal opportunity for participation
 - variety of entry points and media
 - mix of formality and informality
 - balance of direct + representative democracy
 - no “endless loops” of discussion
 - open outcomes

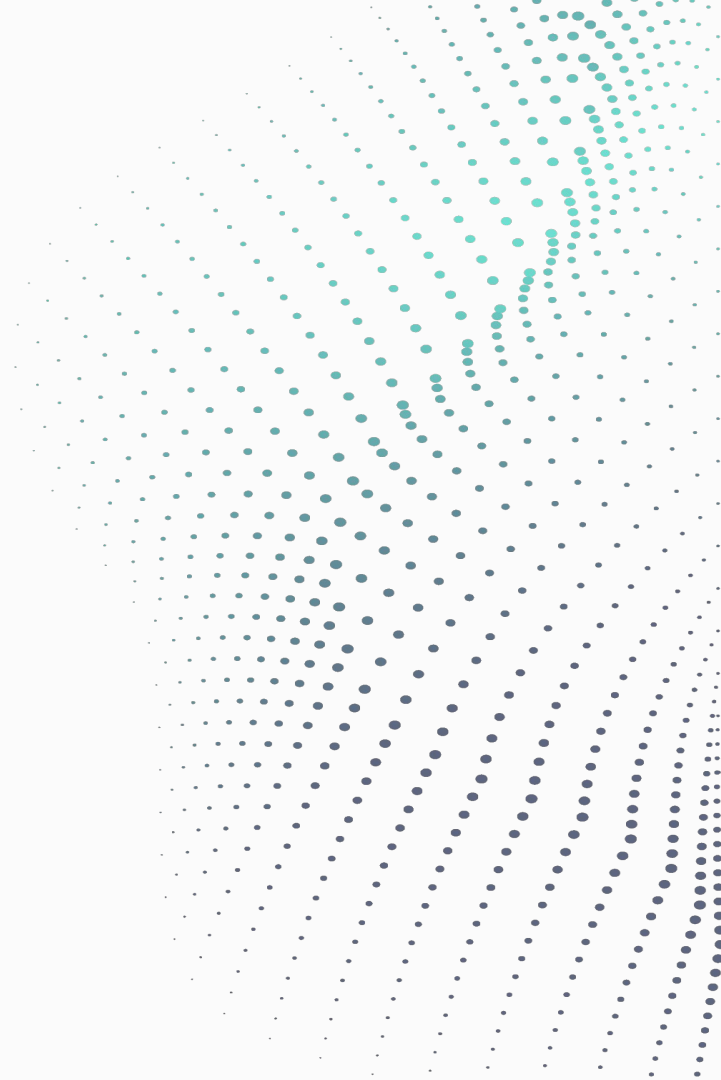
Challenge #1

- Promoting digital technology as a solution that can/will benefit the general population + support sustainable urban development visions
- Why is it a challenge?
 - traditional sustainable urban development frameworks are national level/not in-step with digitization



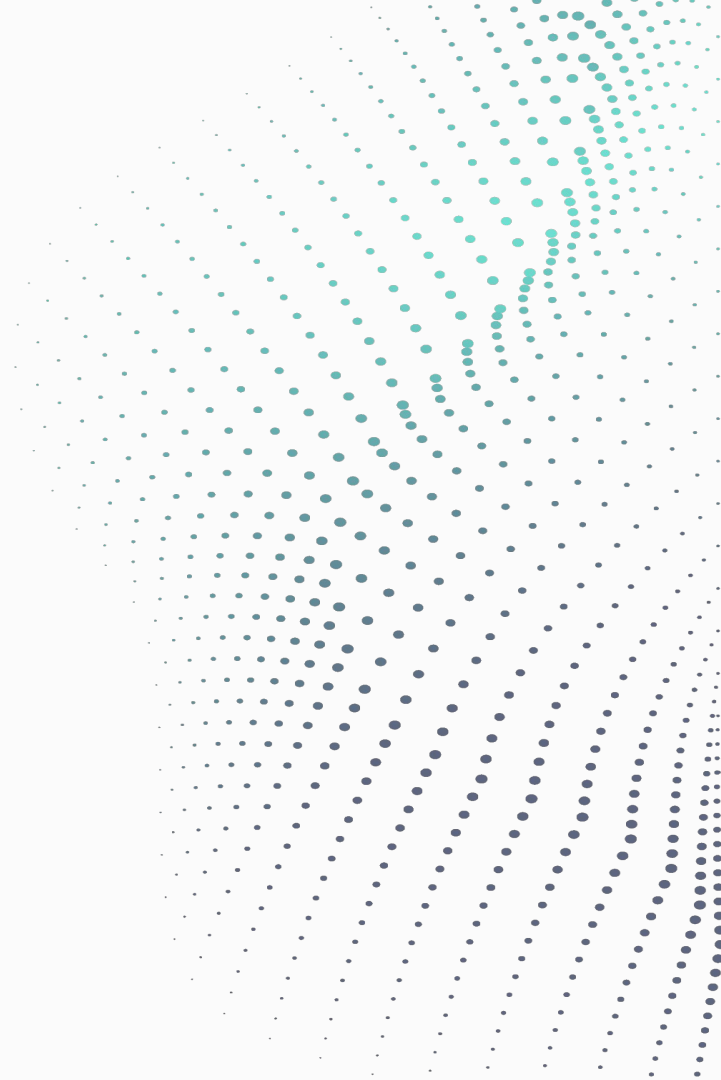
Good Practice Response...

- Cities Coalition for Digital Rights
- Why good?
 - city-led human rights oriented urban framework
- Five-declarations
 - Universal and equal access to the internet, and digital literacy
 - Privacy, data protection and security
 - Transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination of data, content and algorithms
 - Participatory Democracy, diversity and inclusion
 - Open and ethical digital service standards



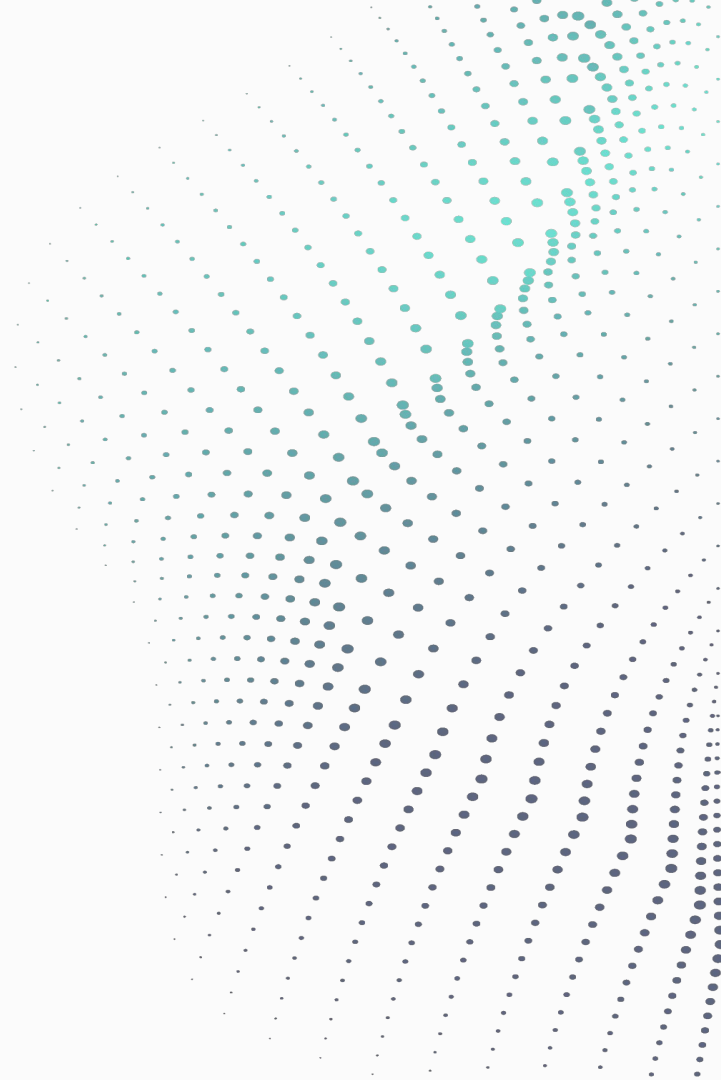
Challenge #2

- In many cities there is relatively low literacy of advanced networked devices among marginalized groups
- Why is it a challenge?
 - improving participation from and data representation within this segment can't necessarily be advanced through digital solutions alone



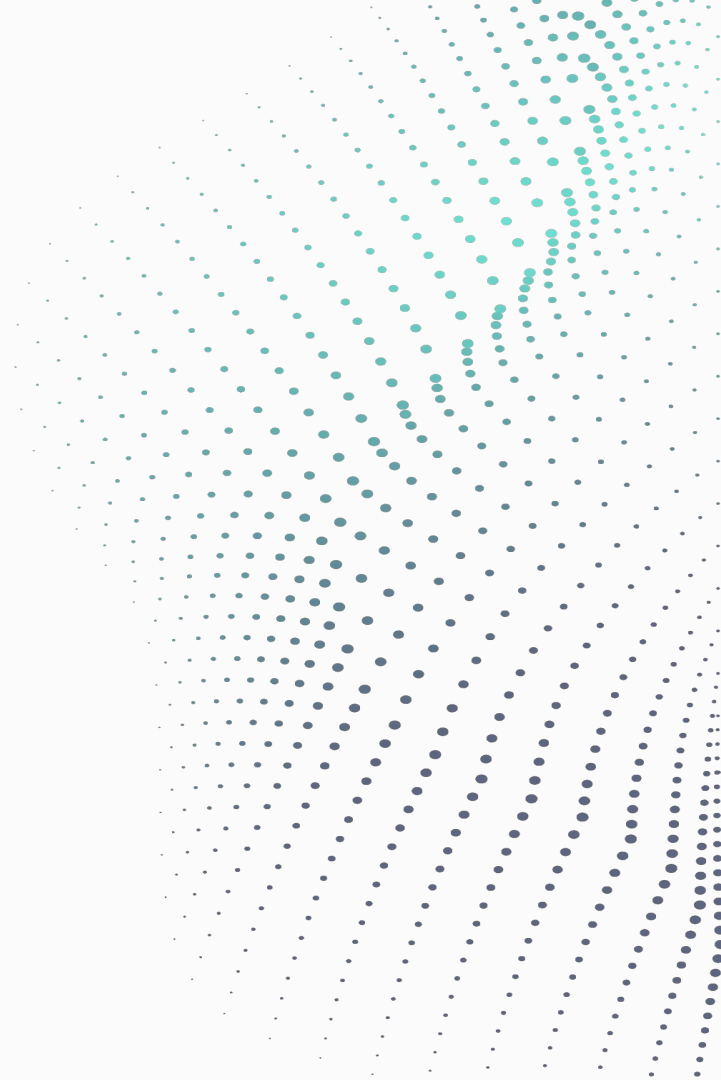
Good Practice Response...

- Citizen-Sourced Data Initiatives
- Why good?
 - combine technology with traditional outreach
 - cost-effective citizen engagement strategy
 - strengthens existing + promotes new community links



Citizen-Sourced Data cntd.

- The Cities of Service Model (*abbreviated*)
 - identify data gaps
 - assemble the team
 - choose an appropriate tool
 - prepare with community partners
 - train the trainers
 - inform the communities
 - recognize and share widely



Citizen-Sourced Data cntd.

- case study: Flint, Michigan – USA
- in 2012 the City needed to know the condition of 51,607 residential properties
- 27 neighborhood groups enlisted
- training provided, after which volunteers were able to assess the condition of residential parcels on a five-point scale
- findings used to secure \$20.1 million grant for repairs (through the Hardest Hit Fund)



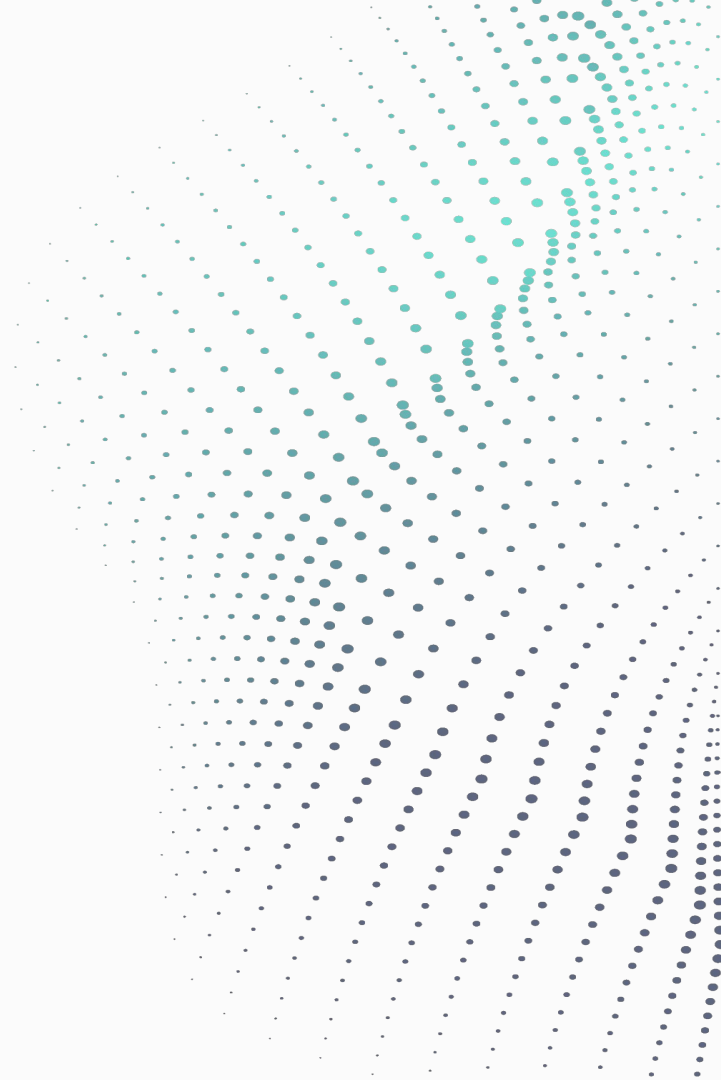
Citizen-Sourced Data cntd.

- case study: San José, California – USA
- mapping process to prevent people missing the 2020 census
 - 1 person = estimated loss of \$3k over a decade
- community partners mobilized their own volunteers and trained them to canvass neighborhoods and identify low-visibility dwellings in the field
- findings recorded using a smartphone text-messaging tool
- translation in Spanish and Vietnamese



Challenge #3

- co-creation requires a 'whole-city' commitment, wherein the community, civil society, academia, the public and the private sector are all engaged
- Why is it a challenge?
 - great in theory but hard in practice; traditional governance structures are bureaucratic and don't naturally facilitate this sort of engagement



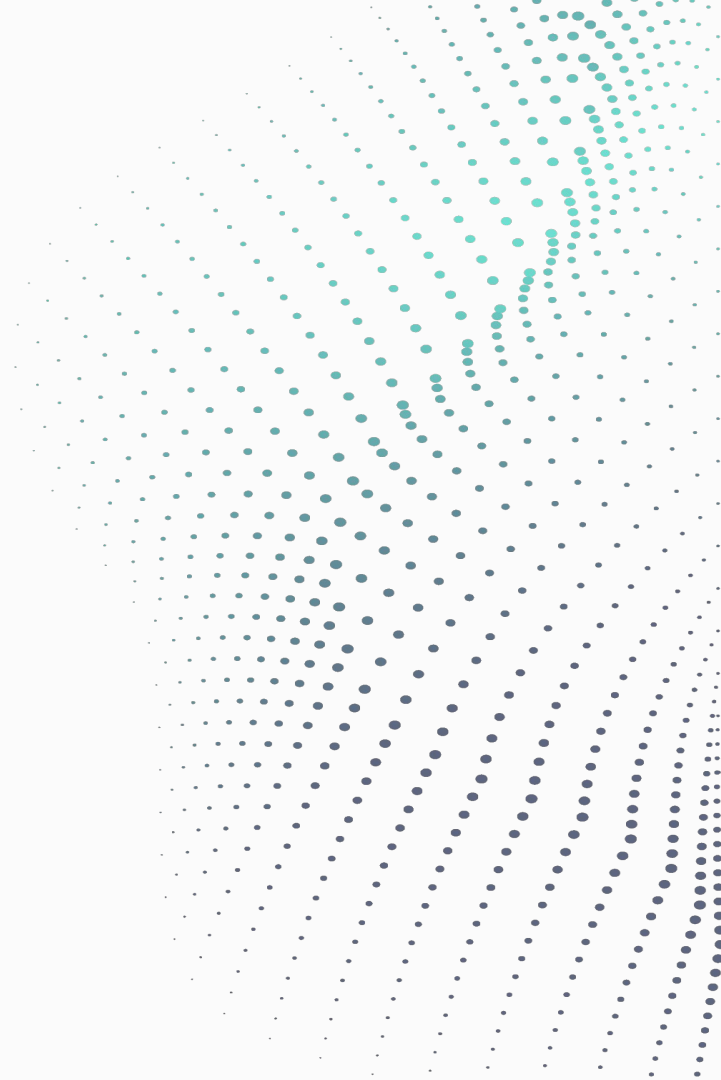
Good Practice Response...

- city agencies for participatory collaborative planning
- Why good?
 - allows for multi-stakeholder collaboration and helps to trial/generate new governance models
 - designed to favour larger democratic participation
 - enjoy a privileged position between top-down policies and bottom-up initiatives, as well as between citizens and local policy makers and decision makers



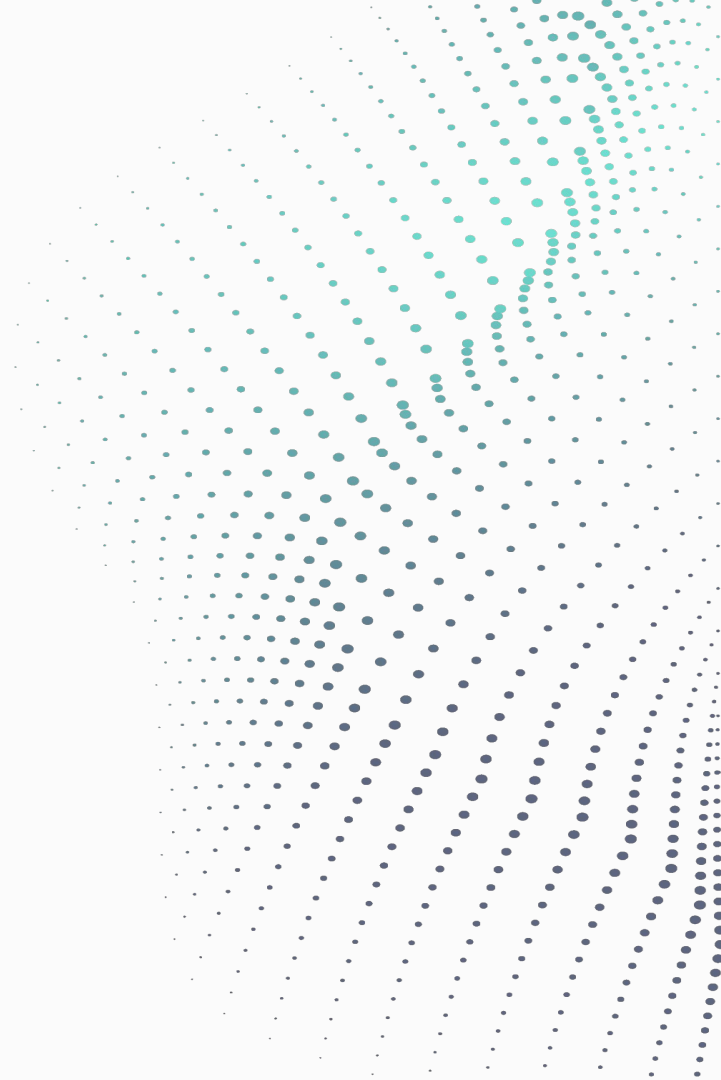
Other Favourite Cases....

- Bologna's collaboration pacts
- Helsinki's migrant youth peer tutoring
- Navajo nation and GIS/geodesign
- Mexico City's crowdsourced constitution



Recommendations

- empower existing community actors (with funding, and to recruit their own staff)
- determine which sort of engagement is best suited to achieve stated goals
- embrace complexity -> present simply



Thank you!

