

Innovating urban governance: A research agenda

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Abstract

Urban governance innovation is being framed as an imperative to address complex urban and global challenges, triggering the adoption of novel institutional forms, approaches and techniques. Urban political geographers are still some way off fully apprehending the dynamics of these innovations and their potential to reconfigure the composition and politics of urban governance. This paper suggests dialogue between urban political geography and public sector innovation literatures as a productive way forward. We build from this engagement to suggest a critical research agenda to drive systematic analysis of innovatory urban governance, its heterogeneous formation, politics and possibilities.

Keywords

innovation, urban governance, innovatory urban governance, public sector innovation, urban political geography

“The truth is cities are innovating the structures of government every single day” Amanda Daflos (2021), Executive Director, on the launch of the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation

Introduction

As innovation has become a ‘symbolic term to describe excellence... in both the public and private sector’ (Jordan, 2014: 68), the innovation imperative

has become a powerful and increasingly ubiquitous societal mindset (Godin, 2015: 252; Vinsel and Russell, 2020). Such a mindset underpins the notion that ‘cities can save the planet’ (Angelo and

Wachsmuth, 2020): solve a range of complex social, environmental and economic challenges and realise prosperous, sustainable futures (Acuto et al., 2018; Barnett, 2022; Lawton, 2020). This notion further identifies an imperative to innovate urban governance, replacing the ‘ossified governance institutions’ of national bureaucratic states (d’Almeida, 2018; Thompson, 2021) with, *inter alia*, rapidly circulating, agile and scalable urban policy ‘fixes’ (Montero, 2020).

Thus, a distinctive and performative framing of urban governance innovation has been developed and circulated through a fledgling epistemic community of think tanks, philanthropies, consultancies, global governance organisations and NGOs (e.g. Mirviss and Sorin, 2020; Bloomberg Philanthropies, 2015; Sorin and Rose, 2019; Sellick, 2019). Mirroring public sector innovation scholarship that has problematised governments’ capacities to address complex societal challenges and prescribed innovation as a necessary response, this innovatory urban governance (IUG) framing promotes efforts to govern cities and urban conditions through a set of institutional forms (e.g. urban iLabs, urban policy labs, innovation offices), approaches (e.g. design-thinking, co-design, challenge prizes) and techniques (e.g. civic pacts, prototyping, hackathons) that are self-consciously shaped as innovatory departures from business-as-usual, purposefully enacted to create improved outcomes. This framing suggests the constitution of innovatory urban governance as a normative-discursive political project, naturalising the urban as scale and site for governance innovation (Timeus and Gascó, 2018). It also diagnoses a distinctive and heterogeneous genre of urban governance practices geared towards agility, responsiveness and speed; experimentation, iteration and the embrace of failure; and multi-sectoral co-design and collaboration. It potentially heralds the shaping of new urban governance dispositifs – assemblages of actors, practice repertoires, techniques and forms of expertise and authority that constitute the capacity for urban governance¹ (see M^cGuirk and Dowling, 2021) – around a plurality of politically strategic and intentional ends.

Despite this emergence, urban political geographers and urban studies scholars are still some way

off fully apprehending the practices, diverse politics and implications associated with this IUG framing or the new governance dispositifs it may enable. There have been productive analyses of diverse forms of urban governance innovation and, undoubtedly, growing recognition of the pluralisation of entrepreneurial political agendas and related governance practices (Lauerermann, 2018; Phelps and Miao, 2020; Thompson et al., 2020). Yet, we argue a research agenda is warranted in order to comprehend and critically reflect on innovatory urban governance as an increasingly normalised and normative framing, an emergent heterogeneous political project and a shifting genre of urban governance practices. Building on urban political geography’s longstanding interests in urban governance restructuring, we suggest that the public administration and public management disciplines’ engagements with public sector innovation (PSI) provide productive resources for developing the conceptual and empirical ground for advancing this research agenda. Largely without an urban framing (cf. Sørensen and Torfing, 2018; Tönurist and Cook, 2020), PSI scholarship has been addressing innovation as an ideational and substantive force in reshaping public management and policy (Bason, 2018; De Vries et al., 2016; Hartley, 2005; Osborne and Brown, 2011). Even as this work has tended to be state-centred and to adopt more rational-formalist terms, there is potential in bringing it into closer dialogue with urban political geographical scholarship. Thus, expanding geographers’ longstanding engagements in this journal with geographies of public policy and policy mobility as drivers of innovation (e.g. Lovell, 2019; Peck, 2011; Ward, 2005), this paper draws together urban political geography and public sector innovation scholarship to shape the conceptual and empirical ground for exploring innovation in urban governance as a research object and to suggest a research agenda to take forward its analysis as a heterogeneous political project with potentially configurational effects on the practices, politics and possibilities of governance.

In what follows, we outline the anatomy of the IUG framing and its urbanisation of governance innovation. Then we review urban political geographical engagement with the modes and purposes

of innovation in urban governance, before examining how PSI scholarship provides a complementary suite of conceptual and empirical lenses that can advance geographical understandings and analyses. We conclude by articulating a set of key issues for a critical geographical research agenda on urban governance innovation.

The urbanisation of governance innovation

Innovation has become 'a nebulous contemporary buzzword in policy-making' (UCL Urban Innovation and Policy Lab, 2019), lacking a unified meaning (DeVries et al., 2016). The definitional spectrum for 'innovation' ranges across the *development* of novel services, products or processes to their *application* in new contexts and from the radically disruptive to the incremental or combinatory (see Baregheh et al., 2009). Jessop et al. (2013) note its alignment with 'invention' in capitalocentric conceptions, while the social innovation literature aligns it with the application of invention in new contexts, for public good purposes. In urban geographical scholarship, innovation is largely synonymous with urban economic reinvention (Bunnell and Coe, 2001), most recently with intensifying demands on urban authorities to nurture innovation ecosystems (Clark, 2020; Zukin, 2020). Distinguishable from 'change' as a permanent condition, innovation is discussed as purposeful action focussed on improved processes or outcomes. For instance, the OECD (2017: 10) argues that 'policy and governance innovation entails purposefully reformulating the prevailing mental models to unlock new paradigms in institutions, laws, policies, financing and governance structures that enable systems change at the societal level'. Godin (2015) argues that the concept has generated an aura, legitimacy and authority as a mindset across economy and politics, presented as both a normative good and 'a priori solution' posited for manifold social, economic and environmental problems (see Vinsel and Russell, 2020). Innovation from the perspective of governance has recently taken shape as a key priority among governments across the global north (Australian Government, 2010; European

Commission, 2013; OECD, 2012), frequently 'embraced by governments, agencies and think tanks as a policy panacea for market failure and public sector reform' (Thompson, 2019: 1174).

Of most interest to this paper is the work of a globally connected and heterogeneous epistemic community of think tanks, philanthropies, governments and NGOs operating at multiple scales – including Bloomberg Philanthropies, UK innovation agency Nesta, UN Habitat, the OECD, the Boston Consulting Group and various university-based entities. Through a burgeoning suite of position pieces, practice manuals, toolkits, platforms, capacity-building events and showcasing initiatives,² an innovatory *urban* governance (IUG) framing that purposefully urbanises governance innovation is being crafted. The IUG framing commences from a problematisation of the capacities, structures and dispositions of governments to address complex urban challenges. For instance, the OECD's (2019) *Enhancing Innovation Capacity in City Government* cites 'inherent barriers' to innovation, including a lack of political leadership, bureaucratic siloing and fragmentation, red-tape, austerity, cultures of risk aversion and the absence of innovation incentives. In parallel, a range of urbanised innovatory institutional forms, processes, techniques and case studies are outlined in order to systematise, mobilise and normalise urban governance innovation craft (see Kleiman and Hillard, 2016; OECD, 2019; Puttick et al., 2014; Sellick, 2019; Sorin and Rose, 2019). Applying a geographical lens to this IUG framing draws out three dimensions of its urbanisation of governance innovation.

First, the urban is framed as a *problem space* where multiple 'wicked problems' originate, coalesce or intensify and demand innovatory governance responses. With cities now accounting for an ever-increasing majority of the global population, they are cast as places of heavy resource dependency and depletion, and growing inequality (OECD, 2019: 20). As such, they 'face a series of challenges that require increasingly sophisticated tools and solutions' (World Bank, 2015: 14). Urban governance innovation is prescribed as best practice to address these complex global social, environmental and political-economic challenges.

Second, the urban figures as an efficacious *scale* of intervention: a strategic entry point for addressing intractably broad governance challenges – citizen engagement, sustainability, inequality and so forth – particularly because higher scales of government are problematized as too slow, intransigent or unresponsive to enact urgent, thoroughgoing change. Cities, urban districts and neighbourhoods are presented as scales wherein innovative solutions can be rapidly developed, trialled, iterated and (theoretically at least) rendered impactful through replication and scaling (Sorin and Rose, 2019). In their closeness to citizens, urban municipalities are framed as enabling more democratically legitimate approaches to governing (Kleiman and Hillard, 2016; OECD, 2020). Cities are ‘uniquely positioned to drive change against the largest, most complex problems’ (OECD, 2020: 34) and ‘to innovate and transform citizens’ lives’ (Bloomberg Philanthropies, 2015: 2). Thus, specifically *urban* interventions are framed as effective testing grounds for delivering ‘solutions’ for wider political, socio-economic and environmental challenges.

Finally, cities are framed as *political spaces* where key actors with the capacity to enact innovation, irrespective of location within or beyond the state – are concentrated, along with the requisite resources (financial, material, institutional, expertise) (Cohen et al., 2016; Montanari et al., 2017). They are ‘an ideal environment for innovation: ... they offer proximity, density and variety’ (Athey et al., 2007: 3) to generate dynamic, innovative, institutional and organisational forms and governance models (OECD, 2020). Cities are lauded as the ‘drivers of government innovation’ (Kleiman and Hillard, 2016: 1) and city government as the ‘vanguard’ of ‘more equitable, livable and resilient’ societies (Sorin and Rose, 2019: 37).

Beyond explicitly *urbanising* governance innovation, the framing seeks to catalyse adoption of a palette of innovatory institutional forms, approaches and techniques geared to deliver more agile, nimble, responsive, experimental and inclusive forms of challenge-led, cross-sectoral urban governance to produce scalable and replicable ‘solutions’. A distinctive repertoire includes: (i) city innovation labs, innovation offices or i-teams (e.g. Boston’s *Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics (MONUM)*), which experiments with and prototypes urban policy and

governance interventions, and Bologna’s *Office of Civic Imagination*, which coordinates collaborative governance of urban commons); (ii) collaborative co-design or human-centred design approaches (prevalent among a range of private consulting firms such as IDEO but also evidenced in Singapore’s *Public Sector Division Innovation Lab*, which coaches public servants across multiple departments and agencies in human-centred design); (iii) prototyping urban policies and projects to drive more agile, responsive and iterative governance (observable in Vancouver’s *City Studio* model in which university students partner with city authorities and other private and NGOs to devise and test interventions, from migration services delivery to bicycle repair stations); and (iv) challenge prizes to source and fund urban ‘solutions’, often through private sector/municipal collaboration (e.g. the City of Melbourne’s *Open Innovation Challenge* for supporting digital and data-led solutions to the City’s policy objectives, or, at a global scale, the Bloomberg *Mayors’ Challenge* in which municipalities compete for million-dollar philanthropic grants to implement ‘best practice’ urban policies and programs).

Multiple dimensions of this urbanised framing of governance innovation are of interest to urban political geographical scholarship. In what follows, we draw out the contributions of urban political geography to the analysis of innovation in urban governance, before turning to the PSI scholarship that, we argue, complements and can advance geographers’ capacity to understand and critically evaluate the implications of the IUG framing and the wider embrace of innovatory urban governance it signals. Drawing these bodies of work into closer dialogue, we argue, better positions urban political geographers to advance a research agenda on this heterogenous political project and its capacity to reconfigure the dispositifs that constitute urban governance towards diverse ends.

Urban political geography and governance innovation

Geographers’ longstanding engagements with entrepreneurialism and innovation in urban governance

provide critical foundations for understanding IUG. Theorisations of the 'new urban politics' of the entrepreneurial city (Cox, 1993; Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Harvey, 1989), and its increasingly financialised 'late entrepreneurial' variant (Peck, 2014), highlighted urban governance as a strategic site and scale through which innovations to drive neoliberal globalisation and economic competitiveness were advanced. More recently, analysts have aligned smart city governance innovation with 'the evolution of entrepreneurial rationality into all manner of urban institutions and policies' (Levenda and Tretter, 2020: 503), representing a spatially selective fix to the wider challenges of capital accumulation and signalling 'a (nation) state-driven mobilisation of the urban, and the introjection of the urban imaginary into state apparatuses at the same time' (Moisio and Rossi, 2020: 6).

Maintaining this multi-scalar lens, a parallel body of work rejects the limiting of urban innovation/entrepreneurialism to reactive, speculative logics driven by exogenously derived political-economic agendas and in so doing highlights the multiple political potentials of IUG. Teo (2021), for example, examines pragmatic urban governance innovations (in Shenzhen and London) involving new symbiotic political relations across diverse interests, conditioned by diverse political-economic positionings and contextualised urban needs. In the US context, Davidson and Ward (2022) explore the innovations – including financialization, inter-municipal cooperation, re-municipalisation and privatisation – enacted by urban bureaucrats to address local priorities while navigating structurally driven austerity tendencies. These analyses reveal innovations as 'relational outcomes of both local and extra-local diagnosis, interpretation and mediation' (Davidson and Ward, 2022: 3) and suggest how mechanisms deeply identified with neoliberalism can be mobilised innovatively to diverse ends, rather than being driven ideologically 'from above' (Chang et al., 2021; Miao and Phelps, 2019).

Several other strands of scholarship assist us to draw out the plurality of ambitions, logics and sources of authority that drive urban governance innovation (McGuirk et al., 2021a; Phelps and Miao, 2020), as well as their topological rather than

territorial political geographies (Allen and Cochrane, 2010). Recent reappraisals of, for example, 'municipal statecraft' (Lauermaun, 2018), 'entrepreneurial municipalism' (Thompson et al., 2020) and 'urban intrapreneurialism' (Phelps and Miao, 2020) identify innovative municipal engagements with experimental practices, processes, technologies and policies aimed explicitly towards transformative urban change. 'Entrepreneurial municipalism', for instance, captures innovation to regenerate local economies and alternative revenue forms while 'investing directly in self-sustaining projects, which harness the value of (de-commodified) land, (co-operative) labour and (patient) capital to ground economic development in people and place' (Thompson et al., 2020: 18). Governance innovation here pushes beyond 'a reactionary politics in which municipalities respond to exogenous logics' dictated by their being closely 'nested within an exogenous political economy' (Lauermaun, 2018: 211, 206). Rather, as Phelps and Miao (2020) emphasise, these innovations draw out the sizeable capacity for invention and innovation within *and between* networked urban governments to address both dynamic local need and wider societal challenges.

A parallel body of work explores innovative attempts to widen the policy and institutional imaginary, drawing on projects initiated beyond the state 'by any kind of actor, in any kind of context' (Avelino et al., 2017: 5) and across diverse topologies. This work attends to efforts to reconfigure 'the institutional ensembles that govern urban life' to shape 'rules [that] enable urban transformation' (Moulaert et al., 2013; Thompson, 2019: 1177, 1189). Thompson (2019: 1168) points to innovative models of policy thinking and institutional forms, often sourced through cooperative trans-local inter-urban networks, as alternatives to 'market- and state-led economic development policies'. These analyses, like those focused on municipal innovation, highlight innovations' disruptive, potentially transformative capabilities as well as the topological, often cooperative trans-local relations through which policy ideas, institutional forms and specific innovative governance techniques are realised.

Two final strands – loosely connected by their emphasis on collaborative approaches – suggest

emergent novel and potentially transformative modes of urban governance shaped through the affordances of innovation. First is work on experimental urban governance that speaks directly to the notion that ‘cities can save the planet’. Analyses of Urban Labs are at the fore here, as deeply collaborative experimental sites bringing multi-sector actors together in catalytic spaces to trigger wider transitions ‘beyond their immediate domain and induce transitions across urban socio-technical and socio-ecological systems’ (Bulkeley et al., 2016: 14; Evans et al., 2017; Fastenrath and Coenen, 2021; Karvonen and Van Heur, 2014). Significantly, Bulkeley et al. (2016), Evans et al. (2017) and Hodson et al. (2018) take this further to position urban experimental innovation as indicative of a broader shift in the nature of urban governance via ‘the gradual replacement of existing modes of governance’ (Karvonen, 2018: 203) that, notwithstanding the risks of elite capture, challenges existing distributions of power and agency (see Torrens and von Wirth, 2021; Thompson et al., 2020).

Work on collaborative experimental governance is extended by work on innovations in participatory urban governance, often aligned with redistributive, social solidarity and sustainability agendas (Castañón Broto and Neves Alves, 2018; Perry and Atherton, 2017). Analyses of co-production reveal the transformation of institutional identities and practices, and polycentric visions of governance that exceed state-market/public-private systems. Chatterton et al. (2018: 227, 240), for example, explore place-based examples of ‘novel institutional personae ... developed to unlock more effective and progressive ways of designing, managing and living in cities ... blending horizontal structures with hierarchies, circular with linear thinking, fast with slow working rhythms, as well as technocratic issues, but maintaining politicized concerns about redistribution and inequality’. Equally seeking innovatory governance transformations, Foster and Iaione (2016: 285, 289) lay out a collaborative institutional structure to govern the city as a commons, to ‘open up the possibility of more inclusive and equitable forms of “city making”’ and ‘reorient public authorities ... toward a shared, collaborative governance approach’.

Collectively, then, studies of the political geographies of urban governance innovation – in pragmatic, municipalist, experimental and collaborative guises – acknowledge its multiplication of institutional forms and agenda, along with the expanding agency of municipalities and diverse, distributed governance actors. They are beginning to re-appropriate ‘innovation’ from its association with private enterprise and the Schumpeterian ‘heroic’ entrepreneur towards collectively driven, novel policy forms that exceed pragmatism for more transformative innovatory governance possibilities. Moreover, such studies examine the topological spatiality of urban governance innovation. They reject an understanding of urban governance as tightly nested in hierarchical state and market spatial logics that positions city governance as reactive to exogenous drivers of accumulation and competitive globalisation, filtered top-down through national policy frames. Rather, they are alive to the shifting relational geographies that produce urban governance and frame its innovation (Allen and Cochrane, 2010), drawing out connections to transnational agendas via networks of relational policy learning and ‘city diplomacy’ (Acuto, 2013; Phelps and Miao, 2020). They establish that, as Lauermaun (2018: 205) puts it, ‘the entrepreneurial city is no longer (only) a growth machine’. Rather urban governance innovation is revealed to be compelled by ambitious (if ambiguous) dynamic energies, capable of re-purposing techniques conventionally put to neoliberal ends. Urban governance innovation is experimental and relational, not always containable by urban policy imaginations cognitively pre-filtered by neoliberal ideologies (see Peck and Theodore, 2015), yet conditioned by its relational embeddedness.

This scholarship equips urban political geographers to apprehend the restless landscape of urban governance and be receptive to shifting ideational and institutional forms, relations and geographies that animate this landscape. We argue, however, that this apprehension is partial, and that the IUG framing poses new analytical and empirical challenges with respect to: the problematisation of government and prescription of an urban governance ‘innovation imperative’; the range of innovatory governance

techniques being urbanised through the IUG framing; the diversity of governing dispositifs assembled around innovatory approaches; and, finally, the implications for a configurational shift in urban governance shaped around a politics of innovation. We turn now to the potential of drawing urban political geography into dialogue with PSI scholarship as a complementary means of addressing these challenges.

Innovatory urban governance: engaging with PSI scholarship

Public sector innovation (PSI) has developed over the last two decades as a distinctive field of scholarship on the dynamics and drivers of innovation (Bason, 2018; Moore and Hartley, 2008; Osborne and Brown, 2011). While largely centred on government as the starting point of analysis, its explorations also productively address the collaborative 'beyond-the-state' institutional forms, approaches and techniques associated with governance innovation. However, urban political geographers have yet to engage with PSI scholarship fully, in part due to its 'bright side' normative tendencies and prescriptive endorsement of innovation (Osborne and Brown, 2011),³ notwithstanding some strands' critical engagement with PSI's dynamics and its relation to wider ideological and political-economic currents. Nor has the field explicated the distinctively urban spatiality, logics and practices emerging in governance innovation (cf. Leminen et al., 2017). Yet, as we articulate below, dialogue with PSI scholarship offers productive contributions to key questions facing urban political geography with respect to shifts revealed and promoted by the IUG framing. We explore these below.

Problematizing governance and framing solution sets

Public sector innovation scholarship is firstly productive in revealing the impetus for governance innovation, and the logics and problematisations that drive it. It is certainly the case that much PSI scholarship remains normative and prescriptive,

invoking innovation as synonymous with improvement and the presumption it delivers 'public good' (Jordan, 2014; Wagenaar and Wood, 2018). Relatedly, it remains limited in its attention to the conceptualisation of power and the dynamics of its enactment in the practice of governance innovation. Power is predominantly conceived of in terms of authority, held and distributed by structurally empowered actors. Besides this, a tendency to assume a politics of consensus accompanies the literature's 'public good' presumption, resulting in a dearth of attention to the forms, configurations and dynamics of power at play across the legitimisation, institutionalisation and practice of governance innovation. Notwithstanding these 'political blind-spot(s)' (Kieboom, 2014: 26), engagements with PSI reveal the logics behind the pressing imperative to 'disrupt' large public bureaucracies, characterised by stability, consistency and resistance to change (see Criado et al., 2020).

Multiple factors are driving the imperative for disruption, according to PSI studies. Sørensen and Torfing (2011) detail rising expectations from citizens and firms vis-a-vis the quality of public services and the responsiveness of government; growing ambition to solve public policy problems among politicians, public servants and professionals; and recognition of multiple 'wicked problems' involving a large number of stakeholders (pp. 847–848; Head and Alford 2015). These are argued to 'make radical innovation an imperative' (Munro, 2015: 219), even as it is suggested that public sector operational capacities are bereft of the necessary innovatory capacity.⁴ Invocations of innovation are habitually supported by characterisations of public sector governance arrangements as outmoded, overly hierarchical, stiflingly risk averse and oriented towards stability and predictability (Blomkamp, 2018; Timeus and Gascó, 2018), and inherently incapable of resolving the multitude of processual challenges (Bason, 2017). Public innovation capacities are frequently argued to be limited by barriers including strict adherence to rules and conventions, complex bureaucratic structures and systems, lack of economic incentives, anti-innovation performance indicators, and risk-averse politicians and senior officials (Sørensen and Torfing, 2011). These are

argued to limit innovation to the incremental and reformist (Criado et al., 2020; De Vries et al., 2016), unable to produce the more radical, paradigm-shifting change required to address current governance challenges (Bason, 2018; Bommert, 2010).⁵ Thus, innovation – the purposive disruption of established institutional forms, practices, participants and norms (McGann et al., 2018) – is positioned as the route to surpassing these ostensibly innate limitations and deficiencies.

PSI scholarship on innovation labs or iLabs as a key innovation in institutional form is illustrative here (Criado et al., 2020; McGann et al., 2018). Defined as ‘islands of experimentation’ where the public sector can test and scale out innovations (Schuurman and Tönurist, 2017: 7),⁶ their establishment within or enabled by government agencies is rationalised as cultivating the ‘innovation craft’ and agility to generate, test and iterate new policy-making processes, flexible procedures and increased citizen collaboration (Ferreira and Botero, 2020; Tönurist et al., 2017). Equally, they are positioned as generating correctives to imputed deficiencies of bureaucratic government by emulating private sector innovation (Kronsell and Mukhtar-Landgren, 2018; Tönurist et al., 2017). For instance, Bevilacqua et al. (2020: 8) credit the firm-like ‘simplified vertical organization’ of Boston’s *MONUM* with nurturing creativity, independence and risk-taking among staff.⁷ iLabs are analysed in terms of their explicit license to disrupt by deploying non-traditional governance practices such as co-design, human-centred design, prototyping and hacking (McGann et al., 2018; Timeus and Gascó, 2018). In similar vein, they are credited as institutional ‘safe spaces’, one remove from the everyday realities of government, where experimentation and failure are normalised and new governance ideas and practices can be generated (Osorio et al., 2020).

In foregrounding the narrative pathways and logics that prescribe innovation as an ‘a priori solution’ to governance challenges (Godin, 2015), PSI analyses push urban political geographers to trace the logics, authorisation and legitimation of innovation as a corrective to government practices and mindsets cast as sluggish, siloed and hierarchical. Equally they provide coordinates for how urban governance is

institutionally readied to accommodate the innovatory ‘disruptions’ disseminated through the IUG framing as an increasingly pervasive political project.

Constituting innovatory practices: Institutional forms, approaches and techniques

As IUG grows in influence and effect, identifying and examining its composition and workings is key to understanding how it reconfigures urban governance dispositifs. PSI likewise extends the urban political repertoire beyond established ‘entrepreneurial’ forms and practices towards those less familiar to urban scholars: iLabs, Innovation Offices and urban policy labs, design-thinking and co-design approaches, challenge prizes, policy hacking and prototyping, service design sprints and more. While geographical literature has pointed to some innovatory forms and techniques,⁸ PSI scholarship’s empirical mapping of the genre and its workings takes us considerably further, notwithstanding a general lack of focus on urban contexts (see Wellstead et al., 2021; cf. Leminen et al., 2017).

Broad horizon scans and descriptive case studies of explicitly innovatory institutional forms have begun to emerge, charting their landscape and predominant purposes (e.g. McGann et al. (2018) and Wellstead et al. (2021) on Innovation Labs). Characteristically, research on iLabs (e.g. Bevilacqua et al., 2020; Osorio et al., 2020) outlines how their disruptive intent is operationalised by seeding differently styled practices, value propositions and dispositions across governments, emphasising agility, iteration and responsiveness above stability, rapidity above caution, disruption above incrementalism, and collaboration above command and control. Drawing on a favourable analysis of Spain’s *NovaGob.Lab* and Brazil’s *LineGov*, Criado et al. (2020: 461) call for wider use of ‘agile methodologies in the public sector, more perceptive to the needs of changing environments with increasing volatility’ and more permeable to ‘external’ experience and expertise. The case study work also commonly surfaces the vulnerabilities of innovatory

institutional forms: such as iLabs' reliance on transitory political patronage, potential isolation from wider institutional structures and short-term, project-focused impact (Clarke and Craft, 2019; Criado et al., 2020; McGann et al., 2018; Tönurist et al., 2017). These empirical analyses offer a productive framework for exploring how innovatory institutions are deployed in urban governance, how their 'innovation craft' overlays, intersects with or disrupts existing forms, and with what effect.

Besides articulating institutional forms, PSI analyses also empirically highlight innovatory approaches that are shifting policy and service design towards co-production and various forms of design-thinking.⁹ Again, these approaches are generally endorsed as fruitful for reframing policy issues, generating and testing novel, creative policy solutions as correctives to problematised conventional bureaucratic approaches (Bason, 2017; Bjo"gvinsson et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2020). Hermus et al. (2020) outline the distinctive empirical applications of design in public administration. Blomkamp (2018) lay out the workings of normatively endorsed co-design approaches aiming to align citizens' needs with policy and service design, build cooperative, trusting relations around participatory policy approaches and deliver economic efficiencies. Kimbell (2019: 129) shifts towards the aspirational, examining design-thinking's potential in '(re)imagining public policy making, by (re)connecting people's experiences with policy infrastructures, processes and practices'. As well as providing productive insights into their empirical workings, these treatments also identify extant vulnerabilities. While in principle, design-thinking and co-production approaches seek to 'transcend organisational and procedural silos, established hierarchies or bureaucratic categories ... to challenge the status quo' (Hermus et al., 2020: 24), in practice they are found to be both 'highly complex and daunting' to achieve (Richardson et al., 2018: 145). They are found to be vulnerable to colliding with standard policy processes (Lewis et al., 2020), differently configured institutional structures (Nesti, 2018), and the aspiration to foster power-sharing and cooperative ways of working rubs up against sedimented roles and expectations of politicians and bureaucrats, citizens and private sector actors (Torfing et al., 2019).

Finally, fine-grained empirical analyses of innovatory governance techniques productively reveal the processes and pathways through which innovation concepts (disruption, iteration, agility, etc.) become part of the governance landscape. Work on hackathons – collaborative, challenge-based, iterative experiments used to identify and develop solutions to urban problems – draws out the infiltration of approaches common in computing software design to iterate and scale up successful proposals (Criado and Guevara-Gómez, 2021; Yuan and Gasco-Hernandez, 2021). Likewise work on prototyping – an experimental approach to 'fast' development and iterative testing of policy or service delivery mechanisms – reveals the filtering of agile and iterative 'discovery-alpha-beta-live' approaches into public administration (e.g. Kimbell and Bailey, 2017; Tironi, 2020). These analyses complement an emergent body of geographical work in urban governance aimed to unpack the workings, power dynamics, potentials and limits of innovatory techniques (e.g. Cowley and Joss, 2020; Magdaleno et al., 2022; Perng, 2018; Taylor Buck and While, 2017).

Collectively, then, the PSI corpus furnishes wider analytical frames for empirical investigation of the urbanised innovatory governance prescribed by the IUG framing, providing useful insights into operational dynamics and related reconfigurations as it overlays, intersects with or disrupts existing modalities. This constitutes a valuable resource, given urban political geographers' longstanding concern for how urban governance institutions and techniques, and the sites and scales of their operation, are reconfigured by logics that condition the solution sets deemed feasible and desirable.

Understanding the multiplicity of emergent urban governance dispositifs

Parallel to recent urban political geographical work on the expanding agendas and reimagined progressive potential of urban entrepreneurialism discussed above, a body of work has emerged that explores the diverse urban governance dispositifs that cohere to address emergent challenges (e.g. Braun, 2014;

M^cGuirk and Dowling, 2021). PSI scholarship complements this conceptual lens insofar as it prises open the diversity – of agendas, actors, governance roles fulfilled and ends sought – within innovatory enactments of governance interventions.

The PSI literature reveals the fluid permutations of ‘innovation’ applied to a wide spectrum of agendas and purposes (Bugge and Bloch, 2016), especially across public service design and delivery (Lewis et al., 2020; Whicher, 2021), and policy co-design (Blomkamp, 2018; Torfing et al., 2019). Sørensen and Torfing (2011: 850), for example, argue that PSI is:

not about producing and delivering more or less of the same ... but rather about changing the form, content, and repertoire ... or transforming the underlying problem understanding, policy objective and program theory.

Analyses uncover innovation agendas ranging from addressing fiscal efficiency in austerity (Siebers and Torfing, 2018) to purposively advancing social and political empowerment and ‘public value’ (Hartley, 2013; Osborne and Brown, 2011), enhanced democratic participation in policy making and budgeting (e.g. Osorio et al., 2020), reducing poverty and inequality (e.g. George et al., 2012; Roy et al., 2014), and decarbonisation (e.g. Kronsell and Mukhtar-Landgren, 2018). These analyses also usefully attend to how pragmatic politics and compromise delimit this diversity of ambition. In Siebers and Torfing’s (2018) study of co-design within a Dutch municipal budgeting process, for example, co-design involving citizens via ‘interactive democracy’ as ‘co-creators’ of local governance (*ibid.*: 187–188) was used to establish least-worst outcomes in the context of national government cost-cutting demands.

Urban political geographers’ longstanding interest in distributed governance (M^cGuirk et al., 2021b; McCann, 2017) is well served by PSI scholarship’s analytical optic on ‘the displacement of a hierarchical mode of coordinating policymaking by a more distributed approach involving an ever-increasing plurality of non-government actors’ (Craft and Wilder 2017: 219; see also Cohen et al., 2016). This is particularly useful in articulating the expanded cast

of ‘uncommon actors’ (Gryszkiewicz et al., 2016) assembled in the ideation, constitution and enacting of innovative governance mechanisms, including: policy entrepreneurs (Criado and Guevara-Gómez, 2021; Mintrom, 2019); specialist innovation training providers (Zivkovic, 2021); innovation consultants (Julier, 2017); not-for-profits (Myers, 2017); and affected communities (Criado and Guevara-Gómez, 2021). PSI’s rich case study work also demonstrates the fluidity of roles performed by actors as authority is intentionally dispersed across public institutions, private sector and community, and away from hierarchically structured relations. Criado and Guevara-Gómez (2021) illustrate this dispersal and fluidity in their study of Spanish collaborative PSI initiatives developed in response to Covid-19: Frena la Curva (Flattening the Curve) involved more than 60 organisations or actors in participatory decision-making. A 20-member group spanning public and private sector organisations and activists developed ‘state-like’ cohering and coordinating roles and composing multi-sector sub-groups to coordinate particular projects and activities.

PSI’s broad optic on the diverse constitution of governance capacity also helpfully captures the formation of multiple governing dispositifs at multiple scales, ranging from projects grounded in neighbourhoods (e.g. The Southern Initiative, 2020) to city-wide initiatives (e.g. Scholl and Kemp, 2016) to programs enacted by national governments across national territories (e.g. Lee and Ma, 2020; Whicher, 2021), often relating to one another through global and regional networks (Ferreira and Botero, 2020). And, despite limited attention to the spatiality of governance innovation, this scope offers empirical and conceptual resources for geographies of governance critically concerned, for example, with the agenda-setting of globally operating philanthropically sponsored urban governance innovations (Fuentenebro and Acuto, 2021; Montero, 2020), seeking to leverage the progressive possibilities of local urban or trans-locally networked innovatory efforts (Phelps and Miao, 2020; Thompson et al., 2020) or interested in excavating the role of the urban as a site and scale in governing complex socio-environmental challenges (Bulkeley et al., 2016; M^cGuirk et al., 2021b).

Signalling a configurational shift in urban governance

One final significant question that benefits from the dialogue we propose concerns the extent to which the emergent landscape discussed above demands consideration as more than a set of stand-alone interventions, instead, following Bulkeley et al. (2016), signalling a broader shift in the nature of urban governance. The broad scope of PSI studies points towards the formation of multiple innovatory governing dispositifs, as does the IUG framing that urbanises innovatory governance, and the scholarship on geographies of urban governance reviewed above on experimental, smart city, evolving entrepreneurial cities and more. Davidson and Ward (2022) insist that contemporary urban governance practices cannot be traced to any universal mode; rather, tendencies will be translated relationally and through contextual priorities and rationales. Yet a deeper systematic investigation is warranted aimed at tracing the prominence of innovatory urban governance, the ‘family resemblances’ (Peck, 2013) across its problem framings and practices, its plural logics and agendas and its inevitably varied, relational translation in distinctive geographical contexts. The IUG framing may herald an emergent heterogenous yet configurational phenomenon or ‘pre-paradigm’ (Nicholls, 2010) with emergent patterns of institutionalisation flanked with supporting discourses, narrative logics and power dynamics.

Public sector innovation studies’ contribution here arises, first, from its recognition of a shift towards a new genre of governance techniques, classed as *post*-New Public Management (Criado et al., 2020; Criado and Gil-Garcia, 2019; Siebers and Torfing, 2018). Its analyses furnish rich contextual understanding of the configurational force of ‘the innovation imperative’ in light of complex or resistant policy challenges in ‘increasingly turbulent, complex and interdependent societal and human settings’ (Bason, 2014: ix). They further reveal the force of an imperative for collaborative innovation, deemed essential ‘in the face of the growing fragmentation, complexity and dynamism of contemporary societies’ (Sørensen and Torfing, 2011: 842). Indeed, multi-sectoral collaboration is recognised as key to the objectives of emergent innovative institutional forms, such as *MONUM*’s aspirations to

improve housing affordability, citizen participation, mobility and education outcomes (Bevilacqua et al., 2020) and of *ViveLab* Bogota’s achievements regarding democratic involvement in policy making and participatory budgeting (Osorio et al., 2020).

Second, PSI analyses unpack the structural drivers – such as fiscal crises arising from growing service demand, revenue reductions and changed expectations regarding public expenditures – that propel innovation around service performance and efficiency, value for money, operational capacity and financial resources (Criado et al., 2020; De Vries et al., 2016; Reckhow et al., 2020). Ferreira and Botero (2020: 158), for example, explain how iLabs in Latin America ‘have been marketed as cost-efficient entities’ for governments with few resources for anything other than basic public and social services. Kimbell and Bailey (2017) connect the rising prominence of co-design and prototyping in government to New Public Management’s blurred distinctions between public and private sectors and the consequent infusion of contemporary management concepts and practices.

Finally, this work unpacks how changing public expectations around democratic participation, policy responsiveness and declining public trust in governance institutions and decision-making processes has driven innovation to foster a wider adoption of open innovation and participatory approaches (e.g. Blomkamp, 2018; Richardson et al., 2018). This is especially evident in analyses of PSI in Latin America, where, as Ferreira and Botero (2020) note, there has been a particular emphasis on participation and decentralisation to build public trust in the aftermaths of dictatorships and economic crises, albeit with mixed results.

These dimensions provide a grounding for urban political geographical investigation of whether practices prescribed by the innovation imperative, and *urbanised* in the IUG framing we introduce above, become interconnected as an emergent mode of innovatory urban governance. Work on contemporary urban governance innovations remains somewhat fragmented across domains, compounded by the ‘projectification’ associated with contemporary urban governance (Torrens and von Wirth, 2021). Bringing PSI work to this question deepens understanding of broader political and policy contexts (see Considine et al., 2009; Van Buuren and

Loorbach, 2009) and provides the lineaments for tracing how these contexts are translated and scaled to the urban.

Understanding the politics of innovation

If a broader innovatory shift in the nature of urban governance is indeed taking shape, then understanding its heterogenous politics becomes a priority. Geographical scholarship on urban governance has insistently explored its politics, attributions of authority and legitimacy within and beyond the state, and shifts in spatiality, accountability and the workings of power. Yet there is work to be done to turn attention towards the innovations lauded by the IUG framing as the future of urban governance, to consider how innovatory reconfigurations rework the constitution and exercise of power and authority. Even as much PSI work is founded in a normative commitment to the public value of governance innovation and its potential to drive radical change (e.g. Gryszkiewicz et al., 2016) and consequently underplays attention to the forms and dynamics of power, engagement with critical strands of PSI scholarship has much to offer here as a grounding for critical engagement with its politics and impacts. Many question the 'objective' or 'neutral' nature of innovation and its presumed capacity to produce "good" results' (Timeus and Gascó, 2018: 994; Wellstead et al., 2021), while also recognising the reconfigurational force of the 'implicit or explicit belief that public servants must engage in innovation or entrepreneurial activity to be considered as doing good' (Jordan, 2014: 86). As an orientation to analysis of governance innovations, this reminds us that, as Wagenaar and Wood (2018: 155) helpfully point out, they are never 'straightforward applications of an impulse to improve'; rather, the 'precarious politics' of innovation are poised around the questions 'who innovates; what is the object of innovation, and what are the effects of innovation' (2018: 151).

One particularly productive focus in more recent, critically oriented PSI analyses is the question of whether innovatory techniques configure more

accountable power configurations or reinscribe existing alignments of power, control and expertise (Durose and Richardson 2015: 35; Nesti, 2018; Torfing et al., 2019). Meijer and Thaens (2021) draw out the 'dark side of public innovation', namely, the perverse effects of low public value and low public control that they interpret as inherent to innovatory governance processes. Lewis et al. (2020) question the value and ability of innovatory techniques to prompt meaningful long-term change, when they come in contact with 'power and politics'. Tironi's (2018: 123) analysis of prototyping introduces the notion of innovatory techniques as 'a political device that can make visible (or invisible) certain entities and issues', shaping what is 'visible and thinkable, what can be spoken and what is unspeakable'.

Parallel work on design-thinking raises similar questions. Clarke and Craft (2019) question its universal privileging of particular actor sets and policy styles (see also Siebers and Torfing, 2018). Hartley (2013) questions design-led reorganisations of public service delivery and their positioning of service-users as customers rather than citizens. Julier and Kimbell (2019: 20) assess it as a:

"performative mode of innovation, making constant adjustments to current systems that are virtual, not actual. Even if an individual designer is motivated to challenge inequality and has some agency as a consultant to do so, the institutional logics of the design profession and client organizations serve to reproduce inequalities."

In a more wide-reaching analysis, Hodgson et al. (2019) critiques the broader sweep of innovation techniques and the transient innovatory institutional forms they often operate through as part of the 'projectification' of governance that reshapes governments' engagement in societal issues, effacing the political, social and ethical dimensions for more instrumental rationalities.

Insights from PSI on the politics of innovation represent a fruitful point of engagement for urban political geographers seeking to attend to emerging heterogenous dispositifs of innovatory urban governance and their effects on the politics, parameters

and forms of power in urban decision-making in, with and beyond the state.

A research agenda

In this paper, we have sought to constitute urban governance innovation as an object of inquiry and to assemble the conceptual and empirical tools to interrogate it. We began by outlining innovatory urban governance as an increasingly pervasive framing and genre of governance practices, circulated by an influential epistemic community focused on governing complex challenges through the urban. Through the paper we have detailed how drawing urban political geography and PSI scholarship into closer dialogue productively enhances geographers' conceptual and analytical capabilities to unpack the logics, forms and practices emerging around urban governance innovation, and the implications for a related shift in the nature and politics of urban governance. To conclude we outline a critical research agenda, informed by this dialogue, around five sets of issues associated with the diverse forms, purposes and performances of urban governance innovation.

Reconfiguring states and governance authority through urban governance innovation: Governance innovation draws on a diversifying set of actors, techniques, dispositions and material qualities, through which new state configurations are emerging and the locus of governing authority and capacity are being reworked. Through innovatory governance techniques, state processes, identities and roles are being reconfigured in response to their explicit problematisation as no longer fit-for-purpose. Innovatory practices explicitly seek less state-centred enactments of governance and configure governing dispositifs that pluralise and disperse authority across a range of civic, non-profit, philanthropic and private sector actors – both locally embedded and working transnationally, across jurisdictional boundaries (see Cooper, 2017). States' roles in urban governance innovation may become more focused on mediating coherence across a broad range of interests, displacing assumptions of centralised control (Chatterton et al., 2018; Torrens and von Wirth, 2021). Alternatively, state capacities may be recentralised as authoritative 'innovation agents'

(Mazzucato, 2013), with capacities to be 'activated as part of a systematic progressive politics' (Martin and Pierce, 2013: 61) as 'anchor institutions' and 'crucial collaborators' in the pursuit of socially and environmentally progressive agendas (Thompson et al., 2020). Research will need to examine how authority is configured in diverse innovatory governance dispositifs, the implications for how and where urban political power is generated and to conceptualise the role of the state within these. And it will need to trace how urban states negotiate their embeddedness as institutional relays for national policy aspirations and global political-economic tendencies, alongside the diverse localised collaborations they engage in through innovatory urban governance practices. This will require geographers' sensitivity to contextually specific arrays of constraint and opportunity and to the relational multi-scalar contexts in which states operate and which condition the scope of conceivable and desirable governance change.

Shifting forms and dynamics of power in urban governance innovation: Innovatory governance forms and practices suggest shifting power dynamics that demand both a relational understanding of power and an insistent attention to the exercise of power. Urban political geography's longstanding conceptual and empirical concerns with the workings of power can make crucial contributions here. First is to query assumptions in much PSI literature of a politics of consensus across the multi-sectoral collaborations and diverse, distributed governance actors involved in innovatory practices (see Paschoal and Wegrich, 2017). Research will need to attend to how contested interests figure across the diverse problem sets to which innovatory techniques are applied, and how their power dynamics operate, are negotiated and potentially reconfigured through innovatory governance practices to differentially privilege certain styles, voices and actors, even as new lines of consensus may emerge. Second is to engage with the multiple lines of authority and forms of power through which innovatory urban governance works. Recent work on urban governance dispositifs (McGuirk and Dowling, 2021; Tozer, 2019), for instance, attends to the diverse and relational forms of power that are immanent in the changing socio-

material assemblages involved in governing complex urban problems. This takes us beyond the PSI literature's focus on authority to the diverse modalities of power through which innovatory modes of governing may operate, including persuasion, seduction, manipulation, inducement and negotiation (see Allen 2003; Kitchin et al., 2017). The relational conception of power mobilised here has much to offer analyses of diverse, distributed governance actors and the heterogenous institutional forms and agendas pursued via innovatory urban governance (see McGuirk, 2021).

Constituting urban governance innovation as a political project: There is a need for careful and critical engagement with the epistemic community that has been central to framing urban governance innovation as a political project. The actors constituting this community operate as intentional change agents with a potentially powerful influence in pre-filtering urban governance logics, practices and solution-sets (Fuentenebro and Acuto, 2021), and in casting particular problems as suited to governance at the urban scale. Attention is needed to analyse how this framing is drawn upon, translated, and contextually and relationally recombined in particular urban settings. This demands fine-grained unpacking of how the framing's particular problematisations of urban governance are mobilised and how the expanded palette of innovatory governance techniques it offers is adopted. It also demands critical questioning of the extent to which the logics, networks and agenda of the framing pre-filter localised innovation efforts, shape emergent governance dispositifs, and connect multiple forms of urban governance innovation within a city relate to each other.

The outcomes of implementing innovatory techniques in urban governance: Research needs to attend to and evaluate the outcomes delivered through urban governance innovations. Returning to questions of power, this opens critical questions around, first, what governance goals are authorised and legitimised by the adoption of innovatory stances, forms and techniques, as well as the implications for which problems are de/prioritised for 'improvement' and the scope of solution-sets imagined. If neoliberal urban governance logics suggest 'no alternative' to

marketised policy suites and resulted in the prioritisation of problems amenable to marketised solutions (Peck, 2001), what policy settings do the logics of innovatory urban governance suggest and how do they diversify (or foreclose) the problem set to be addressed? Second, a focus on IUG outcomes brings a critical perspective to the deliverables realised. PSI analysts have queried, for instance, the extent to which democratic accountability and procedural legitimacy are delivered through these techniques (Criado and Guevara-Gómez, 2021; Yuan and Gasco-Hernandez, 2021), how they manage contestation (see Paschoal and Wegrich, 2017) and the degree to which they operate as marketing tools without making institutions more inclusionary (Criado et al., 2020). Claims of their progressive potential are also countered by evidence of their deployment to identify least-worse outcomes from austerity cuts (Siebers and Torfing, 2018) and to cultivate entrepreneurial citizen subjectivities as 'solutions' to wealth inequalities (see Lyons et al., 2018). The innovation imperative increasingly scripts states into 'enabling' roles in the service of achieving agility and rapid results (e.g. OECD, 2019). As such, there are significant questions about the balance between achieving these ends and accountability. Equally, given their heterogenous politics, further research attention is needed to interrogate the conditions under which IUG practices deliver progressive outcomes or represent minimal change (Chatterton et al., 2018: 227).

Shifting spatialities of urban governance: Finally, there is a need to understand how the embrace of innovation reconfigures the spatialities of urban governance. The IUG framing urbanises governance innovation, focusing on the city as a problem site and a politically effective scale of intervention. Research is needed to investigate whether and how its embrace remaps the topological relations through which urban governance is operationalised and its power dynamics configured, connecting cities through policy mobility conduits such as the OECD's *City Innovation* network or through funding relationships with globally operating philanthropies. Equally we need better understanding of the effect innovatory techniques have on geographies of urban governance via its projectification, often configured at the

neighbourhood level, even as projects themselves might be constituted by global governance, national, state and local governance interests (see Torrens and von Wirth, 2021; Thompson et al., 2020). Research is needed to investigate the remapping of the spatialities of urban governance dispositifs and to build understanding of how place-based governance interests connect to multi-scalar interests and institutional architectures behind innovatory urban governance. This would trace how innovation processes are driven endogenously but also constituted as part of 'exogenous' processes of global urban governance restructuring (see Hodson et al., 2017). It might also be able to suggest both the opportunities for and limits to progressive social change activated by the rescaling of governance innovation through its urbanisation.

If, as this paper's opening quotation suggests, 'cities are innovating the structures of government every single day', then it is imperative that urban political geographers attend to the way that innovatory approaches are reconfiguring governance. The research agenda we have detailed responds to this reconfiguration of governance and the need to reflect on its emergence comprehensively and critically. Bringing the urban political geographic scholarship into closer conversation with PSI literature is one way of pursuing this agenda. The PSI literature can conceptually and empirically inform geographical research into IUG, providing ground from which to explore the innovation imperative, the problematisation of existing governance, emergent institutional forms, and heterogeneous politics, as innovatory governance is put into practice. By urbanising PSI approaches, we can better understand the implications that innovatory governance has for shaping policy and asserting expertise, the distribution of resources and opportunities to be drawn into governing dispositifs and, relatedly, the scope of conceivable and desirable governance change.

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Notes

1. As we have detailed elsewhere (McGuirk and Dowling, 2021), there are challenges in distinguishing assemblage from dispositif. Both Foucault and Deleuze sometimes merge their uses of the terms. Dispositif-thinking is more explicitly focussed on government, the cohering of heterogeneous elements around a particular problematic, and located in power as strategic in nature (Rabinow and Rose, 2003; Strippel and Bulkeley, 2019).
2. This includes UN HABITAT's 2021 Council of Urban Initiatives, which showcases local initiatives aimed to overcome 'the fragility of existing forms of governance', seeking to replicate and scale them and 'promote experimental initiatives ... but also identify barriers to innovation and progressive policymaking that hold cities back' (<https://unhabitat.org/initiative/council-on-urban-initiatives>).
3. This tendency persists, despite well-established recognition that public policy innovation is political in nature (Pettigrew, 1973), sensitive to political contexts (Hill and Hupe, 2009), and liable to failure and unintended consequences (Hartley, 2005).
4. This characterisation has been contested in relation to both national (Mazzucato, 2013) and municipal governments (Phelps and Miao, 2020).

5. Mazzucato's (2013, 2021) reinvigoration of the innovative potential of governments' public capacities is a marked exception.
6. Sellick (2019: 55) further defines iLabs as '(multi-disciplinary) teams or units within government charged with making innovation happen...solving specific problems in a given time frame...(and with) a broader role of promoting innovation methods and cultures'.
7. *MONUM* is, like many iLabs, seen as a type of in-house consultant offering innovation impetus and expertise to the City's various departments and agencies (see also Bloomberg Philanthropies, 2015).
8. Such as living labs (Cardullo et al., 2018; Hodson et al., 2018), hacking (Maalsen, 2022; Perng, 2018) and the infiltration of 'designerly' forms of urban governance and planning (Collier and Gruendel, 2022).
9. Design thinking involves having a human-centered, rather than technology- or organization-centered approach to problem solving. It works iteratively, moving from insights about end users, to idea generation and testing, to implementation (see Kimbell, 2011).

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