



Toward Innovative, Liveable and Prosperous Asian Megacities

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What is **City Innovation?**

 **IS Asia**.net
Asian City Innovation Systems Initiative



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Toward Innovative, Liveable and Prosperous Asian Megacities

1. General Perspectives on Innovation

- Change
 - **Degree of change:** Radical, Incremental, Disruptive, etc.
 - **Pattern of change:** Architectural, Modular
 - **Source of change:** Users, Producers, demand, supply, uncontrollable factors
- Classifications
 - **Sectors:** Technology, Services, Industry, Manufacturing , Agriculture, Business, Society, etc.
 - **Tangibility (Tangible VS Intangible):** Product, Process, Service, Organization, Institution, Paradigm, Position
 - **Conceptual Framework:** Linear, Chained Link, System
 - **Objectives:** Society, Business, Organisation, Individual, etc.



Why this is not enough?

- Existing studies and policies ignore space
 - National, sectoral and a bit regional levels
- Innovation takes place in space
 - Agglomeration of innovative activities in cities
- Focus mainly on supply side
 - How innovations are and should be produced, less on how they are demanded and consumed
- Imported models from the rich West
 - Contexts and conditions are different



2. Innovation and the City

- Cities are always the sources of innovations
 - Since olden times
 - Producers, markets, institutions are in cities
 - Agglomeration economies
 - Proximity: localization economies
 - Variety: urbanization economies
 - Density: scale economies



- Enforcing conditions:
 - Rural to Urban → from cities to megacities
 - Globalisation and regionalisation
 - And yet, things are always localised somewhere
 - Formal/Informal dichotomy
- So we need to think differently...
 - But how?
 - Different levels of analyses
 - Different aspects of innovations
 - Different scopes of thought



3. Defining City Innovation

- Urban Innovation
 - NESTA: Urban hubs and local links
- City, Innovation and sustainable development
 - Bjorn Johnson: innovation systems and cities
- Economic geography of innovation
 - Maryann Felman: geography of high-tech firms



- Still these models are limited to western, developed economies
- No insight into many other aspects of innovations in cities in developing economies
- But in reality, innovations are everywhere in cities



Our starting point

- City innovation as if people mattered
 - There must be goals of city innovation
 - Economic prosperity, Liveability, Equity
 - There must be spaces
 - Cognitive, Information, and Physical spaces
 - Then we incorporate these into the existing knowledge on innovation

Six dimensions of city innovation





Question:

- Pick one “thing” that you think is innovative.
- Then see if you can find all the six aspects of that innovative “thing”



Product, Process, Service

- Product
 - The most obvious and prevalent form
 - e.g., Ubiquitous infrastructure in Seoul
- Process
 - Innovative processes for maturing products
 - e.g., teleworking, call centers
- Service – key innovations in cities!
 - New ways to deliver various kinds of innovations
 - e.g., telemedicine, mobile fresh markets



Paradigm and Position

- Paradigm
 - Changes in ways of life, ways of thought
 - Diffusion until critical threshold
 - e.g, Rail transits in BKK, coffee drinking habits, DIY
- Position
 - Market niche
 - e.g, motorcycle taxis
 - Strategy, Vision, Imagination
 - e.g, Bangkok as a fashion city



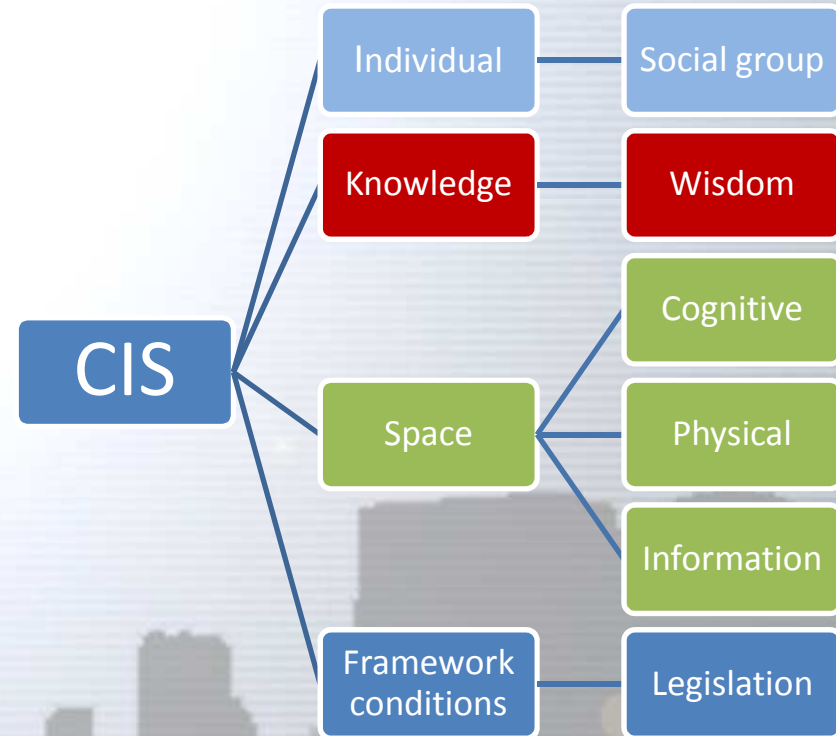
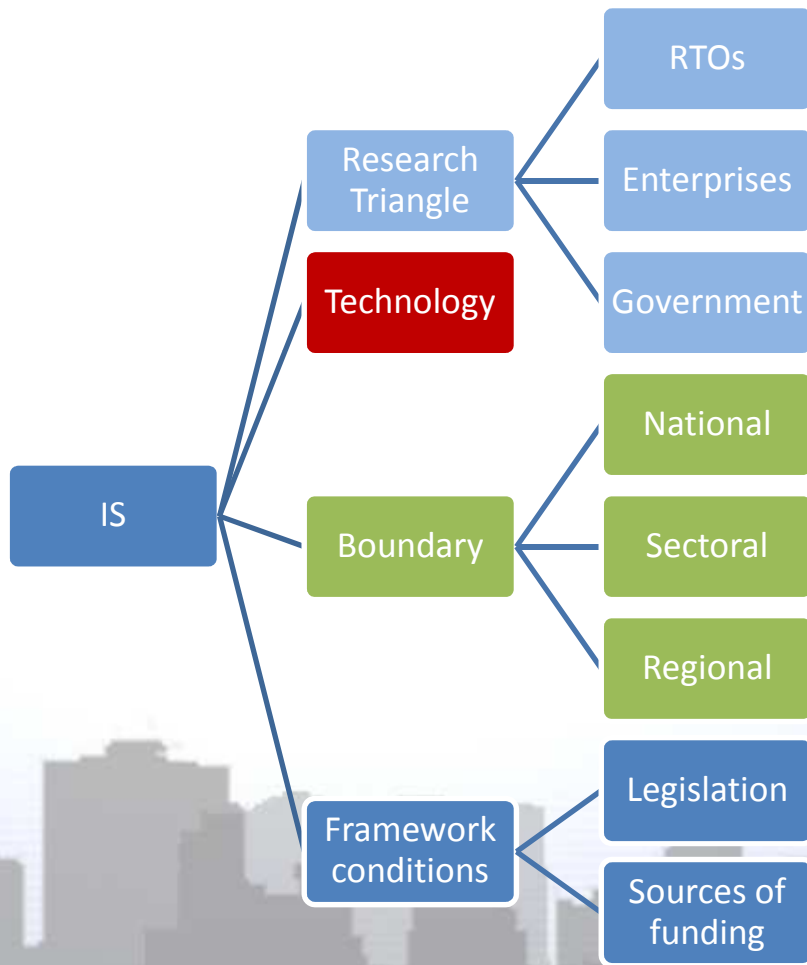
Institution

- Legal Frameworks
 - e.g., innovative governance, green acts, energy-saving stars
- Norms and common practices
 - e.g., “magic eyes” and anti-litter campaign in BKK
- Virtual communities
 - e.g., online social and phone-in networks, community radios



- Informal innovations
 - Innovative activities beyond the legal realm
 - Situational innovations under constraints
 - Particularly in megacities in developing countries
 - e.g., street vendors
- Bottom-of-the-Pyramid Innovations
 - Large markets with long tails...
 - Not just internet companies, but micro-finance
 - e.g., Grameen Bank, Credit Union League of Thailand

4. Designing a “City Innovation System”





5. A Long Road Ahead

- City innovation as a new approach to innovation studies and policy-making
- As a research project, how do we operationalize this?
 - Research from the ground up: case studies in six megacities
- Can this lead to changes in policy making?
 - We need a city innovation community