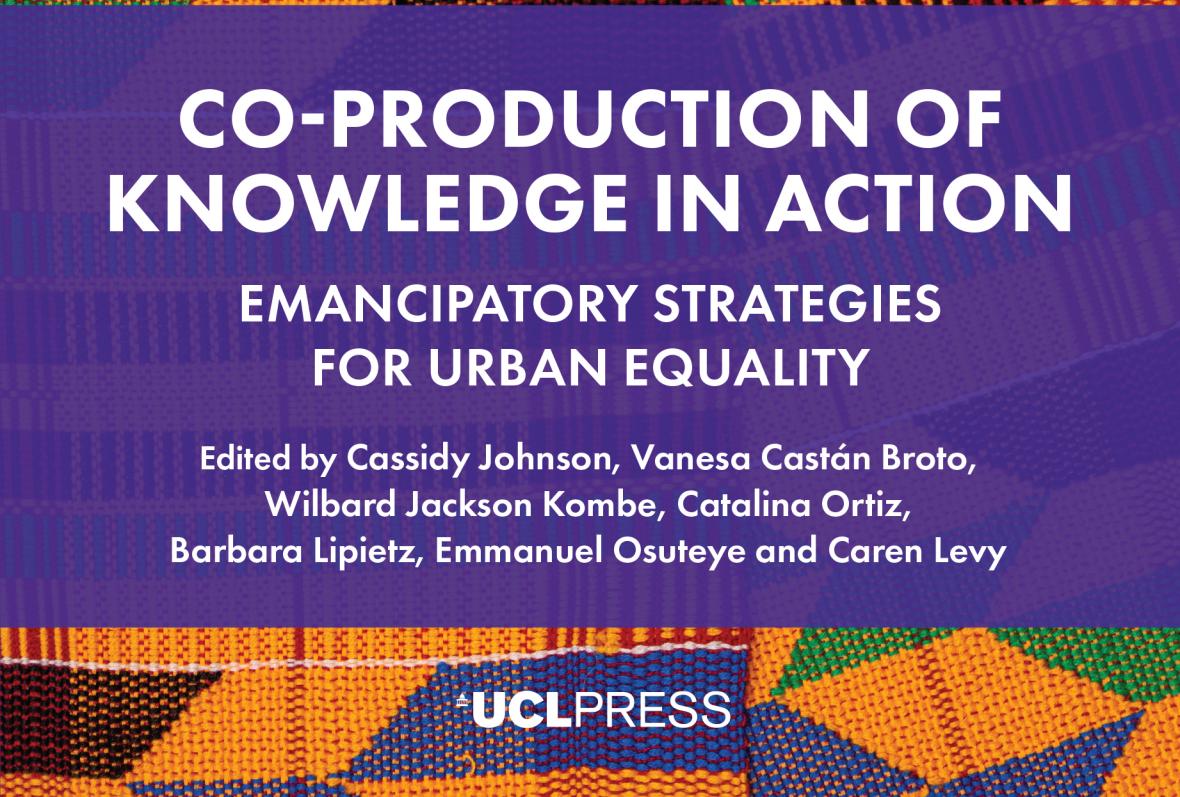




CO-PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION

EMANCIPATORY STRATEGIES FOR URBAN EQUALITY

**Edited by Cassidy Johnson, Vanesa Castán Broto,
Wilbard Jackson Kombe, Catalina Ortiz,
Barbara Lipietz, Emmanuel Osutseye and Caren Levy**



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Emancipatory strategies for urban equality

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*To the communities who were partners in the Knowledge in
Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) project*

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List of abbreviations

ACHR	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
ACTogether	Amazing Communities Together
AICE	International Association of Educating Cities
C40	Cities Climate Leadership Group
CAN	Community Act Network
CBCs	Case-based contributions
CCI	Centre for Community Initiatives
CiLP	City Learning Platform
CoLP	Community Learning Platform
DDA	Delhi Development Authority
DPU	Development Planning Unit
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FCC	Freetown City Council
FMDV	Global Fund for Cities Development
FOTIVBA	Foro de Organizaciones de Tierra, Infraestructura y Vivienda de la Provincia de Buenos Aires
GOLD	Global Observatory of Local Democracy and Decentralization
GPR2C	Global Platform for the Right to the City
HIC	Habitat International Coalition
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
IBCs	Issue-based contributions
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IGP	Institute of Global Prosperity, UCL
IIHS	Indian Institute for Human Settlements
IOPD	International Observatory on Participatory Democracy
KNOW	Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW project)
LRGs	Local and regional governments
MBD	Main Bhi Dilli campaign
MPD	Master Plan of Delhi
MSME	Micro-small-medium enterprise
NGO	Non-governmental organisation

NIUA	National Institute of Urban Affairs
NSCDN	Nakhon Sawan Community Development Network
NUA	New Urban Agenda
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PSI	Public Service International
PUCP	Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDI	Slum/Shack Dwellers International
SLURC	Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre
SWM	Solid waste management
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
WfW	Women for the World
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
WSDN	Women's Savings and Development Network
WUF	World Urban Forum

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Introduction: unlocking co-production in practice

Cassidy Johnson and Vanesa Castán Broto

This book departs from an understanding of co-production as an uneven and heterogeneous process, with varied results. Over the last few years, there has been growing scepticism about the conditions of co-production and the extent to which as a practice it leads to more emancipatory urban environments or, conversely, to the reproduction of the structures of oppression that operate in cities. Co-production has been variously hailed as a means for democratic problem solving (Song 2016), a planning instrument to bridge governance outcomes across local, regional and national scales (Siame and Watson 2022), or a strategy to claim urban space, particularly through the recognition of its initiatives (Recio et al. 2021).

Conversely, some of the hesitations added to co-production have related to its deployment as a means of delivering urban services and addressing distributional inequities in urban environments. Questions of dereliction of responsibility, lack of accountability, increasing transaction costs in decision making, reinforcing of inequalities and destruction of public value speak to the complex processes and engagements that shape co-production (Steen et al. 2018). Co-production may be a means to recognise the multiple forms of entrepreneurialism that emerge in urban environments (McFarlane 2012), but this may draw attention away from the systemic forms of injustice within which such entrepreneurialism develops.

Part of the challenge has been to establish a relationship between the process of co-production and the contexts of informality in which urban inequalities manifest. Definitions of informality as a condition of inhabitation do not stand critical scrutiny, and increasingly informality has been thought of as a site for critical analysis (Banks et al. 2020).

Nevertheless, a continuous engagement with informality, to investigate how inequities sediment through situated histories of urban development, makes it possible to identify the unfair processes that generate inequalities, thus opening the door to challenging them. Co-production for example is increasingly recognised as an effective means to engage with the hybridisation of urban governance, for example, enabling acting upon the unfair provision of urban services such as water (Ahlers et al. 2014). The engagement with co-production thus oscillates between the critical and the pragmatic, because it requires an engagement with real-world problems that are rarely neatly delimited.

At the same time, co-production enables challenging the colonialisities embedded in our current way of thinking about social relations and the social construction of knowledge, morality and goodness which informs the way in which urban development takes place. Co-production has travelled from a response to complex urban environments to a means of actively producing multiple forms of knowledge to inform those interventions (Mitlin et al. 2020).

The central hypothesis in this book is that the outcomes of co-production depend on how co-production is achieved: prescriptions for co-production mean little if co-production practices are not examined. Clearly, co-production requires moving beyond specific projects or interventions to engage with broader processes that often move beyond the urban space in which co-production takes place (Mitlin and Bartlett 2018).

What does this mean in practice? To answer this question, this book examines the practices of co-production, first looking into the wider contexts in which co-production practices happen ([Part I](#)) and second offering concrete examples of how co-production has evolved ([Part II](#)). The conclusion of the book is clear: there is no single recipe for co-production: co-production may occur in various ways, sometimes unexpectedly, and it depends, most of all, on the ability of those holding knowledge to open the process of learning and decision making to alternative perspectives.

This book emerged from a four-year collaboration within the Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) project, which brought together partners from around the world, coordinated by a group of scholars at University College London (UCL), to challenge the structural drivers of urban inequalities, seeking to deliver prosperity and resilience in contemporary cities.

KNOW sought to reverse the trend towards urban inequality, as disparities in access to resources, opportunities and services increase with

rapid urbanisation. New forms of intra-urban and inter-urban inequality are visible in cities. Spatial segregation, housing affordability, environmental pollution and lack of access to resources and employment opportunities contribute to the widening gap between affluent and marginalised urban populations. As the contributors to this volume recognise, the causes of urban inequality are complex and diverse, and, at the same time, they exhibit high levels of variation across contexts and scales.

On the one hand, urban inequalities relate to material and economic aspects which manifest in segregated cities and neighbourhoods with differing levels of infrastructure development and levels of access to the urban economy. On the other hand, inequality can be understood as linked to self-esteem, lack of power or lack of voice, as our colleagues in Tanzania emphasise (Kyessi et al. in this volume); a perspective which centres the social and psychological dimensions. Disparities in social status, access to education and employment opportunities can impact individuals' self-esteem, influence their ability to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes and limit their capacity to access the decision-making processes that affect them.

Co-production offers a response to these two challenges. On the one hand, the tradition of *service co-production* has pointed towards processes of collaboration between providers and users who collectively co-create a service. Service co-production emphasises shared responsibility, engagement and mutual exchange of knowledge and resources between service providers and users. In contrast, *knowledge co-production* refers to a parallel process of knowledge exchange that questions the superiority of expert knowledge in favour of a celebration of diverse understandings and perspectives. Knowledge co-production recognises the value of local and experiential knowledge alongside academic and other kinds of expertise, aiming to produce more relevant, context-specific and actionable knowledge. In both cases, the effort is one of addressing the two most prominent manifestations of urban inequality.

A key contribution of the KNOW project was to explore pathways through knowledge co-production and practice whereby such inequalities could be reversed, looking to engage with alternative directions of change through which such pathways developed (Cociña et al. 2022). Further, KNOW sought to explore the multi-scalar tensions whereby such practices of co-production would be developed (Levy et al. 2023). This book provides a complementary perspective by reflecting on the question of how co-production is accomplished and the intertwined challenges that are faced in active engagements with diverse contexts of co-production. This edited collection moves away from complex debates

on the conceptualisation of co-production and focuses instead on the learnt experiences of co-production as it emerges in different challenges, in which pragmatic compromises are often needed.

The contributions of this collection engage with the practical aspects of making co-production a reality that can be deployed to advance urban equality in different contexts and cities. All the contributions challenge readers to think of the purpose of co-production, the means of delivering co-production, the timescales at which co-production is delivered, and the politics inherent in the co-production process. Read together, the chapters provide the basis of a co-production typology that demonstrates that the power of co-production lies in its diversity as much as in recognising its limitations in different contexts.

The purpose of co-production

The chapters in this collection depart from a critical engagement with the purpose of co-production. There is a tendency to think of co-production as solutions-oriented. Service co-production is commonly structured around a given service, whereas knowledge co-production has knowledge outcomes associated with it. However, viewing co-production exclusively as solutions-oriented can be considered a ‘tyranny’ because it may mobilise co-production for unjust wielding of power. A focus on results in co-production, for example, may foreground a reductionist perspective, which translates complexity into a linear process with pre-defined outcomes. This may lead to a co-production process that prioritises narrow solutions which are perceived to have an immediate, tangible outcome. The instrumentalisation of co-production validates pre-determined solutions at the expense of a wider outlook that integrates diverse and contradictory perspectives in the collaborative production of knowledge.

On the other hand, delivering solutions may help gain purchase among communities, particularly when those solutions are related to tangible needs within the communities. Incremental delivery of responses may help develop purpose and motivation to keep the co-production process going. Moreover, delivering results may help build trust. Positive results confirm the optimistic outlook that kickstarts co-production and demonstrates its value.

The contributions in this book demonstrate that co-production depends on both providing results but also not getting hung up on them. Examples like Urban Action Lab operated out of Makerere University in

Kampala (Lwasa et al. in this volume) demonstrate this – the Lab has created a collective process of change that involves multiple actors and that leads to tangible and incremental outcomes over time.

In practice, a key aspect of co-production is that collaboration has to start from the outset, with no preconceptions, enabling communities to co-produce as a means of collective engagement. Co-production may be itself the purpose. Here, we need to recognise that co-production does not emerge in a vacuum, but within a history of the practice of community involvement under the labels of participatory action planning.

All the contributions in this book engage with co-production as a means of decolonisation or a means for emancipation. First, co-production offers the means to recognise diverse knowledge systems – that recognition targets the root causes of urban inequality, as explained above. Challenging the production of knowledge is also a means to challenge and transform power structures, and reclaim alternative narratives and experiences within the communities.

How to deliver co-production

The advantage of engaging with a number of cases of co-production in practice is that they make it possible to examine the range of methods that are in use for co-production.

Some of the challenges faced by those involved in co-production relate to who is involved in co-production and how. The chapters in this book differ between those written from an insider perspective embedded in communities that kickstart co-production processes, and those written by authors who come as external observers to the community and observe the co-production process analytically. This insider-outsider perspective shapes the means of co-production and how co-production is delivered. It is very difficult to understand the wider consequences of co-production when you are embedded in the process; you could argue that being too critical may stop engagement. How much criticism is needed and how much is enough? Co-production's fluid and non-linear nature is a reflection of the complexity of the collaborative endeavour. First, co-production involves diverse stakeholders, each bringing their unique perspectives, experiences and priorities to the collaboration. The dynamic interactions among these stakeholders lead to a fluid and evolving process as different voices contribute and shape the direction of the co-production. Moreover, the co-production process is often iterative, involving cycles of feedback, adaptation and refinement. As stakeholders

engage in dialogue and collaboration, they may discover new insights, encounter challenges or identify opportunities that necessitate adjustments to the initial plans. This iterative nature makes the process non-linear. Co-production contexts can change over time, influencing the dynamics of collaboration. A fluid and non-linear approach allows for adaptations to emerging issues, evolving needs or shifting circumstances within the community or the broader environment.

The knowledge element of co-production is evident in the way that different stakeholders bring their particular expertise and vantage points to the process. While residents bring their lived experiences, struggles and desire for change, we find that academics bring their skills of preparing briefs, designs or other products that help to synthesise or make visible the issues. This also helps to make those in politics accountable in terms of bringing their power to make a change. Thus, the co-production process is one of teamwork, with varying contributions to the team depending on the skillset, improving on what would be possible to achieve by any of these stakeholders alone.

The timescales of co-production

The timescales of action influence the practice and delivery of co-production. Urban development is increasingly characterised by projectification, as urban development planning becomes fragmented and structured in discrete projects with defined objectives, scopes, timelines and deliverables. The emphasis on projects rather than long-term programmes in urban development – whether this is led by local governments or by civil society and private organisations – has impacted the nature and dynamics of co-production.

Projects typically have a clear beginning and end, introducing a temporal dimension that shapes the level of engagement and collaboration. Unlike long-term programmes that may foster sustained relationships and continuous dialogue, self-contained short-term projects necessitate a more concentrated effort within a specified timeframe. This temporal constraint can influence the depth of community and organisational involvement, and the extent to which those mediating the process perceive that there is sufficient time to integrate diverse perspectives into the co-production process.

Moreover, focusing on projects often leads to a more targeted and outcome-driven approach. Such an approach prioritises interventions that lead to clear results, but avoids more long-term and uncertain

investments in institutional development, even though such efforts may have greater potential for high gains in terms of driving the initiative towards systemic change. In contrast to long-term programmes, where relationships and learning evolve over time, projects may place a higher premium on efficiency and streamlined decision making, thus challenging efforts to ensure inclusivity within the co-production process. The very efforts to define the outcomes of a given project may exclude those actors whose future orientations are not yet concrete.

Projects offer clear advantages. Formulating common objectives may bring different people and institutions together. Efficient decision making supports perceptions of effectiveness that may sustain the efforts over time. Projects allow for experimentation and innovation within a bounded context, and thus they provide spaces to test ideas, learn from successes and failures, and apply these insights to future initiatives. The iterative nature of project-based co-production can contribute to a dynamic learning process, fostering adaptability and responsiveness to evolving community needs.

There needs to be a recognition that co-production starts somewhere and that it is not always delivered in perfect conditions or with the necessary engagement, so we need to understand which of those conditions make it worthwhile. Co-production should be the default strategy. Even if it is a one-off research project, co-production can be achieved.

Co-production politics

Every chapter in this book demonstrates the fundamental political character of co-production. This, however, means different things in different contexts.

For example, contextual relations such as the relationship between political decisions and the urban economy – for instance, in terms of the allocation of resources, the time availability of different actors, and the distribution of power among those who participate in the process. Both institutional structures and economic incentives may play a role in facilitating or preventing co-production. Furthermore, there is a politics of how co-production insights and results are further used to influence practice or policy making.

At the same time, co-production serves as a dynamic and inclusive mechanism for political mobilisation by empowering communities, raising awareness, shaping narratives, fostering grassroots movements

and advocating for systemic change. Co-production fosters a sense of collective agency by bringing together community members, activists and policy makers. In Delhi, for example, co-production was used to contest a masterplan through the development of alternative perspectives. Through active participation in the co-production process, individuals and groups can recognise their collective power and potential to effect change, leading to increased political mobilisation. Co-production helps build platforms (metaphorically or literally), such as in the case of Freetown, in which different institutions contribute to building citizens' platforms.

However, co-production is also shaped by micropolitics, intricate and often subtle power dynamics, negotiations and interactions that occur within the collaborative process. The negotiation of agendas – the purpose of co-production discussed above – is central to co-production. This is why many practitioners emphasise the difference between co-production initiated by experts and powerful actors, and co-production initiated by communities.

Towards a typology of co-production

Table 0.1 presents an overview of different forms of co-production, with different aims, means, timescales and politics. What the table reveals is the structuring of co-production along different variables:

- As explained above, the purpose of co-production can vary, from delivering specific projects to creating institutional engagements and partnerships that endure over time or facilitating the consolidation and mobilisation of social movements.
- In terms of mechanisms, they may vary: sometimes co-production is a means of dialogue, but at other times co-production is a means to highlight unheard voices. The focus on specific outcomes may propel co-production, but this may be operating in different ways, whether the intention is to develop strategic partnerships through a process of institutional building or to deliver material outcomes by bringing together different actors.
- There are also differences between long-term engagement strategies and short-term self-contained projects, although this difference in reality may be less salient than it appears.
- And finally, there is a politics involved in the shifting narratives through co-production, most often through bringing community knowledge, experiences and needs to the forefront.

Table 0.1 Types of co-production

Type	Purpose	Mechanisms	Timeframes	Politics	Examples in this volume
Institutional co-production	Development of incremental solutions over time	Co-production as facilitating institutional change (for example, policy-makers' awareness)	Long-term engagement	Focus on strategies that emerge within a long-term policy process led by communities or their perspectives	Chapter 2 (Kampala) and Chapter 9 (Freetown)
Service and housing upgrading co-production	Project delivery	Co-production as empowering communities to have a voice	Ad hoc engagement in delivery and implementation	Focus on including community knowledge on a par with expert knowledge	Chapter 1 (Dar es Salaam)
Local innovation support co-production	Locally based innovation	Co-production as a means to produce and test locally adapted innovations	Short-term delivery of business opportunities	Focus on recognising the potential of communities to deliver adaptable solutions to their local context (design justice)	Chapter 7 (Kampala)
Insurgent co-production	Insurgence organisation and recognition of broader issues	Co-production as organising the spheres of activism, networks of solidarity and care	Occurring sporadically and taking windows of opportunity as they open in the political landscape	To create convincing narratives of change that put communities' concerns at the centre, but which also mobilise expert knowledge	Chapter 3 (Lima) and Chapter 6 (New Delhi)

(continued)

Table 0.1 (Cont.)

Type	Purpose	Mechanisms	Timeframes	Politics	Examples in this volume
Co-production as a tool for political mobilisation	Service improvement challenging disservice by the state; engaging in sites of co-production	Co-production as a means of delivering strategic partnerships to transform urban environments	Long-term mobilisation	Grassroots-driven creation of a movement without the state	Chapter 5 (Yangon)
Transformative co-production	Reproduction of upgrading processes at scale	Sustained partnership between communities and government (including leadership by the government at the national level)	Long-term systematic delivery of responses that reflect community needs	Mutually dependent on each other to achieve their interests (because the government institutions depend on communities' success)	Chapter 8 (several cities in Thailand)

The examination of these different aspects helps us map different modalities of co-production.

The contributions to the book

Part I: Understanding the contexts for co-production

Chapter 1 by Kyessi and colleagues presents a co-production process for land use planning and settlement design of an informal settlement in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The editors have chosen this as a first chapter because it places the practice of co-production within the larger discourse of participatory development and links the argument of the book to how co-production is the same as, and different from, participatory development. The authors make the point that the co-production approach goes beyond conventional community engagement by empowering and substantively working with the urban poor in a partnership process. They found that bringing together societal and expert knowledge to address the social and spatial inequalities has helped to address the important issues of self-esteem among community members. The chapter offers an excellent account of the co-production process, looking closely at how standards were changed and the support institutions provided through different project stages.

Chapter 2 by Lwasa and colleagues highlights how co-production depends on building partnerships. The Urban Action Lab at Makerere University is highlighted for its distinctive approach, wherein the community's voice is acknowledged and significantly amplified through continuous dialogue with policy makers. The chapter puts mediators such as universities at the core of these partnerships. In this case, the objective is to intervene in the material causes of urban inequality. Here, co-production emerges as a versatile research methodology, aiming to integrate local knowledge and research seamlessly into policy priorities. The exploration of the deployment of co-production methodologies in applied research raises questions about the location of knowledge and to what extent co-production is sufficient to decolonise the processes of knowledge production that shape urban environments.

Chapter 3 by Desmaison and colleagues is written from the perspective of a group of university researchers who have been working extensively with communities in networks of solidarity and care in order to address some of the key deprivations and urban inequalities in Lima, Peru. The chapter brings to the fore how researchers' expertise can bring

more visibility to community-driven initiatives, for example, by providing drawn plans, diagrams and other forms of professional support and solidarity. Each intervention generates different kinds of relationships and levels of responsibility for every stakeholder. The authors and her colleagues reflect on how these insurgent planning practices and experimentation aim to open up the space for many actors to intervene in urban governance and ultimately to re-arrange political institutionalism.

[Chapter 4](#) by Ortiz provides a perspective on the history of participation and co-production through an exploration of the work of Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda. Ortiz examines his notion of Sentipensante, in which the production of knowledge is something inherently emotional, and the population are the protagonists of history, seen as interlocutors rather than informants, and the role of the researcher is to convert stories into political tools. In doing so, Ortiz makes an important contribution to post-colonial studies of co-production, showing how the thinking leading to co-production emerges from attempts to deliver emancipation. Ortiz proposes four principles from the reading of Fals Borda: first, there is a need to rethink stories of struggle into stories of liberation so that there is a path to emancipation; second, there is a need to think of knowledge as a practice embedded in territories, for knowing is a bodily practice; third, there is a need to recognise the multiplicity of ontological perspectives that influence it; and, finally, this thinking engages with feminist proposals for a reparative approach to those liberation struggles explained above. At the core of this is the idea of positive subversion of Fals Borda; the purpose is to undermine power and hegemonies, but in a positive way towards liberation outcomes. This philosophy already has a strong influence in post-development studies, chiefly through Escobar's ideas on design for the pluriverse, but as Ortiz expresses it, they have the potential to redefine practices of co-production in multiple spaces.

Part II: Experiences of co-production

This part opens with [Chapter 5](#) by Kolovou Kouri and Sakuma focusing on the example of a women-led collective housing movement in Yangon, Myanmar, which has been operating with the support of a non-governmental organisation Women for the World. The chapter is based on engaging and vivid life stories of residents and community leaders that tell the story of how the process of collective housing has created an emotional sense of security and togetherness that enables them to focus on their children's education, their own business and

other things that improve their lives. The authors of the chapter are development practitioners and researchers working with movement; they reflect how co-production is both a principle and an everyday practice, and they highlight the emancipatory effect of this co-production in making ‘ordinary’ people experts, activists, advocates and holders of critical knowledge that slowly find recognition by diverse city actors.

[Chapter 6](#) by Narayan and colleagues foregrounds co-production as a tool for creating a campaign to democratise the official master planning process in New Delhi. The campaign, called Main Bhi Dhilli (I too am Delhi), brought together more than 40 civil society organisations, along with community resident activists, informal workers, architects, urban planners and researchers. Together, they created a parallel to the official master-planning process through being responsive to the needs of those who are not considered in conventional planning paradigms. The example shows that co-production is, above all, an exercise in collective creativity and that it is by generating ideas that knowledge hegemonies can be broken down. This links to some of the thinking of Sentipensar presented in the chapter by Ortiz. The authors of this chapter were co-ordinators of the Main Bhi Dhilli campaign, and they reflect that the manner in which collective understanding was built within the campaign was through combining different streams of knowledge such as those from research, activism and lived experiences. In this way, like the case in Lima, the experience in Delhi links with traditions of insurgent planning in which planners align themselves with the concerns of the communities they serve, contesting the structures of power. The chapter also reflects on the endurance of the masterplan in creating unequal conditions in cities; as master-planning continues, it cannot be put aside, as the strategy here is to create alternatives to change those master-planning processes and challenge their inherent epistemic injustices.

[Chapter 7](#) by Kisembo and colleagues highlights how co-production processes can act as a means for innovation to contribute to the urban economy. The chapter, written by members of the Urban Action Lab at Makerere University in Kampala, explores the process of working with communities to develop a business model that transforms organic household waste into cooking briquettes. Spurring on innovative waste economies, this process involved business planning, briquette production, labelling and marketing. Evolving out of frustration and need, these micro and small enterprises are providing forms of economic exchange that directly support informal communities, while at the same time serving to manage waste in the city – an enduring wicked problem in

many cities around the world that municipal governments cannot entirely tackle alone. The authors place co-production here in the context of ‘self-provisioning’, which could be critiqued in a similar way to service co-production, because the inhabitants of informal settlements have to shoulder responsibilities for waste management services due to the failure of the state to provide these. The Kampala example shows how citizens need to be increasingly involved in servicing and innovative ways to do this that provide economic opportunities. The knowledge aspect of the co-production process here was bringing together a community-developed technology of briquette making with the knowledge of business from the academics involved to enable the endeavours to be scaled up.

Chapter 8 by Supreeya Wungpatcharapon and colleagues illustrates the history of one of the most well-developed community networks that make up the Thai government’s celebrated Baan Mankong programme, which is based on community-driven upgrading of informal settlements. The chapter tells the story of the Nakhon Sawan Community Development Network, in which community members, with the support of the local government and other local stakeholders, community architects and the central government have upgraded 30 of the 50 informal settlements in this city. The chapter shows how strong support from the Thai government for a commitment to the community-driven development model through the Baan Mankong programme has transformed lives for those living in informal settlements. It also explains how other institutions are part of this co-production process – for example, in Nakhon Sawan, the City Development Committee is an important platform for the city that unites all of the major stakeholders under the direction of the mayor, bringing together all the relevant stakeholders that are relevant to the Baan Mankong, such as public landowners, those involved with the electricity and water supply, officials from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, academics, and representatives from the community network.

Chapter 9 by Koroma and colleagues describes a knowledge co-production process called the City Learning Platform (CiLP) in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Organised on a quarterly basis, the CiLP provides a representative governance structure for a wide range of stakeholders to address urban development challenges through representative governance, thus fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among community residents and other stakeholders. The authors remark that community residents in particular need support and resources to actively participate in decision making and contribute their knowledge

and experiences. The CiLP has delivered some specific benefits to some neighbourhoods, but has largely focused on developing a base for a long-term strategy of institutional change that would enable routinely including communities across the city as meaningful participants and sometimes leading the process. This strategy also responds to the problem of fragmentation of decision making in the city. In this way, the city-learning platforms provide a governance framework that counters tendencies towards technocratic and top-down decision making that pervades urban development, as we will also see in the example of Delhi in this volume.

Part III: Expanding the co-production experience

The last part of the book shows co-production as a versatile practice that can challenge ideas about the deployment of knowledge across scales.

[Chapter 10](#) by Cociña and colleagues reflects on a knowledge co-production process of creating a flagship report for the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) on the topic ‘Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality’. The chapter details the writing and deliberation process that sought to bring together multiple perspectives from local governments and civil society actors to produce a common narrative. In this case, it is the writing process that enabled the co-production. The chapter shows that co-production lessons can be extended to a variety of processes of learning – in this case, the purpose was to generate purchases around a common process of building an agenda that everyone involved feels is their own; this resonates with other processes such as the development of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, in which a similar process of engagement was attempted. However, in this case, the focus of the co-production process, plus the process of writing, made it possible for the actors to see their voices represented directly.

[Chapter 11](#) by Banyai-Becker and colleagues reflects on co-production experiences at the PhD level, showing that knowledge co-production experiences can provide a springboard for further learning at university. This resonates with the chapter by Patel in this volume. Here the PhD students reflect on how learning (and unlearning) is central to the co-production, and how co-production generates a process of self-reflection in which the power relations concerning research become questioned. This places the researcher in a difficult position vis-à-vis the need, on the one hand, to navigate their own PhD process while, on the other hand, building structures of care and generosity into their own research.

[Chapter 12](#) presents the summary of an interview with Dr Tim Ndezi, in which he discusses the experience of the NGO he founded in Tanzania called the Centre for Community Initiatives (CCI). CCI uses knowledge co-production methods to support the community groups who are part of the Tanzanian Federation of the Urban Poor. The chapter explains how CCI brings in local government and community members in a process that enables all to see and understand the kinds of struggles that the urban poor face and to find practical solutions. This chapter exemplifies how knowledge co-production is a process of shared learning and understanding that has practical outcomes for urban dwellers.

The part comes to a close with a commentary in [Chapter 13](#) by Zarina Patel on the potential of co-production and the role of universities. One of the insights of Patel's chapter is a focus on co-production as a means to create room for manoeuvre. Room for manoeuvre has long been a point of connection between urban dwellers and activists in their struggle to gain political recognition, and ideas of room for manoeuvre influenced the KNOW project, via the thinking of Caren Levy. Patel's commentary resonates with the experiences of social movements. She identifies four strategies to gain room for manoeuvre: the first strategy relates urban struggles to sustainability as a means to highlight the material and ecological basis of urban conflicts. Patel here calls attention to the different 'desire lines' for development that are followed in informal settlements. Desire lines are the courses of action that connect past, present and future in imaginations and interventions in the city, such as planning. The second strategy to gain room for manoeuvre is to use co-production as a means to challenge epistemic injustices and thus flatten power relations created by knowledge production. The third strategy relates to the need to rethink institutions to allow co-production to emerge, even those institutions of practitioners-activists or practitioner-academics, who, in their practices, must also transform the very organisations in which they work. The fourth strategy focuses on power and how institutions create institutional barriers for co-production, from incentive systems to funding strategies – the means of recognition invalidate the possibility to develop actively engaged work which does not always recognise the needs of working in practice. The recent turn towards impact provides opportunities for challenging these barriers, but so far, impact delivery continues to rely on outdated systems of measure and indicators that do not always accommodate the difficulties of doing co-production in practice.

[Chapter 14](#) by Caren Levy and Barbara Lepietz looks back at the chapters in the book to reflect on the changing practices of urban



Figure 0.1 Case studies discussed in the book.

Source: Prepared for this publication by Ottavia Pasta

development planning, and the role of planning in transforming cities to achieve urban equality. Reflecting on the ‘strictures of expertise’ they reflect on a history of planning that has systematically created forms of exclusion and misrepresentations that are at the core of many of the urban injustices we see today. They call for transdisciplinary practices as a means to break the mould and create opportunities for alternative activities. They propose a series of principles to do things differently which characterise co-production as a situated practice in which practitioners, by means of recognising their own power, play a key role.

Figure 0.1 shows the case studies discussed in the book.

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Part I

Understanding the contexts for co-production

1

Co-production: the power of societal knowledge in *post-ante* planning of informal settlements

Alphonse Gabriel Kyessi, Wilbard Jackson Kombe,
Tatu Mtwangi Limbumba and Fredrick Bwire Magina

Introduction

Urban planning and related studies have shown that most cities in Asia, Africa and Latin America are largely a product of planning knowledge and experiences imported from the West (Sarin 1982; Home 1997; Njoh 1997, 2007, 2008; Watson 2009). In Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, urban land use planning system and practices are mainly influenced by ideas and paradigms from the Europeans, especially the British, French, German, Portuguese and Belgian (Njoh 1997, 2009; Rakodi 2001; Abbott 2012). For instance, Njoh (2009) reports that after the Second World War, colonial administrations were assigned the responsibility to carry out urban land use planning using the British Town Planning Act of 1932 and other supporting instruments (Njoh 2009).

Most importantly, the planning knowledge and practice deployed to direct land use development of cities during and after the colonial period did not recognise planning knowledge and experiences held and used by the local communities to generate and regulate land use development. Yet, towns such as Timbuktu, Kilwa, Zanzibar, Mombasa, Sofala and Mogadishu had existed as trading centres with their own urban spatial configurations for decades before the colonial era (Mabogunje 1990; Njoh 2008; UN-Habitat 2009). Omolo-Okalebo (2011) asserts that orderly spatial structure and efficient layout planning constituted critical attributes of the thinking and practice of the British colonial planning

system in particular. Hall (2014) emphasises that whilst orderly and healthy public hygiene dominated colonial urban planning practice, the societal planning knowledge and practice gave rise to dense organic networks of access roads and paths, bazaars and crowded housing that largely reflected local initiatives, experiences, practices, culture and values of urban life. Indeed, the knowledge used in such African urban spaces was shaped by spatial behaviour affiliated to family, kinship and ethnic bonds (Limbumba 2010; Kinyanjui 2016). In Europe, urban planning, public health and ventilation were adapted to deal with unsanitary, crowded and precarious living conditions resulting from the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution and unprecedented urbanisation in the West (Njoh 2007). Functionality and hierarchical ordering of land use through zoning were central in the fight against epidemics such as cholera (Njoh 2007).

Despite the shrinking capacity of the public and its agents to plan and promote coherent urban land use development, urban planning practitioners and policy makers alike have not acknowledged and tapped into the societal knowledge in land use (spatial) planning. The latter is one of the main forces shaping built urban space in most cities in SSA countries.¹

This chapter explores co-production of built urban spaces in informal settlements, through the use of societal or traditional knowledge, expert knowledge and institutional provisions in the regularisation of informal settlement.

To understand how these knowledge sources influenced the built space generated, the discussion is framed around the co-production approach that combines partnership and governance in public services delivery (Osuteye et al. 2019; Kombe et al. 2020). The key distinctive feature of the co-production approach is that as a paradigm and approach to public services delivery, it goes beyond the conventional community engagement by empowering and substantively engaging and working with the urban poor in a partnership process (Kombe et al. 2020). At the centre of the co-production approach lie issues that concern epistemological justice and the acknowledgement of the reality that the daily experiences and practices local communities use to shape their living and working spaces depict tacit knowledge they have that exists in a variety of forms and contexts. The focus of knowledge sources discussed in this chapter are societal and expert knowledge. These have driven and shaped spatial structure of many informal settlements in Tanzania as well as in many other countries in SSA.

Societal knowledge

Existence of local or societal knowledge that is shaping spatial structure and form of informal settlements is a contentious and an underrated area in academic debates and praxis (Kombe and Kreibich 2006). This is primarily because perceptions and arguments on informality have centred on the comparison based on the formal (well-structured) and informal (organic) binaries (Kombe and Kreibich 2006; Roy 2014; Koster and Nuijten 2016). The plethora of derogative terms which are used to conceptualise and characterise the spatial character of most informal settlements, such as ‘out of control’ (Mottelson 2020), ‘impossible cities’ (Roy 2009), ‘illegal city’ (Roy 2005; Varley 2013) or ‘mazagazaga’ or ‘unstructured spatial structure’ underline overgeneralisation and little understanding and appreciation of societal knowledge, despite being the system that is generating cities in its own right. Studies conducted in several African cities and elsewhere have shown that informality is a mode of urbanisation that is variably shaped by social actors using societal knowledge (Rakodi and Leduka 2004; Kombe and Kreibich 2006; Roy 2008; Koster and Nuijten 2016; Kombe 2017). Societal knowledge includes unwritten norms, values and rules that are variably used to regulate private interests on the land and promote public interests such as access roads and recreational open spaces. Jenkins (2008) asserts that such informal practices are socially more legitimate than the formal practices of the state actors. They are also more adaptable to the contextual realities of informal cities (Kombe 2017). Babbie (2005) observes that norms used by societal actors in informal settlements are crucial as they regulate social behaviour and create more regularities. Levi-Faur (2017) asserts that informal mechanisms of social control can be more effective than formal ones. However, Braithwaite (2017) adds that the formal system including regulations ought to strengthen the informal, primarily because this is what low-income communities are generally more conversant with.

Expert knowledge

The universalisation of urban land planning (expert) knowledge has promoted concepts that tend to over-emphasise a number of aspects. These include orderly spatial structure, uniform land use planning standards that define varying zoning plans/sizes for land uses and

prescribe hierarchies and desirable densities for facilities and services in the planned built environment. The standardised urban planning (expert) knowledge including planning systems and practices prevail in most SSA cities and have repeatedly led to failed outcomes (Abbott 2012). Expert knowledge is closely connected to the institutional provisions that concern important issues such as accessibility, connectivity and functionality matters, as well as policies and regulations that regulate urban land markets and protect the public interest (including ecosystems and environmental resources), promote the optimal utilisation of land, designate and protect land for public uses, secure land tenure and strive to keep socio-spatial fragmentation and urban sprawl in check (Figure 1.1). Expert knowledge is mainly acquired through formal education and practised by trained personnel, and involves regulatory and administrative institutions such as the local and central governments and professional registration boards. However, in most SSA cities, the utility of expert knowledge has been exclusionary (Hall 2014) and has repeatedly been challenged (Watson 2009; Kombe 2017). Resources paucity in the public and private sectors, the increasing dominance of economic planning and neo-liberal policies (including the commodification of urban land and most importantly the unprecedented urbanisation and public policy that is ambivalent towards informality) have rendered urban land use planning practices that are driven by expert knowledge prescriptions untenable in large parts of most SSA cities (Kombe 2017). As a result, informality has become the major driver and the dominant feature of urban land use development in SSA cities. In most cities it accounts for over 70 per cent of built-up areas (Magina et al. 2020a, 2020b). In Tanzania, attempts to control informality through programmes such as slum clearance, squatter settlements upgrading, and massive planning and supply of housing land have proved ineffective primarily because most interventions tended to alienate formal from the informal areas and paid little or no attention to subsisting societal knowledge (Kombe 2017).

Conceptual framing

Collective and individual space production initiatives that generate and govern urban space using societal knowledge, including unwritten norms, values and rules (Rakodi and Leduka 2004; Kombe and Kreibich 2006; Roy 2008), underline the existence of tacit knowledge (Kombe and Kreibich 2006) and indigenous planning (Walker et al. 2013), as well as question the misconceptions inherent in the standardised urban planning

hegemonies which tend to obscure societal knowledge. The latter is mobilised through self-production initiatives of individual households (the plot level) or through collective efforts at the housing cluster and community levels. In either case, the process is often spontaneous, giving rise to organic structure of roads, footpaths and physical forms.

How societal and expert knowledge domains interfaced during the *post-ante* regularisation of informal settlements remains a grey area; at the same time, scholarship in the area is limited and its importance continues to be underrated by urban practitioners (planners and urban designers) and policy makers (Kombe and Kriebich 2006; Kombe 2017).

The conception of knowledge co-production as used in this chapter is seen as a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach that bring together actors with varying knowledge sources, interests and resources to work together as partners. In this regard, knowledge co-production is seen as a process that bridges the expert (formal) knowledge (such as skills, expertise and technical prescriptions) with societal knowledge (uncoded norms, values and hands-on skills). The interactions between the two knowledge spheres or sources are dynamic and fluid. They entail formal and informal actors and processes (Roy 2005; Kombe and Kriebich 2006; Mitlin 2008). In this regard, interventions aimed at retrofitting informal settlements such as the regularisation processes undertaken in cities is seen as a process that builds upon the subsisting societal knowledge so as to moderate expert knowledge and institutional normative provisions such as policies, laws, stringent standards, regulations and rules that ought to shape the spatial structure and socio-economic development of cities in the Global South.

Insofar as the *post-ante* planning (regularisation) of Goba informal settlement is concerned, the knowledge co-production process was informed by three interconnected spheres or knowledge sources (Figure 1.1). These are: (i) society (tacit) knowledge – held by the community; (ii) expert knowledge – acquired and held by bureaucrats/practitioners, academics and public (including retired) officials; (iii) institutional frameworks or spheres such as policies, standards and regulatory provisions, and the proclamations by institutions with mandate and responsibility over urban land development and administration such as the central government Ministry of Lands. Regularisation of (Goba) informal settlement is seen as a co-production process that brings together the three knowledge spheres.

Although co-production gained currency in the 1980s as an initiative to intensify state-citizen interaction in US cities (Mitlin 2008), it has also been instrumental in addressing the misconceptions that knowledge

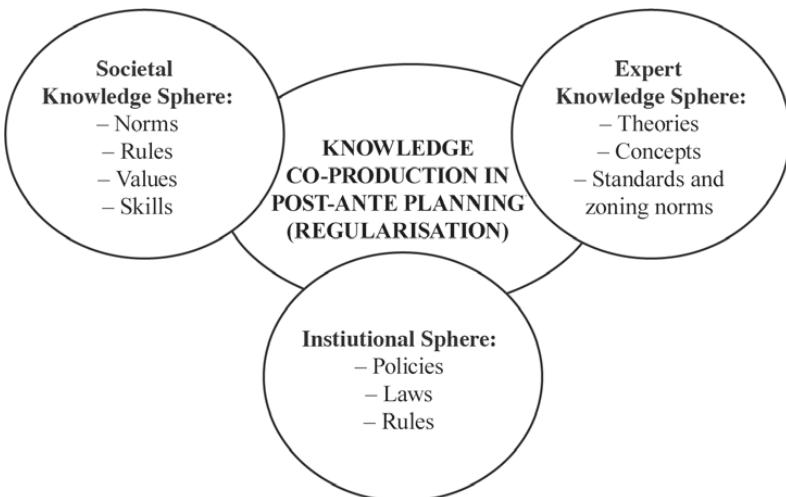


Figure 1.1 Main spheres of knowledge co-production in *post-ante* planning.

Source: Authors

generation is a preserve of technical experts and researchers (Mitlin 2008; Mitlin and Bartlett 2018; Buyana et al. 2021). The bottom line for knowledge co-production is that stakeholders and communities from diverse backgrounds and sectors work together to share, co-learn and co-generate knowledge (Mitlin 2008; Osuteye et al. 2019). In the context of the regularisation of informal settlements in Tanzania, a mixture of knowledge is structuring built-up areas in the regularised settlements. Often, experts, including researchers, academics and practitioners/technocrats as custodians of coded knowledge, play particularly critical roles. Their appreciation of the existence of varying and multiple knowledge sources and willingness to learn from others is a critical factor in knowledge co-production (Song 2016; Kombe et al. 2020; Buyana et al. 2021). Also, policy makers and technocrats may influence knowledge co-production as they take positions that emphasise their interests or influence stakeholders' composition or the scaling up of local solutions (Buyana et al. 2021). Members of local communities, civil society organisations and opinion leaders are critical players because their knowledge and actions often represent the everyday practices/lives and concerns of communities (Castán Broto et al. 2022).

The next section outlines the methodological approach.

Methodology

A case study strategy was deployed; fundamentally it was informed by qualitative interviews of individuals and focus group discussions (FGDs) carried out in Goba between March and May 2021. These activities were preceded by a review of secondary data sources. The data and information collected was also complemented by in-depth analysis of spatial structure and the organisation of selected housing clusters in Goba settlements. The selection of the clusters focused on housing where the community has made significant efforts to orderly structure their housing and provide for basic services such as roads, recreational open spaces and land for communal services (for example, cemeteries and religious sites), and protect these areas from encroachment. In total, 76 households and official interviews were carried out; FGDs were also held.

In order to collect data on the societal and expert knowledge applied during settlement regularisation, land use (spatial) planning activities, actors involved and their roles were documented through in-depth interviews with key informants, including opinion of leaders involved in the process. Narratives from in-depth interviews were collected from the following purposefully selected informants:

- 60 landowners, including those who bought land, subdivided and later sold it to land seekers;
- three memory holders (elderly persons) hold the history of the settlement, including the former Chairperson of Goba who has been a resident of the area for over 20 years;
- one Ward and two Mtaa (sub-ward) level officials;
- two planning and land surveying companies involved in the settlement regularisation process;
- three individuals living in housing clusters which display significant efforts to spatially structure their cluster using tacit or societal knowledge; and
- five individuals living in the settlement who used their expert knowledge to educate and actively support the community initiatives to regularise their settlement.

An open-ended questionnaire was used as an interview guide. Documentary reviews also involved spatial analysis of Google Maps between 2005 and 2021 in order to track the development trends of Goba settlements. This complemented the narratives from the respondents. Underpinning the

approach to data collection, especially the interaction with the various respondents outlined above, was the recognition that multiple actors with varying planning knowledge sources are generally involved and shape self-built informal settlements (Kombe et al. 2020; Buyana et al. 2021). The focus during the interviews was on what knowledge was deployed, its sources from the various actors (landowners, land developers, community leaders, enlightened settlers and so on) and how the knowledge held was deployed at different stages of the settlement growth.

Findings and discussions

Institutional knowledge deployment in Goba

The regularisation process in Goba was largely driven by the existing policy and legal framework which governs urban (land use) planning. The National Land Policy of 1995 and the National Human Settlements Development Policy of 2000 recognise the existence of informal settlements and advocate for the regularisation of such settlements. Emphasis is also put on the participation of local authorities and the community which has a responsibility of mobilising resources to finance the regularisation projects.

Sections 23, 25 and 56–60 of the Land Act No. 4 of 1999 clarify tenure issues in informal settlements (URT 1999; Lerise et al. 2022). Sections 3–19 of the Land (Schemes of Regularisation) Regulations 2001, sections 42–43 and 55 of the Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act No. 8 of 1982, section 23 of the Urban Planning Act (UPLA) No. 8 of 2007 and section 25 of the Land Use Planning Act No. 6 of 2007 provide for the procedures of carrying out regularisation, including planning standards, to be used as outlined in the national regularisation manual and section 4(1) of the Urban Planning (Planning Space Standards) Regulations 2018 (URT 2018).

Section 23 of the Urban Planning Act 2007 provides for procedures for declaring the regularisation scheme, amending the scheme, preparing a new scheme, approval of the scheme, contents of the scheme and actors who can prepare the regularisation scheme. Part 23(1) of the UPLA provides that any area intended for a scheme of regularisation should be declared a planning area under the Act (URT 2007). Part 23(2) of the UPLA requires the inventory to be made in line with the provisions of section 58 of the Land Act No. 4 of 1999, which requires an inventory to be prepared by experts, including, among others, a town

planner. Another instrumental piece of legislation deployed was the Environmental Management Act of 2004 (URT 2004), reviewed in 2021, which stipulates planning standards in environmentally sensitive (hazardous) areas in section 52.

Mobilisation and engagement of stakeholders (partners)

Based on the provisions of the existing policy and legal frameworks, six main institutions and their respective institutional operational levels were mobilised and engaged in the regularisation of Goba (Figure 1.2). These are the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development (MLHHS), the Regional Administrative Secretariat (RAS), Ubungo Municipality, private planning firms (Geo Consult and HUSEA) and the Community Regularisation. Also, landholders in Goba were critical players in the whole process. The roles of these actors are briefly discussed below.

The roles of the MLHHS were in principle to ensure that the laws, policies, guidelines and regulations which govern regularisation were observed. It was also responsible for monitoring community engagement in the regularisation process and ensuring that the expected product (namely the layout scheme) is produced so as to facilitate issuance of titles. The Ministry was also responsible for handling grievances from different actors (including landholders), approving the layout scheme,

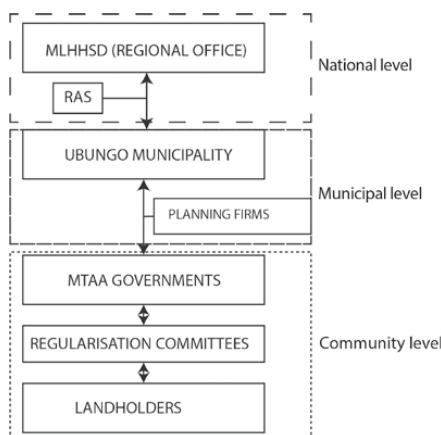


Figure 1.2 Institutional structure for the regularisation of the Goba informal settlement.

Source: Adapted from Lerise et al. 2022

and processing and issuing title deeds. Before the regularisation, town planning layout schemes and cadastral survey plans were presented to the MLHHSD for approval, after having been submitted to the RAS for scrutiny and endorsement first. The Ubungo Municipal Council (UMC) was the planning authority responsible for overseeing the entire process as per the Urban Planning Act of 2007. The UMC was also responsible for the approval of the private planning firms appointed by the community regularisation committee. Other roles of the UMC were to provide technical support during the process of implementation to ensure that the schemes produced complied with provisions in the law and that they met the basic planning qualities before submission to higher authorities for approval. The responsibilities to prepare the regularisation planning scheme were contracted out to private planning firms (Geo Consult and HUSEA). The two firms were also responsible for mobilising and sensitising landholders to contribute financial resources required to prepare regularisation schemes. They also supported landholders to fill application forms and other documents for the acquisition of title deeds.

The Mtaa leaders and the regularisation committees also organised public meetings to sensitise the community to effectively participate in the project. They worked closely with the planning and survey firms, landholders and other stakeholders to ensure the smooth execution of the project, mobilising landholders to show up during property identification and providing progress reports on the project in regular and emergent meetings. Closely related to the roles of the Mtaa governments, the Regularisation Committees (Kamati za Urasimishaji) took the lead during the implementation of the regularisation process. Their major role was to work with experts (planning firms) on a daily basis. As such, on the one hand, the committees had to settle plot boundary disputes and convince landholders to surrender part of their land for basic services and infrastructure, access roads and footpaths. On the other hand, land occupiers were responsible for contributing to the fund for the implementation of the projects, as well as providing cooperation to the planning firms and to the regularisation committees.

Expert knowledge deployment process in Goba

The deployment of expert planning knowledge essentially refers to normative knowledge that includes the administrative and legal procedures prescribed in the Urban Planning Act No. 8 of 2007. Normally the deployment of expert knowledge often takes a command-and-control approach

(Kombe 2017); however, in the regularisation of Goba settlements and other regularised informal settlements, the use of expert knowledge took a flexible and negotiation path. The clauses of the legislation that were deployed in the ‘post-ante’ regularisation process focused on a number of procedures, namely: mobilising the community and building consensus on the need for regularisation; soliciting and seeking approval of the scheme of regularisation from the local government authority (LGA); establishing and launching a community (technical) committee to support and implement the project; and signing of the project execution contract with private planning/surveying consulting firms. The committee was the key structure that worked with all other partners on behalf of the community.

Other critical procedures undertaken are the identification of land and properties held by individuals and institutions. This was followed by negotiations between community leaders and the community regularisation technical committee to secure land required for public use, such as access and local roads, playgrounds and cemeteries. Once negotiations were complete, a layout plan showing the private property boundaries, land designated for public uses and protection of fragile ecosystems such as valleys were co-produced by the technical committee in collaboration with landowners and community leaders. The plan was thereafter approved and a cadastral survey was carried out.

As noted earlier, the urban land use planning procedures were not wholesale imposed in Goba, but contextually adapted² through negotiations with key partners such as the Ministry of Lands, the Regional Administrative Secretary, the Municipal Authority and the Community Committee. Some of the standards that were strictly not observed include size of access roads, paths, recreational open spaces and schools (Table 1.1). Where landowners were adamant that they wanted to donate land, the status quo was adopted, as the following quote elaborates:

in order to secure land for public use, we negotiated with landowners and some were ready to donate. In some circumstances where land for public use, for instance, access roads could not be provided, the existing road widths were maintained although not in the required standards. (Retired Chairperson in Kibululu Mtaa and Geo Consult Limited in Goba, 2020)

Discussions with the key respondents including community leaders and public officials involved in the regularisation of Goba revealed the

Table 1.1 Urban land use planning standards versus the standards used in the regularisation of Goba settlements

Land use		National Urban Planning Space Standards	Standards used in Goba	Remarks
Access roads		4–8 metres	3–8 metres	Leaders and elites pioneered land reserve for access roads during land sales. Very few roads had 6–8 metres
Access paths		2–4 metres	1–2 metres	In some cases where land was not reserved for access roads during land sales
Schools	Nursery	1,200–1,800 sqm.	1,000 sqm.	Elites set aside their land for education facilities
	Primary	1.5–4.5 ha	4,500 sqm. (0.045 ha)	Elites set aside their land for education facilities
	Secondary	2.5–5 ha	4,000 sqm. (0.04 ha)	Elites set aside their land for education facilities
Recreational areas	Children play field/1,000 persons	0.2–0.4 ha	4,000 sqm. (0.04 ha)	Original land occupiers with large land parcels offered land for other public uses
	Play field at community level	4–8 ha	4,000 sqm. (0.04 ha)	
Health facilities	Dispensary	3,500–5,000 sqm. (2.5 ha)	2,000 sqm. (0.02 ha)	Private individuals bought land, except that for public (government) use

key institutional attributes that facilitated the co-production of knowledge, which are as follows:

- Adaption and legitimisation of flexible and much lower urban land use planning standards. This was agreed through formal adoption of lower standards and approved of the same by the local technical committee, the Ubungo Municipal Council (LGAs) and the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development (MLHHSD).
- Continuous engagement and negotiations between the community leaders, the local technical committee, the private company and the technocrats from the municipality and the MLHHSD to co-produce the layout plan (regularisation scheme) to minimise social and spatial disruption or displacement of the existing private property/rights.
- Building on the pre-existing semi-structured housing clusters that were produced through individual and collective societal knowledge. This includes existing footpaths, access roads, semi-structured housing clusters and land designated for public facilities reserved by the local community long before the regularisation project commenced.
- Tackling the critical issues in the community such as socio-spatial inequalities, poor accessibility and connectivity as much as possible. For instance, these were concerns in housing clusters at Kwa Mzee Kambangwa and Kwa Mchungu areas and at Goba centre.

Elaborating on how societal (tacit) knowledge was applied in Goba, a community leader noted: ‘Common sense, experience and everyday tacit knowledge prevail among most land developers. Landowners and developers know that they need accessibility and areas for public use especially roads’ (Goba and Kibululu Mtaa leaders, 2020).

The community leader further noted: ‘There were, however, a few adamant landowners who refused to donate land for public use without compensation. These were sensitised on the importance of access roads and the values they add to their land and that public land use was critical and beneficial to their environment’ (Kibululu Mtaa leader, 2020).

As this quote shows, many landowners expected to be compensated for their land if it was appropriated or required for public uses such as roads and schools; landowners perceived the donation of their land as a loss of capital, ignoring the benefits, including an increase in the land value through the improvement of public services.

The societal knowledge deployment process in Goba

The nature of the societal land use planning knowledge exhibited in Goba settlements comprises a blend of tacit knowledge, societal skills, lived everyday experiences and traces of expert knowledge. The societal experiential knowledge applied includes the organic layout of the housing clusters, provision of an access to dwelling in a cluster as well as connection to the adjoining houses or housing clusters. The processes involved include use of hands-on skills and mental constructs to organise the houses in a manner that promotes spatial structure and facilitates interconnection between clusters. By and large, societal knowledge is largely held by the communities in their minds in the form of memories, constructs or concepts. The way and extent to which individuals and the community as a whole have used societal knowledge is, for instance, depicted in the spatial orderliness, inter-settlement and intra-settlement connectivity, provision for public services, observation of building lines along access paths and roads, and so on. The societal knowledge held by the Goba community also includes the skills and understanding of their local environment such as the flood-prone areas and stormwater flow patterns to be avoided during land sub-divisions and development. It also includes securing land for basic public uses, such as provision of way leaves for public services and utilities, and designation of land for community facilities such as health and education. Societal knowledge also includes initiatives taken and put in place by individuals and communities to protect communal interests such as 'do's and don'ts' on areas earmarked for future public uses the enforcement mechanisms by individuals and other social actors in the communities.

Interviews with residents show that in the 1970s, residents mainly from the Zaramo ethnic group owned most of the land, which was mainly used for cashew and coconut farming.

The former Chairperson of Goba observed that, in earlier years, access to land was mainly through indigenous landowners who were allocating land to their family and kins based on clanship and family ties. However, from the mid-1980s and even more so in the 1990s, the Goba area became a hotspot commanding a high price per square metre (reaching US\$38.50), primarily because of high demand for land largely for farming by affluent persons from the consolidated parts of the city. An elder settler recounted:

From the early 1990s Goba became one of the most attractive areas in the city; many would-be home builders moved from various parts

of Dar es Salaam and purchased land for housing and farming from sitting land occupiers. During the period, many middle-income people purchased large tracts of land for peri-urban farming. Most land transactions were authenticated by local community leaders.

Asked about how societal knowledge was used to structure the settlement, the elder settler noted:

[E]very buyer made sure that each land parcel has motorable access. The size of this, however, varied. Some has 2.5m others 3m or more depending on negotiation and agreement between neighbouring land occupiers. In some clusters, settlers organised the plot for sale in a manner that each has access road or access path that connects to the nearest motorable access road. This was almost a 'norm' otherwise nobody would buy poorly accessible land.

Probing on how the societal knowledge was deployed during the regularisation, the elder settler further explained that enlightened individuals and especially settlers who had migrated from planned areas played an instrumental role. In addition, a local leader in the settlement noted:

[A]reas occupied by elites were relatively spatially well-structured. Most of them seemed to have had hands-on skills on how houses/plots have to be organised in planned fashion; most likely they drew this knowledge from their past experience because most of them had migrated from planned areas such as Sinza and Mikocheni. These organised their land parcels in an orderly manner and provided access roads to all plots. I borrowed this experience when I bought land in this area. I have also advised the person who sold the land to me to ask other buyers in our area to organise their plots and build in an orderly manner leaving space for roads for future accessibility. The affluent bought large plots to enhance privacy and maintain spacious green areas around their houses. (Migrant from Sinza, in Dar es Salaam, now a Goba resident, 2020)

The transfer of lived experiences and mental constructs from various planned settlements where some community members had lived was repeatedly reported by Goba respondents. These have shaped the land spatial structure of the settlement (Figure 1.3).

Such experiences and constructs include spatial organisation of plots and houses in a manner that provides spatial order, ensures accessibility

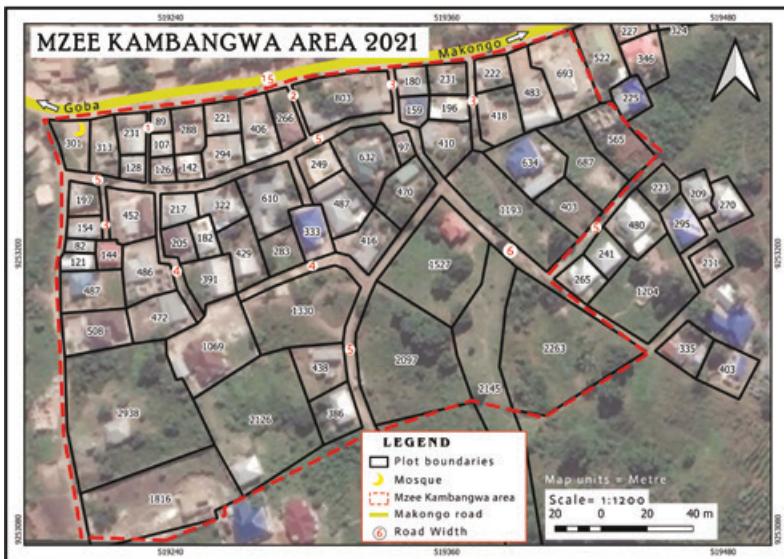


Figure 1.3 Layout plan for the Mzee Kambangwa as adapted and modified in the regularisation scheme.

Source: Field study, 2020

to each individual housing/plot, and interconnectivity with neighbouring land/plot owners and adjoining housing clusters. The ‘do’s’ included a requirement for each plot owner to align his or her house along the access roads or paths, whereas the ‘don’ts’ refers to non-encroachment on the access roads/path or areas designated for public use.

Adherence to the ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ was particularly apparent among landowners along the main access roads and footpaths. Besides, in order to ensure the interconnection of access roads/patterns and provide for way leaves for future basic public services such as tap water and electricity, each plot/landowner/developer was required to contribute part of his or her land along the frontage for these public uses – utilities and accessibility. The local leader interviewed asserts:

Every individual who held a house/land along the access roads had to donate a small piece of his/her front land for the road. Also, planting of trees that might block access and view along the roads was prohibited. A flexible road width was adopted but each individual land occupier along the main access roads had to donate

land accordingly. Some donated one metre, others more depending on individual decision. (Mr H., a Kibululu resident, 2020)

The roads provided under the regularisation scheme were mainly built upon the traditional access roads and paths that had been created through community initiatives. For instance, the local roads such as the Makongo–Goba Road (30 metres right of way) and the Tangi Mbou-Mbezi Louis Road (40 metres right of way) were built upon traditional access paths. Roads in informal settlements were often carved out of traditional pathways and lanes that form the framework for the alignment of buildings (Dovey et al. 2020):

The road running from Goba center to Makongo was a rough access road used as a shortcut to areas such as Ardhi University, Sinza, Mwenge, etc. Later on, it was expanded following the donation of land from landowners adjoining the road. Even the local road running from Matosa to Kimara was established by Matosa settlers to improve connectivity to the vegetable, fruits and cereal market outlet areas in Kimara. (Mr Z., a landowner in Kibululu Mtaa, 2020)

Compliance with a requirement for space for access roads was initially done on the basis of negotiating mutual agreement among sellers and buyers of land. Later, local leaders intervened and instituted this as a norm to ensure that everyone who developed their plots adhered to the local by-laws.³

Land for community/public services

The study area has several basic community services. Two ways through which land for public services was acquired are as follows. First, free donation by individual landowners – in most cases, this happens following community leaders negotiating with landowners. This was, for instance, the case where an individual donated about 600 m² for a Mtaa office or 400 m² for a Madrasa building (Figure 1.4). Second, some individuals donated their own land for specific public uses, such as cemeteries (1,200 m²), religious sites (1,000 and 1,500 m²) and recreational open spaces (400 m²).

According to the interviews, the donations were largely motivated by spiritual and moral consciousness and the obligation to their community. Those who were, for instance, pushed by such factors include four



Figure 1.4 Land for a cemetery (a) and a mosque (madrassa) (b) offered by Muslim landowners.

Source: Photo by Magina, 2020

individuals who contributed a piece of land measuring 1,600 m² for a mosque and a cemetery site ([Figure 1.4](#)). An elderly respondent recalled:

I had initially set aside part of land for burying my family members. As a Muslim believer, this is my moral obligation to consider burial needs of my family and others. When the settlement grew with more people moving in here without a public cemetery area, I allowed other members of the Muslim society to our cemetery. It later became a designated public cemetery. (Mr K., Goba Mtaa resident, 2020)

Another respondent recalled:

My father and his close neighbours donated land here at Goba for a cemetery and a nursery school; all measuring 2,000 m². This was a gesture of spiritual obligation towards fellow community members; so, we have upheld this commitment even after my father passed away. (Mr M., Goba Mtaa resident, 2020)

Also interviews further revealed that an academic landowner living in the area donated part of his land (600 m^2) for the Mtaa office: ‘the chairperson came and asked me to offer land for a Mtaa office. Knowing the importance of the Mtaa institution in the governance of our area, I freely offered about 600 m^2 for the Mtaa office’ (Professor X, Kibululu resident, 2020).

Other community members were reported to have donated land for the development of a market (500 m^2), a police station (800 m^2), a primary school ($4,500\text{ m}^2$) and a secondary school ($4,000\text{ m}^2$). As noted earlier, standard sizes prescribed in the Urban Planning (Planning Space Standards) Regulations 2018 were deliberately not adhered to – understandably, because most of the area was already built. At the same time, the value has increased and consequently the price has skyrocketed. As a result, the size of plots/land designated for most public facilities depended on how much land one was willing to donate. The community leaders at Mtaa level play an important role as they took steps to appeal to individual landowners to contribute more land for public use. According to the community leaders, some of the land for basic community facilities was acquired through negotiations before the settlement consolidated – that is, before the land market heated up and prices skyrocketed.

Provision of recreational open spaces was also considered by some landowners during subdivision of land. This includes the donation of the playground ($1,500\text{ m}^2$) at Kwa Mzee Mchungu by a community member who also happens to be a university don. When the donor was asked why he prioritised a playground, he noted: ‘The use of recreational areas, especially by children or the youth, is very beneficial to these groups. They offer social space for varying social groups to interact, share and understand each other in activities such as meetings, sports, etc’. (Dr Y., Kibululu resident, 2020).

Protection from encroachment and overall land use development control was undertaken by local leaders alongside the community members. Despite the fact that local leaders and some landowners set aside land for community public services, the sizes of the land donated fell short of meeting prescribed land use planning standards. Also, in most cases, the locations of the land for public facilities were not the preferred ones. Interviews further revealed that the decisions to donate and designate areas for community facilities were made because individuals and the community as a whole felt the need for those facilities and the community leaders took a lead in the initiatives to negotiate with and convince landowners occupying relatively larger parcels of unbuilt land to offer part of their land for public use.

Assimilation of the organic society plan into the regularisation (expert) plan

Field results have shown that the regularisation process by experts in Goba, by and large, adapted the structure of local/societal organic spatial structure comprising access roads, access paths and land for public facilities created by the community. This guided the preparation of the regularisation plan. In other words, the societal plans were adapted and included into the regularised plan prepared by the experts, often with minor or no modifications/alterations ([Figure 1.5](#)).

Respondents asserted that the following attributes of societal knowledge were deployed in the regularisation of Goba informal settlements of the semi-structured spatial layout.

Physical transfer of mental constructs and concepts from lived experiences

Mental constructs helped create semi-orderly structure (spatial) clusters of individual dwellings along the access roads and footpaths. Each

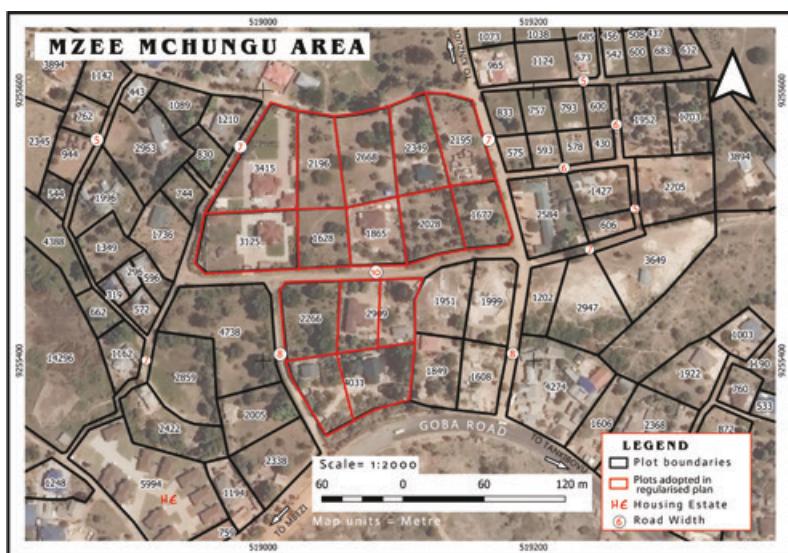


Figure 1.5 Organic layout plan as adapted in the regularisation scheme.

Source: Field study, 2020

individual house is connected to access roads that extend and link to the neighbouring or adjoining houses or plots. Although the layout of most housing clusters was organic, they did not appear as regular as in formally planned areas, so the initiatives taken to gradually structure the individual housing clusters using societal knowledge made the spatial structure of most areas organic ([Figure 1.6](#)), fairly functional and easy to fit into the spatial layout of the area.

Incorporating land for public uses into the regularisation plan

Interviews revealed that the designations and location of the areas for facilities depended on who donated them. This confirms observations in the literature which underline challenges associated with accessing suitable land for public facilities in informal settlements, which are compounded by increasing land values, raising housing densities and land market prices (Kombe and Kreibich [2006](#); Magina et al. [2020a, 2020b](#)).



Figure 1.6 Four-metre access path that has spatially structured the area in Goba.

Source: Photo by Magina, 2020

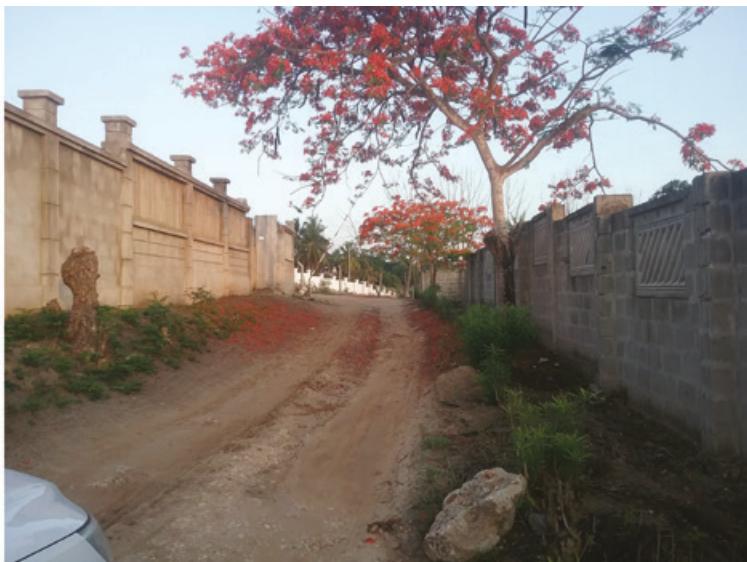
Informal land development control measures

Like most other informal settlements in the city, Goba settlements lack the formal public institutional mechanisms to regulate land parcelling, transactions and development, primarily because community leaders in Mtaa/Ward do not have a statutory mandate on land development and management. This undermines sustainable land use, especially post-regularisation protection of land for public uses. Interestingly, in Goba, residents have not been passive. They are actively engaged as individuals and as a group to monitor and regulate informal land development activities, especially those that might compromise public interests in land, that is, encroach on access roads. For instance, they have unwritten norms, values and rules which protect and advance collective interests in land. This refers to, for instance, setbacks home builders have to observe, minimum of 4 metres for access roads and 2 metres for access paths. Also, house construction activities on fragile ecosystems such as valleys, steep slopes and wetlands are prohibited. These land use development control measures are known to all community members. During the sale and development of land, Mtaa leaders normally visit the sites to remind land sellers to provide and earmark land for access roads/access paths in front of their land parcels so as to set out an interconnected accessibility in each housing cluster: ‘we make sure that land sellers show how plots will be accessed and put marks. When buyers start developing their land, we also visit the site to check and protect public land for circulation from greedy developers’ (Kibululu Mtaa leader, 2020). In practice, these norms, which may be termed as ‘*community* unwritten *by-laws*’, are operationalised in the community in two ways.

Individual (household) actions

Respondents asserted that because community leaders are involved in most land transaction deals, when someone buys a piece of land, he or she is required to provide for a motorable access road (4 metres minimum) along the frontage of his or her plot. As can be seen in [Figures 1.7\(a\)](#) and [1.7\(b\)](#), landowners on both sides of the access road have provided 1 metre each for the purpose of widening the access road – that is, the area beyond the fence along the access road. The following quote further elaborates on this: ‘the road width could not support movement of vehicles sufficiently. When we bought land the Mtaa leadership asked to provide for land to widen our access road and we accepted’ (Mr L, Cape Verde Street resident, Goba, 2020).

(a)



(b)



Figure 1.7 (a) Land for a motorable access road. (b) Building setbacks along access path.

Source: Photo by Magina, 2020

Besides, the setting of individual dwellings has to be placed at least 1 or 2 metres from the plot boundaries. Community members and especially land occupiers are also required to monitor encroachment on public areas such as access/local roads and recreational open spaces, and to report violations to their respective ten cell or Mtaa leaders.

Collective actions

The unwritten norms and rules require households occupying land around public areas such as playgrounds and schools to monitor and report to the Mtaa office land use development activities that encroach upon areas designated for collective goods and services. When such cases are reported, the local leaders would normally visit the area and upon confirmation of the violation, they summon the violator to the Mtaa office and require him or her to demolish the extension on public land. Cases where the violator refuses to comply are referred to the higher organs, such as the Ward leaders, the police and eventually to the courts of law. Asked how frequently non-compliance occurs, a local community leader noted that:

we experience 3–4 cases every year. We often handle such cases using [the] Mtaa Environmental Committee. However, last year, we involved the Police Force because of non-compliance by a person who had encroached a road land reserve. The Police summoned him and within a day he retreated and apologised to us. (Goba Mtaa leader, 2020)

As noted above, just because the informal rules, norms and frameworks are unwritten or are not proclaimed by the formal urban land development institutions and regulators does not mean that formal institutions cannot step in to protect public interests. When such needs arise, they do act. The governance of land by grassroots actors using the unwritten norms, rules and values to protect public and private interests in land is instrumental to ensure compliance with these unwritten norms and rules. This is particularly because the Ubungo Municipal Authority, with a mandate over land use development control in planned and unplanned areas, lacks the resource capacity to effectively discharge these functions (Kyessi 2011; Kombe 2017). Land governance by grassroots actors is not confined to Goba settlements alone, but is operational in many other informal settlements in the country (Kombe 2017).

What is also important to note is that the individual and collective roles in land use development control are interconnected and

complementary. For example, as individual households designate land for access roads, they expect the neighbouring settlers to reciprocate or provide for the same so as to promote interconnection, that is, access roads or footpaths. Similarly, households, housing and community-level initiatives are interconnected. As households and housing cluster levels strive to ensure that they have convenient accessibility to services such as Mtaa/Ward office, the community leaders struggle to get land for the collective need, such as recreational open spaces and local commodity market outlets. However, these initiatives on their own are not adequately meeting the needs of the community. Mitlin (2008) underlines the significance of higher-level institutions, noting that if the urban poor are to effectively address their housing needs, it is necessary for state actors to play a role in this process. Also, what needs to be underlined here is that the society experts and their knowledge involved in the generation of built environment have been pulled together as they navigate and try to retrofit the complex *post-ante* geographies of informality into the formalities of urban planning. In so doing, a variety of skills and knowledge are co-produced and co-deployed. What is also notable is that the knowledge co-produced in Goba settlements has not adopted normative expert knowledge, values, standards and practices *in situ*, but has adapted them to constitute ‘actionable knowledge’ that takes cognisance of the local context. The local context frames interaction between societal knowledge and expert knowledge. The ‘actionable knowledge’ approach, coupled with collective engagement with a variety of actors on the ground (community members/landowners) and experts, was central to creating appropriate land use planning (that is, what standard is to be adopted) and how to enhance accessibility and connectivity in the housing areas with varying physical and social contexts (that is, housing densities and a willingness to donate land for collective needs). In turn, this underlines knowledge co-production in action. The focus on the use of actionable knowledge that addresses specific local problems created a working environment where experts (officials from public and private firms) and the societal or local community worked together towards a common goal. Yet, compromises were necessary because societal knowledge often does not meet the normative measures, such as spatial orderliness, regular patterns, and standardised sizes of basic community facilities and infrastructure services provision. This underlines the realities of the world of planners in SSA cities: they have to be increasingly imbued with and acknowledge negotiation, collaboration and knowledge co-production as critical attributes to address and cope with real challenges in their cities.

Table 1.2 presents a summary of the knowledge co-production processes in Goba informal settlements.

Reflections from the findings

One of the striking features of knowledge co-production in Goba is that it mediated societal and expert knowledge in a fluid and non-linear pathway – that is, the local physical and social contexts shaped the knowledge generation and use. Further, the expert (formal) knowledge held by practitioners and institutional frameworks (policies, laws and zoning norms) relating to urban land use planning and development were mediated by the grassroots actors applying societal knowledge.

Comparing the approach used here with land use planning in green fields or similar settings, one notes striking differences characterised by adjustments of both societal and expert knowledge. The modification was done in partnership and with concern for the protection of common interests, leading to compromises of normative measures relating to, for instance, public interests such as securing motorable way leaves or adequate land for public use, such as cemeteries and recreational areas.

In essence, societal land use planning knowledge helped put in place the initial organic (spatial) framework upon which expert knowledge inputs were anchored. Without the societal knowledge, the problems of *post-ante* retrofitting (regularising) Goba informal settlements would be insurmountable due to the necessary demolition and related costs that would be incurred in order to provide basic public services.

Another output from the interaction between the knowledge spheres is the actionable knowledge applied to produce an organic urban structure that is fairly functional, despite being limited in terms of the spatial orderliness, levels and standards of public services and facilities provided. This observation questions the interpretative bias and generalisation by scholars such as Mottelson (2020) on public policy positions that tend to argue that informality depicts chaos or disorderly structure, instead of seeing informality as a different typology of settlement formation (Kombe and Kreibich 2006; Abbott 2012; Roy 2014) and urban settlements in their own right.

As noted earlier, the blossoming role of unwritten social regulatory norms, values and informal rules is not a phenomenon confined to Goba informal settlements. This is a modus operandi and practice in many informal settlements in Tanzania and several other countries in SSA (Kombe 2017). However, the significance of the norms in spatially shaping and

Table 1.2 Summary of the knowledge co-production steps, process and actors in Goba settlements

Expert knowledge	Societal knowledge	Remarks
Normative coded urban planning concepts, theories, laws, standards and regulations that relate to land use planning to promote better quality of life and security of tenure	Uncoded local organisation, local norms, rules and values including tacit knowledge	Working individually (households) and collectively as well as flexibly to adapt to the real condition
Urban planning, laws, standards and provisions of regulations that relate to improving quality of life and security of tenure in informal settlements	Tacit knowledge process, lived experiences and organic structure of settlements – an amalgam of informal and formal standards and norms	Social learning amongst actors, hands-on experiences. Process comprises (i) collaboration between technical committee and <i>Mtaa</i> leaders; (ii) compromises between experts' knowledge and standards and societal plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal provisions to protect public and private interests constituted in urban planning legislation, cadastral survey laws, regulations and rules - Formal urban planning procedures and guidelines for regularisation (as specified in the Urban Planning Act No 8 of 2007) to appreciate significant role of local actors in co-producing the built environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informed (retired civil servants and staff from Ardhi University who reside in Goba) actively involved in community sensitisation, regularisation and organic (spatial) organisation of their areas - Apply knowledge in action process in spatial structuring and organisation, and negotiate with landowners to access land for public use - Enforce unwritten land use (development control) norms and values (do's and don'ts) on access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage community, educate and sensitise - Build capacity of the local community and their leaders (<i>Mtaa</i>/Ward) to spatially organise their settlements and secure public areas - Specify roles and obligations and put in place mechanisms to resolve conflicts - Adopt lower land use planning standards for roads and public land uses - Appreciate and adapt to contextual challenges - Recognise social actors at the grassroots (enforcing do's and don'ts) as well as using skills of enlightened persons – public employees and/or Ardhi University staff (familiar with planning) living in the area

(continued)

Table 1.2 (Cont.)

Expert knowledge	Societal knowledge	Remarks
- Adapt flexible (context-responsible) urban planning standards and regulations - Focus on improved accessibility and connectivity, and demarcate fragile/unbuildable land (valleys and steep slopes)	Acknowledge and build upon semi-structured spatial organisation engendered by grassroots actors using societal knowledge	Disregard some conventional urban land use planning considerations – zoning of land uses or use of uniform standards (sizes of access roads and residential plots or public land uses)
Make necessary compromises	Address critical concerns of residents – avoid demolition/displacement and address spatial inequalities (poor accessibility and intra-settlement connectivity)	Meet residents' aspirations and interests
Standards, regulations and procedures	Regulate regularised settlement development and street configuration, and safeguard land for public use	Maintain community regularisation committee to continuously support local leaders and the community to cope with emerging development

structuring informal settlements, and most importantly their interlinks with formal urban land development instruments, remain unrecognised. In turn, this has given rise to two main challenges.

Unregulated excessive housing densities

This is, for instance, the case in the housing areas near the commercial centre along the main roads from Mbezi Tangi Mbou to Mbezi Mwisho (Durand-Lasserve 2005). The construction of new structures in these areas including multi-storey buildings for commercial and mixed use continues without regard to the unwritten norms and rules, leading to encroachment upon public areas, especially access roads and footpaths. The irony of this is that this violation continues even after regularisation, suggesting the limitations of the voluntary grassroots social regulators in the informal land development sector to regulate market interests in land.

Over-emphasis on the protection of private property rights and the politicisation of *post-ante* regularisation

Protection of private property is the main philosophy that has hitherto underlined the *post-ante* regularisation projects implemented in the city and the country in general. At the centre of this approach lies the desire to recognise property rights and formalise them without causing pain. Formalisation seems to be a politically mooted idea aimed at avoiding litigations and disputes that would undermine the government commitment to regularise all informal settlements by 2025. The over-emphasis on private interests in land compromises the very foundations that gave rise to modern town planning, that is, protecting the public interest. The implications of this are far-reaching; suffice it to note that such an approach is unlikely to lead to sustainable cities envisaged in the SDG 11. Besides, an emphasis on private property suggests strong inclination towards the market. The latter alone cannot deliver a functioning urban structure.

The knowledge and skills used by the champions, particularly informed dons and retired public servants who migrate from planned areas such as Sinza and lived in housing clusters with orderly spatial organisation, induced the adjoining community of landowners to imitate and spatially organise their housing clusters. The socio-spatial structures resulting from the negotiated combination of societal and expert knowledge is not regular but organic, which is meeting basic functional needs of the communities, despite the shortcomings observed.

The actionable knowledge was neither purely societal nor expert-based, but an amalgam of both. The compromises made on the expert knowledge in Goba settlements, including the lowering of land use planning standards for roads and public services, and/or disregard for traditional planning concepts and norms such as zoning and hierarchies in urban structures and services delivered was a real game changer. The amalgam of societal and expert knowledge has helped not only to address socio-spatial inequalities that undermined self-esteem among community members, but has also helped to increase property values and integrate the various housing clusters of Goba settlements. At the centre of the challenges observed lies the weak and ineffective land governance, essentially the lack of a robust institutional framework for land use development control in regularised informal settlements, including legal and administrative mechanisms. This underlines the need for rethinking the assumption that the conventional land use development control measures prescribed in the Urban Planning (Building) Regulations of 2018 are applicable in the regularised settlements. Regulation of land development in the regularised informal settlements has to be built on a careful integration of societal and expert knowledge experiences and realities so as to co-produce context-sensitive land development control measures that respond to the emerging community challenges and have legitimacy in the eyes of local stakeholders. The capacity of grassroots actors to regulate market forces is limited. Besides, the Mtaa/Ward actors do not have a mandate over land management in their areas of jurisdiction; however, they are actively involved in overseeing, authenticating and sanctioning land transactions not only as services demanded by buyers and sellers of land/properties, but also because of the economic interest. Governing land effectively in rapidly consolidated informal settlements which currently account for over 75 per cent of the built environment requires progressive reform to support and build on the role being discharged by the subsisting actors and processes, even though Mtaa/Ward actors are inconsistent with normative norms and values. The envisaged reform must put in place a coalition of actors, with the public sector acting as a pivotal player and not merely an onlooker.

Conclusion and links with other chapters

This chapter has focused on the interaction of societal knowledge, expert-based knowledge and regulations which govern the regularisation of informal settlements. It aligns with the exploratory and contemporary

approaches to co-production whereby indigenous and decolonial notions have been shaped and built by Colombian intellectuals. Similarly, the discourse in this chapter has related to co-production outcomes for urban equality: learning from different trajectories of citizens' involvement in urban change. In addition, the findings tally with the lessons that will be drawn in other chapters of the book that not only knowledge is co-produced, but so too are dwellings, infrastructure, and political, cultural and social identities. While this chapter has explored co-production of knowledge in the regularisation of informal settlements, the conceptual premises of co-production have taken into account the contextual and environmental diversities in different countries. It has been suggested here that the built environment requires progressive reform to support and build upon the role being discharged by the subsisting actors and processes – in this case, the regularisation of informal settlements. Therefore, the envisaged reforms in the processes need to create a coalition of actors, notwithstanding the leading role and interests of the public sector and of local communities.

Notes

1. Societal knowledge as applied in this chapter refers to tacit knowledge, skills, experiences, norms and values that a society may apply in the spatial organisation and ordering of settlements through self-organised initiatives of individuals and/or communities.
2. Contextual challenges include the existence of residential plots far below the minimum size of 300 m² or the existence of private properties or houses close to the access roads, dead-end access paths and lack of/poor connectivity between housing clusters, and so on.
3. These by-laws were prepared by and imposed in the settlement in 2016.

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2

Knowledge co-production for transformation in low-income settlements in urban Africa

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Introduction

Delivering services and utilities to keep up with the pace of urban growth remains a policy challenge. Livelihood improvement programmes and social protection have not been successful in increasing coverage, availability and affordability of services and physical infrastructure or in the creation of employment opportunities in urban areas. Communities have developed innovations to address this deficit and have created employment opportunities for their integration into the urban economy. Individual and community ingenuities are catalysed by the involvement of research and private industry actors to co-produce knowledge, and co-implement and validate some of the economic opportunities where they exist that can enable the transformation of urban areas (Banks et al. 2020; Mitlin and Walnycki 2020).

This chapter demonstrates how knowledge co-production is enabling the spurring of innovative solutions and integrating low-income people into the urban economy. To do so, the chapter: (a) analyses the slow response of the public sector in improving living conditions in low-income settlements; (b) assesses how urban service gaps have spurred ingenuities leveraging local materials to create economic opportunities, improve well-being and close the inequality gap; (c) illustrates the role

of knowledge co-production involving multiple actors in validating the emerging technologies for opportunity creation.

We anchor knowledge co-production along the household energy-waste nexus to illustrate how opportunities have been created and possibilities have been harnessed for communities' engagement in circular urban economies. We draw on the experiences and collaborative work of the Urban Action Lab of Makerere University (UAL), together with community-based organisations, communities in informal settlements and policy makers in Kampala. This concerted effort has contributed to generate innovative scalable solutions to address infrastructure and services challenges to enable urban transformations.

Framing knowledge co-production

Co-production across multiple scientific knowledge systems has become a cornerstone of research to enhance knowledge, practice, policy and ethics and to foster sustainability transformation (Engels and Walz 2018). Co-production of knowledge can be framed as a process that has evolved from basic disciplinary research to transdisciplinary research, where scientific research on societal issues transcends participation and empowerment to embrace different ways of knowing and co-creation of solutions to existential problems. Embedding research into local and national priorities to address long-standing problems has been a topic of discussion where it is supported but also critiqued, which is well represented in the literature (Watson 2014; Oliver et al. 2019; Bandola-Gill et al. 2023).

Research for development discourse slowly evolved into research and development, and in more recent decades more evidence and action has emerged around transdisciplinarity when conducting applied research (Chambers et al. 2021). Applied research has always been premised on informing policy, programming and action, whereas the enabling environment, including governance, financing and institutional set-up, has always been thought to bring the research recommendations into programming, budgeting and investment. There is ample literature on how the research-policy interface can be enhanced, augmented and improved to address intractable problems, especially in developing countries (Mitlin and Bartlett 2018). In a similar vein, and related to the research-policy debate in epistemic communities, is the following question: how relevant is academic research to societal needs? And how can the voices of the intended beneficiaries of the research be listened to in order

to shape the policy and programming? Situating applied research in the societal domain is an initial step towards transformative research to advance urban equality. But assuming a seamless uptake by policy through planning and programming obscures the complex way in which such society-relevant applied research takes place.

This chapter draws on the long-standing experience of applied research at UAL, where knowledge co-production was taken as the main approach to produce usable knowledge in solving existential problems at the urban scale. UAL pursued multiple solutions-oriented research objectives and engaged with communities and public policy actors, coupling this with training the next generation of urban managers. This experience illuminates the lessons learnt about the journey from participatory research to transdisciplinary research, which invokes the notion of bringing in all possible relevant stakeholders and feasibly undertaking research that is co-produced, that is discussed as a process involving co-designing, co-implementation, co-dissemination and co-experimentation, and that is co-owned. The chapter draws on a variety of examples to illustrate how this process has been undertaken. It closes with some pointers on limits and caveats of co-produced knowledge and acknowledging that some deeply rooted structural problems raised by Chambers (1995) (the insider-outsider dilemma) can hardly be extinguished by co-knowledge production and that, indeed, some of the imbalances in power (including colonialities) associated with knowledge in applied research are amplified when research teams are structured by age, sex, elitism, language and epistemic methodologies of validation of knowledge. The chapter uses the domains of knowledge co-production which are the urban policy analysis; Micro-Small-Medium-Enterprise (MSME) pathways; and urban transformation in response to climate change action to illustrate how the knowledge co-production approach is useful in problem solving and can inform transformative development in urban settings. We position the knowledge co-production in the urban systems moving beyond sectoral approaches to the delivery of services, utilities and pursuance of economic prosperity.

Knowledge co-design: framing issues and protocols

This chapter defines the co-design of research as a deliberate process that appreciates and embraces multiple actors in knowledge production. Co-design is illustrated as a process which mobilises stakeholders to frame the research questions, prioritise issues important to them and

determine the research approach on data gaps, data collection, analysis and dissemination. Co-design extends the timelines and logistics of data collection (whether longitudinal or case study in nature) and positions actors in their own environment. We prefer the use of the notion of ‘actors’ instead of stakeholders to broaden the variety of people to engage with due to the limitations of the ‘stakeholder’ concept, which tends to treat some categories of people as experts and elites in the knowledge production process. When actors engaged in co-production of knowledge are expanded from a few elitist communities, the research questions, protocols for data collection, and analysis are enhanced with often differing ways of knowing, informed by the perspectives from which a problem is approached. For example, academic research on cities tends to follow the perspective that cities in developing countries have huge infrastructure deficits because such lenses are informed by the dominant urban sector approach. The counter to this perspective is that when other actors such as community members try to work on infrastructure, they complement the deficit model with alternative systems that have multiple benefits that will be discussed later on in this chapter and that importantly have stood the test of time in many instances. These two perspectives give a good example of how the research questions could be expanded from what is missing to what can be done to improve the existing models. If only the academic perspective is taken in applied research, then the outcomes are predictable and the recommendations are pre-defined; solutions would then be to extend the water supply network system or sanitation system or waste collection trucks. With this comparison of approaches, co-design of research is critical in the process of co-production of knowledge because the framing of questions enriches possibilities. In the subsequent sections, more grounded examples will be used to illustrate and discuss the process of co-design in detail.

Knowledge co-generation: involvement in data collection

As a follow-up step from knowledge co-design, co-generation is understood as the process through which data are collected for quantitative, qualitative or artistic approaches, including videography, and analysed, to be presented in a manner that enables understanding for all actors involved in any research undertaking. Co-generation has one fundamental difference from other participatory research activities – that is, it transforms the ‘beneficiary actors’ into active data collectors and analysts

on issues affecting them; essentially, they become research partners and not just subjects of research. Co-generation also has another dimension of kickstarting the appreciation of different ways of knowing informed by the perspectives alluded to in co-design of the research. By taking data collection as a non-specialist field, channels are opened up to innovative ways of collecting relevant and vital pieces of data which enhance the different ways of knowing by incorporating details often overlooked in expert-led approaches to data collection. For example, through participatory journaling and self-remuneration, actors have the opportunity to document their lived experiences. Co-generation of data also starts a discourse on the ownership and storage of data. In academically designed research, these data are often owned by whoever pays for them and although many funding agencies now emphasise public repositories, the practice of data hoarding is still very much in place because of the ethical and power issues associated with data. Co-generation transcends participation and extends the participation from passive actors to higher levels, although it is contested as to whether co-generation can deliver empowerment. Even for actors living within the research sites, the power imbalances at play can limit the empowerment when local elitism kicks in, to the disadvantage of some of the actors involved in data collection. As will be illustrated with examples later on, co-generation of knowledge about socio-technological solutions enabled the participatory journaling of production, labour hours, inputs, market readiness studies and product promotion activities that provided detailed data which expanded insights into the operations of the technologies. This insight is critical in assessing efficiency, productivity, profitability and potential for upscaling. Although surveys can be designed to garner these detailed operations of a technology, the difference is that compassion drives the process when data collectors are also the owners/operators of the technology and have been part of the co-design process. But this also has its limitations, such as under-representation or over-exaggeration of the data when the owners/affected actors are the data collectors. As with scientific data, the issue of validation and method to validate becomes important. Co-generation can involve techniques to validate the data collected by actors, which is detailed in the subsequent sections.

Knowledge co-implementation

Most development projects and programmes have largely been implemented following trials or pilots and this practice continues in the

present day. Subsequent programmes draw on previous trials and go straight for implementation, as is the case for urban systems, where, for example, infrastructure systems have long been tested and validated, and once a design is approved, implementation follows if resources are available. The over-reliance on consulting for infrastructure delivery in urban Africa has consolidated a system where solutions are fixed based on the repeated baselines that are skewed towards identifying deficits that can be easily fixed with known solutions depending only on funding availability (Pieterse et al. 2018). The UAL engagement has been built around co-implementation regarding alternative technologies, products and new ways of enhancing economic prosperity. Trials have been co-implemented as an element of research and development.

The process of co-implementation builds on assessing potential and identifies possible solutions that harness the existing locale potential. At UAL, we have run experimentations of solutions on energy, urban and peri-urban agriculture, employability opportunities, localising Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to determine locale implementation. The experimentation was achieved through collective actor planning, seed grants and technology development where necessary in the trials. Co-implementation illustrates how new frontiers of learning are opened up when the political economy and politics of cities interact to shape policy in order to deliver infrastructure services more equitably. Through co-implementation, several lessons can be deduced. From service and product development (to use the economic models), individual and collective ingenuities exist, but are subsumed by consulting-based planning and delivery of infrastructure and services. Validation of such services and products provides avenues for tailoring the technologies to the situated capacities, resources and accessibility, thereby enabling improvement for efficacy, efficiency and learning between actors (Lwasa and Buyana 2011). An interesting dimension of the learning is the knowledge co-production among diverse actors that addresses existential needs by embedding such knowledge in human capabilities and resourcefulness. The model for knowledge transfer in contemporary development is dominated by direct education and training in higher education levels or technical fields, coupled with training of trainers, leading to an elitist approach to development issues. Professional practice on the other hand utilises the behavioural, information communication approach that again assumes that the available technical information will change the behaviour of actors once it is targeted in its dissemination. Co-implementation is enabling transformation when changes are made on who conducts the training, but also in what aspect of development, how and where such

training is conducted. As will be explained later on in this chapter, the utility of co-implementation is the augmentation of the research-policy integration of the capabilities of a variety of actors, alongside the industriousness of the informal/emerging sector.

Knowledge co-dissemination

The lingering discourse on the research-policy interface is dominated by the notion of problem-solving research synthesised or summarised as recommendations, which are then passed on to policy actors to implement. In recent times, this notion has also been extended to co-implementation for the validation of emerging knowledge and in some instances mainstreaming into public programmes for institutionalisation. Thus, co-dissemination is enabling new or different ways of knowledge management with recognition of the long-standing repositories embedded in locales where the co-production took place. Knowledge ownership also pushes the frontiers of empowerment. Co-dissemination has highlighted the importance of different ways of knowing, the diversity of narratives and the diversity of validation methods that constitute appropriate knowledge rather than focusing on factual research findings which may or may not be relevant. The latter underscores the epistemological and ontologies of truth claims. In practical terms, co-dissemination seems to be applying adjusted or adapted mainstream scientific research, but in a targeted way. Thus, local actors' newsletters, manuals, training or multi-purpose centres, exhibitions and libraries for repository of co-produced knowledge are emerging as a powerful reminder that truth claims relate strongly to the lens through which issues are framed, but also who writes the research findings. This of course raises contestations among the scientific and mainstream academics as the knowledge validation methods differ strongly in mainstream academia compared to co-production methods. Nevertheless, the coloniality of scientific knowledge dissemination channels has maintained the imbalances in power that have an impact on solutions to urban problems in Africa. Although the topic of decolonisation is beyond the scope of this book, co-dissemination signals the start of a discourse on the decolonisation of methodologies and knowledge in Africa. We illustrate this with a summary of an example regarding a community organisation that has had long-standing relations with UAL. The Kasubi Parish Local Community Development Initiative (KALOCODE) is a community organisation operating in Kampala that has co-produced knowledge working initially on a city

project in collaboration with UAL and other partners. Through this collaborative research, members of the group have enhanced their capacities in data collection, analysis, publication, trials and dissemination. Group members have also gained experience in terms of engaging policy actors, some of whom participated in the knowledge co-production, elevating their links with institutions in the city where decisions that affect their lives are made.

Knowledge co-production and the policy-practice interface

Coming from different worlds, with divergent perspectives, work plans, timeframes, values, professionalism and expected outputs, still presents a challenge to researchers, policy makers, practitioners and research communities to ensure that policy change is fully driven by research. While research communities become frustrated with the data collected, their opinion not taken seriously, and research findings not translating into solutions. Researchers at times wonder about the lack of appreciation, recognition and realisation of clear, evidence-based and co-produced knowledge. On the other hand, policy makers and practitioners deplore the fact that many researchers' findings are unfathomable and incomprehensible, with limited or no attempts to disseminate their work. In the end, research findings have not been linked to policy development. In this section we demonstrate how UAL partnered with Amazing Communities Together (ACTogether) in addition to other partners to influence policy through co-produced knowledge. We draw on several examples of project-focused experiences in the partnership that illustrate the usefulness and tensions between policy actor-driven knowledge generation and community-driven knowledge production for development.

One of the key lessons in co-produced knowledge is the recognition of increased citizen science, based on an appreciation of citizens' views, knowledge and experiences, resulting in 'knowledge into action' (Khine et al. 2021). From UAL experience, co-production has produced results that are impactful, have contributed to solving problems and have influenced policy for improvement and change. Co-production has also deepened and strengthened citizen engagement, enhancing the provision of urban services that are essential to the well-being of these citizens and thus increasing the capability of officials to work with low-income and disadvantaged citizens. As a result, politicians may consider effective strategies beyond state-led delivery. This is one of the

most effective strategies for mobilising evidence in policy and practice contexts. Although UAL's experience cannot claim to have strengthened community capacities, well-designed co-production processes can enhance capacities, enabling community members to build collective processes along with an understanding of effective design. Aided by solidarity, capacity to organise and developed precedents that demonstrate to government agencies what is required and what it costs, low-income urban communities, which are often informal, can contest power, negotiate and collaborate around their needs. Co-production signals potential for the provision of quality services, access to public services, enhancing synergies between communities and service providers, and building community social capital that addresses power differentials for marginalised groups. It enables community organisations to develop new relationships, enhance their existing relationships and legitimate their own role to a wider set of actors.

Positioning the researcher-policy maker and practitioner

The production of knowledge for action largely depends on having research at the centre of development projects right from the start and on who or which partner is involved in the co-production process. During the design process, it is very important to be mindful of existing knowledge or ongoing research, stakeholder partnerships to ensure the added value of co-production. Such working relationships depend on expertise, experience, resources and skills which are pivotal to the process of researcher-policy maker relationships. From the UAL experience, involving different actors from different levels and sectors in the governance process helps to enhance institutional capacity and gain support for policy frameworks. Several research undertakings at UAL that have applied co-production have resulted in lessons on how co-production enhances the voices of citizens/users in the public sector in the delivery of services. Ensuring the inclusion of all actors results in greater efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery (Buyana et al. 2021). ACT's experience in the positioning of the researcher, policy maker and practitioner illustrates mixed but promising benefits. Policy makers and practitioners whose approach is dominated by collecting, transporting and disposing of waste had their thinking influenced by waste to energy projects with UAL, and they understood how to reduce the costs of overhaul, reduce emissions and enhance the incomes of participating groups. With this example, partnership between

academic researchers, local government officials, civil society and local communities allowed urban actors to explore and design solutions to pressing urban waste problems (Patel et al. 2015).

Some drawbacks of co-production

Employing co-production for policy improvement and practice for community development is always dragged, slowed down and deemed inconsequential because of the likelihood of risk aversion. Co-production is still seen as highly risky by many politicians, managers and professionals, as the behaviour of the co-producing users and citizens is less understood and is seen to be more unpredictable than that of passive actors. There is a political and professional reluctance to lose status and ‘control’ and a willingness by government organisations to move to co-production, particularly where it is seen as ceding status and control (Watson 2014; Turnhout et al. 2020). Knowledge co-production is an inherently political process, since politics plays an essential role in the remaking of knowledge, while the use of knowledge can remake politics (Khine et al. 2021). For example, knowledge co-production is associated with the potential dangers of including multiple actors in waste management of the city, when community groups organise to come into direct confrontation with the contracted companies that collect fees from households. Another challenge is the well-documented, time-consuming nature of negotiations during the science practice dialogues. There is a challenge of sustained use of the co-produced knowledge and implementation of the altered governance arrangements within their local context. For example, it took 12 years from 2008 for UAL to build the partnerships, co-produce and experiment in order for the evidence to emerge as an alternative to various urban sector problems (Muñoz-Erickson et al. 2017). For practitioners and policy actors, knowledge co-production has also led to a deliberate rejection of responsibility, failing on accountability, rising transaction costs, a loss of democracy, reinforced inequalities, implicit demands and co-destruction when local politics intervene with co-production processes (Oliver et al. 2019).

Individual community actors as the missing link

Rather than being onlookers, bystanders and receivers of solutions, communities can be supported to change roles and be initiators of

ideas, solutions and partners in research. From this perspective, there is always active participation rather than sharing solutions for policy following research, which tends to have short-term results. Research has been dominated by consultants, which in itself is not a bad thing, but the subsequent plans, policy briefs and frameworks have limited impact in comparison to the scale of societal problems. Implementing development projects and interventions with communities to work with researchers, practitioners and policy makers enables these coalitions to address what is most pressing to the community, with solutions that best resolve and address community development challenges rather than producing solutions basing on perceived unrealistic notions that are at times impossible to realise, unimplementable and non-responsive to the problems at hand.

Community repositioning in knowledge co-production creates a sense of acceptability for results and interventions from communities. Through the ACT-led 'Know Your City' initiative, the community members profile, document and analyse data and share the solutions for uptake by other actors. But communities are not uniform and should always be de-layered to identify all possible in-community groups if locally devised solutions are to be successfully tested. The synthesised lived experiences of communities, researchers and practitioners can help to expound on what exists within communities and develop scalable solutions to problems.

The urban infrastructure deficit as an opportunity to rethink the urban labour market

Based on emerging possibilities from co-produced knowledge, one key challenge is employability of the people in the city. This finding was surprising due to the shift from job creation to an approach that can generate employment opportunities. The finding is also informative about different ways of knowing, especially regarding potential ways to create economic opportunities. This section shows how the urban infrastructure deficit can be a springboard for opportunity creation and can trigger a rethink of the urban labour markets and how they might work or function. Realising that the formal urban labour market has limitations in terms of absorbing all labour, the urban infrastructure deficit can generate pathways to integrate labour into the urban economy. But such integration would rely on embracing alternative infrastructure systems, technologies and new business models with flexible skillsets that can complement education

through functional training. This section does not delve into the employability of a highly educated labour force in urban systems, but focuses on the less educated population and how they can complement the formal urban labour force. We summarise the urban economy structure and labour needs by using examples to show how the mismatch is a catalyst for integrating labour into the urban labour market.

Analysis of the urban labour market and effective labour requirements

As the largest city in Uganda, Kampala attracts many migrants from rural places and from other countries. The city contributes over 65 per cent of the total gross domestic product (GDP) and is home to over 2.3 million people (Buyana and Lwasa 2016). However, the formal urban labour market remains small and characterised by the under-utilisation of labour and under-employment, coupled with high levels of unemployment. Generally, the urban economy is capable of providing employment for less than half of the city's labour force, and yet active participation in the labour market stands at about 68.8 per cent, with an estimated 35.7 per cent of the employed earning less than two-thirds (i.e. UGX 270,000 or US\$73.97) of the median monthly earnings of wage earners in full employment and working between 40 and 48 hours a week. A total of 21 per cent of Kampala's labour force is unemployed, which is the highest figure across the country. Associated with most jobs being out of the formal sectors, the highest proportion of Kampala's labour force engages in the informal economy, which consists of all economic activities outside the formal institutional framework and is estimated to absorb 72 per cent of informal sector employment (KCCA 2015) (Figure 2.1).

Due to the contracted economic base, there are limited employment opportunities in Kampala, and this is coupled with a large proportion of youthful population who have limited marketable life skills, a situation that affects their employability. As a result, the majority of the urban labour force do not engage in decent employment, with the biggest proportion being women and youths lacking adequate skills and education to access appropriate jobs. The nature of employment for most of the labour force is largely one that requires fewer skills and lower levels of education. The nature of these jobs is flexible, so can absorb a low-skilled and/or uneducated urban labour force. Such informal workers attain skills through apprenticeship, on-the-job training, imitation, self-improvisation and social networks that facilitate access to such employment. Co-produced knowledge around urban systems shows

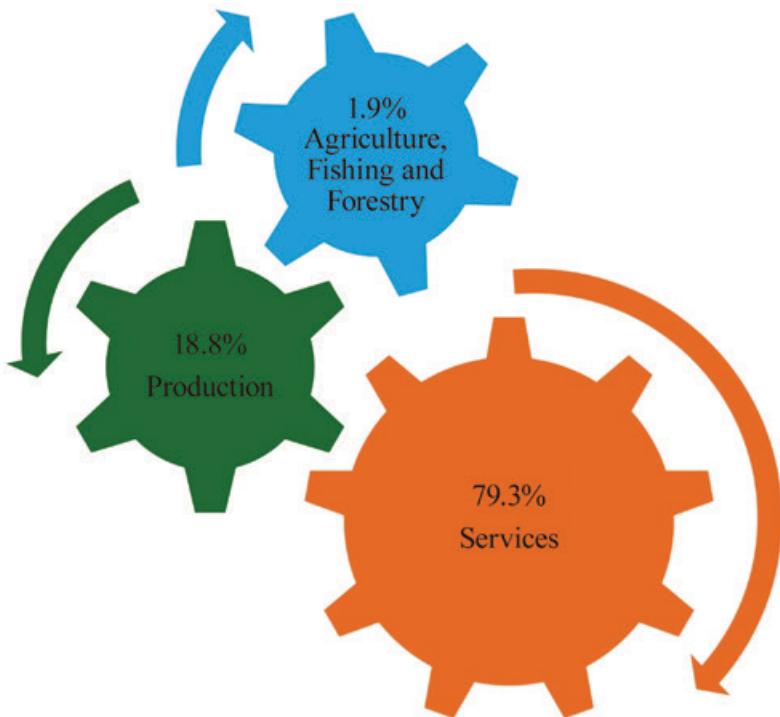


Figure 2.1 Employment sectors in Kampala city.

Source: Adapted from UBOS 2019

that flexibility is needed for vibrant informal economies to complement formal systems through alternative modes of infrastructure, technologies and business models. The adoption of such complementary labour markets provides opportunities to drive innovations and inventions, job creation and revenue, entrepreneurial and technical skills, and potentially an enabling environment for decent work for the urban labour force over time. For example, the urban sanitation, water and transport sectors have seen the emergence of alternative systems that are off-grid, smaller in scale and enabling MSMEs. These are creating jobs for youths, women and other people in the city.

Co-production reveals a mismatch between effective labour market requirements and life skills

The urban labour market continues to face many challenges, including the failure of the formal economy to absorb the unemployed population,

the prevalence of an unskilled or semi-skilled labour force, heavy taxation regimes and burdensome regulatory frameworks. Labour market outcomes, workers' productivity, competitiveness and economic growth are negatively affected by the mismatch between effective labour market requirements and life skills mostly amongst the urban low-income communities. While multiple initiatives to increase the employability of the urban population in Kampala have been implemented, within formal and vocational education and skills development centres, the levels of unemployment continue to increase, contributing to socio-economic inequalities across the city. The high and persistent levels of unemployment are often attributed to mismatches between jobs availability and skills held by those seeking jobs, which in turn relegates blame to the nature of education and training systems to cover up pitfalls/drawbacks within the urban economic system. Although mismatches in skills can be explained by low-quality education, changes in the demographics, rapid technological innovations, inventions and development, the emergence of either new or alternative forms of employment and work configurations strongly influence variations in skillsets amongst the urban population. Moreover, it should be the responsibility of urban authorities to create an environment for the expansion of the economy in order to compel education service providers to train a competent labour force for the existing opportunities. But low-income settlements and communities have developed innovations and inventions where new skillsets are mostly acquired by or transferred to the less privileged, less educated and almost invisible sections of the urban population. More contextually, such skills become clearly relevant when addressing the everyday challenges that communities face (Monteith and Lwasa 2017).

Infrastructure deficits

Before we discuss the intersection of infrastructure and employment opportunities, this section briefly explains the infrastructure mismatch in the city region. The rate of urbanisation in Kampala has outpaced infrastructure investment and expansion capacity, leading to a huge number of people residing in the city's unplanned areas or areas usually referred to as slums. Consequently, matching infrastructure provision with the pace of urban growth has posed challenges but no feasible solutions (Lwasa and Owens 2018). There have been some improvements in infrastructure, but this is largely selective in affluent neighbourhoods, leaving

low-income neighbourhoods with minimal infrastructure improvement. Infrastructure provision and services are based on charges that low-income neighbourhoods can hardly afford. These include water, electricity and sanitation. For Kampala's residents in low-income communities, the lack of sustainable income sources makes the affordability of the rationed electricity, waste management, water and sanitation services, and infrastructure extremely complex.

Analysis of the water infrastructure service provision shows that the rising population is resulting in increased demand for water, but there is only a marginal change in the capacity and coverage of the infrastructure or distribution system. Moreover, the prevalence of unplanned settlement patterns compromises the supply of piped water and sewer services. In addition, water quality is also reducing due to increased water pollution, encroachment on wetland ecosystems, and climate change impacts (especially floods and droughts). Thus, as access to water remains a challenge, the quality, distributional equity, reliability of supply and affordability of quantities consumed by households manifest as critical problems for low-income households.

The cost of building infrastructure is vast, but the costs of failing to invest in public infrastructure in line with existing demand are considerably higher. Whereas demand for services continues to rise, investments in service infrastructure have remained low and have focused on high-income settlements of Kampala, leaving the majority of people in informal settlements and peri-urban areas to face deficits in terms of both the infrastructure and services. In a study of water access in the city region of Kampala by UAL, it was found that there are multiple water sources for households and businesses. Piped or tap treated water provided by the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) accounts for 88 per cent, while alternative sources such as boreholes, protected and unprotected wells account for 12 per cent. For those using tap water, 17 per cent have taps at their premises and the remaining 71 per cent buy it from kiosks or from vendors, sometimes supplementing it with water from other sources, especially when there are water outages or limited financial resources to buy water. Although 12 per cent exclusively depend on alternative water sources, this number rose to 33 per cent when combined with those juggling between tap and alternative water sources. It is important to note that the water sources in Kampala city region are unevenly distributed, presenting acute deficiencies in access to safe water in some areas. This was mostly observed in the northwestern parts of the city region, as shown in [Figure 2.2](#). Households in these areas of acute deficiency rely heavily on alternative water sources and require much

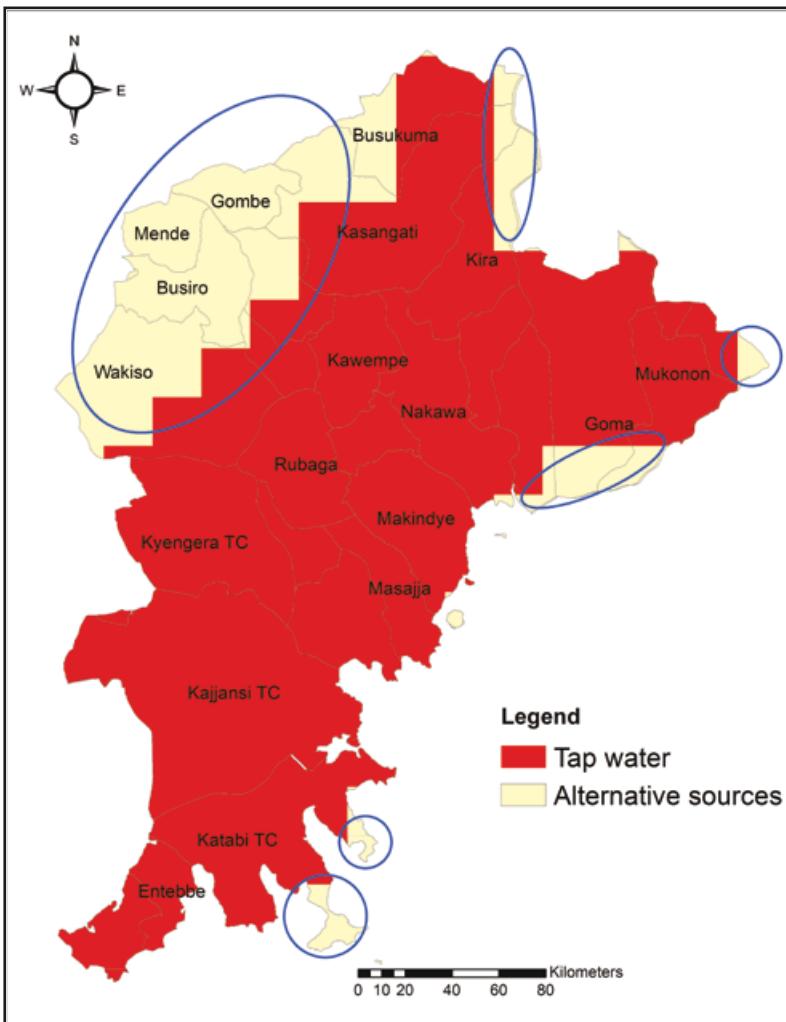


Figure 2.2 Water availability by type of source in the Kampala city region.

Source: Authors

more time (usually an average amount of 1 hour 10 minutes) to draw water from alternative sources because the sources are few and often overcrowded.

There exists a wide gap between the quantities of water demanded across Kampala city region compared with the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations. Our study showed that the daily average water

demand in the Kampala city region for a household size of 4.6 people is 157.6 litres, with 34.3 litres of water per capita. On the other hand, the WHO's recommended average water usage for a household of four people is 234.71 litres, with a daily per capita demand of 50 litres (WHO 2003). This difference could be for many reasons, but most importantly that households do not have enough money to spend on their extra water needs. However, this is not a sufficient explanation for the 12 per cent of households that depend exclusively on alternative water sources that are unpaid for. Households with tap water on their premises had a daily water demand of 312.2 litres compared to 77.4 litres for households which bought tap water. Therefore, effective water demand by households with tap water is greater than that of households without tap water. While informal vendors are not registered and do not operate under any legal agreements, they are critical in terms of meeting the needs of the community. They usually supply small amounts of water for households from piped water sources, wells, springs or unknown sources. The presence of informal water vendors and their services has enabled a growing industry of water tank fabrication mainly from steel and aluminium in areas like Katwe and Kisenyi, as well as at hardware shops across the city. This example of urban infrastructure and service deficit illustrates on the one hand the deficit, but on the other hand the intricacy of assuming that connectivity implies access and affordability. It is these intricacies that have partly driven an emergence of MSMEs to fill the gap not only for water but also sanitation, waste, electricity and other paid services in the city.

Co-production and urban transformation

Drawing on the assessed opportunities and potential, several possible solutions are identified from so many years of UAL experimentation. From urban water and sanitation infrastructure, waste management, urban and peri-urban agriculture and forestry to recyclable businesses, opportunities for alternative systems have been identified in order to increase the coverage, accessibility and affordability of these services and infrastructure. The transformation associated with this is in relation to embracing alternative systems that are less networked and less centralised, but importantly drawing in different actors/operators. The Gulper technology, energy briquettes, high-value agri-products applying space-confined technologies and recycling or resaleable value chains have emerged to fill the deficit but also to redefine urban labour markets. These innovations demonstrate the disruptive nature of emerging

technologies that supplement the large-scale infrastructure technologies. In the next section, we summarise lessons from the co-produced knowledge on how these disruptive technologies are spurring urban transformation, harnessing opportunities and expanding possibilities through knowledge co-production.

Flexible specialisation and skills development

Disruptive technologies have one key feature of developing organically through experimentation, usually by individuals and groups that are not in the mainstream education system. But disruptive technologies are also coming out of the mainstream education system because the people involved in experimentation are not usually from mainstream education systems – they are either trained by peers or train themselves and thus may specialise in a variety of fields compared to mainstream education. The former is what we term here as flexible specialisation discerned from the knowledge co-implementation regarding MSMEs in Kampala. Community groups have shown ingenuity in developing skills as fabricators, as book-keepers, business development specialists, marketing specialists and communication specialists (Bhan et al. 2020). The skills development and learning take even more unconventional routes, including peer-to-peer learning, civil society organisations as resource centres, academies as catalyst actors, UAL's role in business development, training product development and market readiness studies, all of which were conducted by community groups.

Transformative MSMEs in urban sectors

This section draws from co-produced knowledge in the sanitation sector to present opportunities and expandable possibilities for enhancing service coverage, quality and delivery systems in cities through the deployment of potentially viable business models that leverage on the prevalence of infrastructure deficits. While applying the MSME lens to the conventional sanitation management system, the uniqueness of sanitation enterprises is expounded to highlight the spillover benefits of embracing hybrid infrastructures to address not only urban service delivery inadequacies but also the integration of the urban poor into the local economies. This section demonstrates that the centralised highly networked system of sanitation is limited in terms of promoting enhanced coverage, access and affordability for any urban dwellers.

Spatial inequalities in accessing sanitation services have amplified the limitations of the sector-based large-scale infrastructure model. The application of MSME models in the sanitation sector provides opportunities for employability, economic growth, service delivery enhancement and urban economy integration, especially for marginalised low-income communities (Lwasa et al. 2020).

Embracing heterogeneity of infrastructure through the MSME lens

Co-produced knowledge shows that MSMEs play a vital role as engines enhancing basic service sectors like sanitation, energy and water, as well as economic growth. The sanitation in Kampala does not provide channels for locally grounded innovations supporting or enhancing efficiency within the sector. The existing legal and policy frameworks makes sanitation a preserve of the utility company (the NWSC). The low-income settlements remain under-served and if they are available, the services are usually ineffective. Such service gaps have led to the rise of sanitation business through MSME start-ups at a local level and operating either individually or collectively as a community. The Gulper technology, which is a vacuum manual pump, is combined with three 200 m³ tanks and a tricycle that is used to collect and transfer the material to a bigger transfer tank that eventually transfers the material to a centralised sewage treatment plant. A value chain with charges has emerged to fill the gap in Kampala, with over 60 per cent of households using pit-latrines that fill up over time. Enterprises with different scales of operation engage in faecal recovery and some groups are converting the organic materials into cleaner energy products (Sseviiri et al. 2020).

Such alternative infrastructure has provided multiple benefits to low-income communities, including filling gaps in reusable pit-latrines and supplementing household incomes through operations of Gulper technology businesses (Nakyagaba et al. 2021).

Policy shifts for the transformation of urban infrastructure and utilities

Low-income communities' innovations on waste infrastructure have proved to be effective in enhancing service delivery at the community level. Conversely, sanitation enterprise development continues to be locally accepted by urban residents. Further, sanitation initiatives

have influenced civic engagement amongst marginalised communities through coalitions and partnerships targeting the most critical challenges relating to urban infrastructure and utilities. Whereas the Public-Private Partnership framework allows room for private investment in the services sector, interventions for such a partnership have been limited to Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between city authorities and private entities. Although communities have shown the potential to complement service delivery at different scales, private sector engagement is limited only to large enterprises. The national-level policy advocates for the prioritisation of MSMEs as engines of growth, but there are hardly any incubation centres to foster enterprise development adoption within the overall service delivery chains, governance and financing. Further, the policy support mechanisms for business support, service provision, access to finance, technical and business skills, and the creation of conducive policy, legal and institutional frameworks have rarely been anything else than theoretical when it comes to low-income community enterprises. In circumstances where municipal authorities have been engaged in mobilising institutional support for enterprises, these have been largely maintained by individuals and not through strategic institutional norms and practices (Mwangi 2000). Eventually, partnerships created and institutional support mobilised from city authorities or other public institutions tend to die off the moment facilitators of such relationships change positions, retire or seek opportunities elsewhere.

Multi-level policy shifts for the transformation of urban infrastructure and utilities are necessary to support delivery systems for low-income communities. To date, the prevalent business models have integrated multiple MSMEs on behalf of Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) across multiple city spaces, but these have only remained fixated on centralised highly networked sanitation approaches. However, sanitation economies through the Gulper technology are receiving tremendous recognition from different actors, and efforts are in place to support policy reviews with various stakeholders. Urban services-related cooperatives and enterprise associations are also on the rise to push for the acceptance of new actors that provide alternative pathways to addressing infrastructural deficits. Such strategies have increased the engagement of MSMEs at various levels to allow for buy-ins from all stakeholders in the search for sustainable innovations and solutions for urban services challenges. Policy shifts in support of MSME development for service delivery systems provide opportunities for job creation for multiple social groups, improving socio-economic support for communities and social cohesion, while at the same time providing spaces for knowledge exchange, research and innovation.

Caveats

Economic risks of scaled-up innovation

There are risks in knowledge co-production just as there are many risks associated with innovative technological and business ideas. The engagement in this space has revealed several risks in terms of knowledge co-production. The first of these is the misunderstanding on the part of many actors in communities that people 'external' to their locales have hidden agendas and that the time and effort put into co-production must be compensated. This is true in relation to innovations that have economic value such as alternative infrastructure businesses. Knowledge and product appropriation is a key risk, which is why those championing co-production must always consider risk management plans and, where necessary, a legally binding approach to the ownership of emerging innovation in respect of the product, technology and business ideas. The second risk is the elitist capture and appropriation where economic value is assessed as positive. Micro-scale enterprises have limited or no access to finance in order to fund their businesses. This is a recipe for elitist capture that can take the form of medium or large-scale businesses. Although a medium or large-scale infrastructure enterprise has not emerged, the risk still looms and therefore this is the point at which actors such as regulation authorities come in to protect the disruptive technologies and knowledge (Dixon et al. 2014). There are also occupational health risks associated with alternative urban infrastructure systems. In the experimentation with MSMEs in sanitation, the process is less environmentally controlled than it is in fully fledged laboratories. Thus, exposure to harmful organic and non-organic substances when operating the Gulper, gases and physical elements is a risk to take into consideration. The process of transportation also poses a public health risk if the tricycle and tanks are not properly secured against leakage, which can be a source of harm to the health and physical well-being of employees as well as the public.

Policy shifts, protectionism of MSMEs and capture by large-scale producers

As mentioned earlier, the risk of elitist capture is of concern to many agencies promoting disruptive technologies. But there is also a residual risk in protecting MSMEs. This is a policy issue where questions linger as to how far MSMEs can be protected by law and yet remain economically competitive for value accruals. The option of linking MSMEs to

larger value chains may seem like a ready answer to this risk, but it also exposes the MSMEs to often dominant large-scale businesses that over time can constrain relations and end up capturing the idea. A shift in policy on urban governance can possibly enable limited protectionism while spurring transformation in urban infrastructure and economies (Lwasa 2019).

Conclusion and summary

This chapter has illustrated how urban development and infrastructure investment are not matching the growing demand, leaving many neighbourhoods with infrastructure deficits, but also creating spaces for ingenuity and innovation in addressing the shortfalls. The analysis of several cases of research undertaken through a knowledge co-production approach in partnership with multiple actors further demonstrates how different ways of knowing are elevating innovation that is transformative in terms of building and developing cities differently. The chapter has also demonstrated that whereas the largest proportion of human resource in cities of the Global South like Kampala are unemployed and the youth, this is seen as a challenge, but it is also an opportunity. The opportunity requires applying the lens of employability and the creation of economic opportunities to close the inequality gap. Again, the role of knowledge co-production involving multiple actors in validating the emerging technologies for opportunity creation is critical to providing pathways to address existential needs, while also linking to broader challenges such as mitigation of emissions as part of the climate change response.

In summary, this chapter has illustrated how knowledge co-production can be achieved while also examining critically the relevance of co-produced knowledge in advancing scalable solutions and urban transformation. It has demonstrated the book's thrust of there being no blueprint of co-production and that co-production is situated in the spatial and political context where it is applied. It has further illustrated that co-production outcomes can be thought of as *a posteriori* as compared to pre-determined solutions to urban challenges, thus adding value to existing initiatives rather than prescribing ready-made solutions. By embracing different ways of knowing, including recentring community knowledge, the chapter informs decolonial debates where methods for research are applied in a way that turns individuals and collective members into partners in research rather than being subjects of research, and universities as convenors.

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3

Collective infrastructures and governance in precarious neighbourhoods in Lima, Peru

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Introduction

Urban inequality, when presented as a theory or reduced to quantitative data, does not properly represent how it is manifested and experienced in everyday lives. Focusing too much on its manifestations rather than on the structural causes that reproduce it leads to short-term fixes, but not to the radical transformations needed to reduce it. The causes of inequality are inherently complex and diverse, varying in each context and in each scale (from the household to the neighbourhood, city, nation and region). This multiplicity calls for approaches that give voice to multiple perspectives, experiences, knowledge and practices not only to understand inequality but also to collectively seek ways in which to challenge it, with a particular emphasis on actions emerging from social groups that are more vulnerable to the impacts and limitations of inequality.

In this chapter we first introduce a theoretical lens through which to understand how current urban inequalities experienced in Lima came to be and continue to evolve. We then present collaborative experimentation and co-production as possible pathways to challenge inequalities, as well as an analytical tool – Hou's (2010) six insurgent planning strategies – to help us deconstruct and assess the transformative power and

limitations of these approaches (Castán Broto et al. 2022). Later, we discuss two co-production experiences undertaken in Lima between 2020 and 2021: the improvement of a local market in the historic centre and the implementation of community kitchens in the peripheries of the city. Both projects emerged as collective responses to the rising food insecurity that resulted from the socio-economic crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic (Desmaison et al. 2022). These experiences show the diversity of everyday encounters of inequality as well as the different ways in which inhabitants seek to overcome challenges by building dialogue with different stakeholders in city making, particularly different levels of government. The chapter ends with an analysis of both experiences, depicting how they evolved over time and showing how co-production can lead to unexpected outcomes which could potentiate or limit the construction of social, political and material pathways to tackle inequalities.

Understanding urban inequality in Lima: multi-dimensional fragmentation

Under the framework of the action-research Knowledge in Action Towards Urban Equality (KNOW) project,¹ a team of researchers from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP) embarked on a four-year project that sought to unveil multiple understandings of urban inequality in Lima to propose pathways emerging from this specific context to challenge these inequalities. The team analysed different discourses around urban inequality in Latin American and Peruvian academic literature, in policies and programmes from multiple levels of government and as understood by residents living in marginalised areas (Jaime and Bernales 2021; Jaime et al. 2021; Desmaison et al. 2023). This analysis sought to unveil intersections and discrepancies of these multiple understandings in order to explore ways in which to create common ground for collaborative work. In Peruvian national indicators of inequality, emphasis is placed on economic poverty with a quantitative and material focus that does not delve into the structural causes of inequality. The Peruvian state focuses on indicators for the nuclear family in terms of economic income and the material characteristics of housing (Ramirez-Corzo and Herrera 2018). This quantitative perspective hides other dimensions of communal daily life and equitable access to public spaces and infrastructure beyond the private or domestic sphere.

On the other hand, Levy (2013) understands inequality as the differentiated access to opportunities to achieve individual and communal development. Based on the conceptualisation of justice proposed by Fraser (1995), Levy proposes that urban equity is based on five fundamental pillars: an equitable distribution of resources, the recognition of diverse realities and needs, the existence of horizontality of voices, participation as equals in decision making, and mutual care and responsibility in the management of resources. Thus, Levy amplifies narrow understandings of inequality that focus on monetary income at the individual level.

Within Latin American academic tradition, di Virgilio and Perelman (2014) emphasize material conditions and spatial segregation (Jordán et al. 2017). They argue that the location of a person or a social group in the city, along with the possibility of moving freely and the accessibility of public resources, directly influence their possibility of individual and collective development. Urbanisation processes reproduce conditions of urban inequality by being platforms for power disputes. From this perspective, spatial segregation is understood in terms of everyday dynamics, flows and daily mobility.

We propose that the above notions should be complemented by adding a historical analysis of urban processes and place-based perspectives to the social understanding of inequality and its manifestation and reproduction in physical space. For this, we work with a relational approach to space and time, following the work of Doreen Massey (1993, 2005). The particularity of inequality in Lima arises from the confluence of these historical and contemporary factors within particular territories. Thus, understanding the particularity of a territory – in its multiple scales and histories – requires an understanding of the relationships between these places and the different socio-natural flows that converge in them.

We present multi-dimensional fragmentation (political, social and territorial) (Figure 3.1) as a manifestation of these different flows converging in this particular territory (Desmaison 2021; Jaime et al. 2021). On the one hand, there is social fragmentation expressed in terms of how community groups are increasingly smaller and, rather than cooperating with one another to demand access to public infrastructure and services, compete against each other in their demands to different levels of government for access to micro-scale interventions and services, while demand for broader scale services (like education and health centres) is relegated. On the other hand, territorial fragmentation occurs as land occupations become increasingly smaller responding

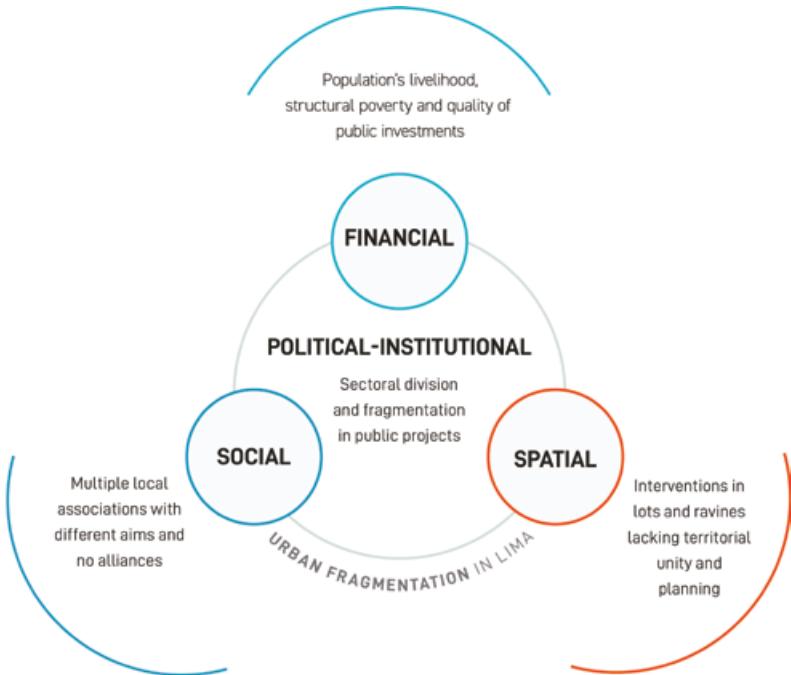


Figure 3.1 Dimensions of urban fragmentation in Lima, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima

to harsher topographical conditions and are located in higher-risk land. Another manifestation of territorial fragmentation is the appearance of a multiplicity of small-scale interventions like football fields, stairs and contentious walls in the absence of other infrastructure that promotes greater social cohesion on the one hand and access to other services like health and education on the other hand. Lastly, political fragmentation is seen in the lack of a broader vision for the city, focusing instead on short-term investments that are clientelist in nature and reproduce inequalities as they limit access to better spaces, services, infrastructures and solidarity networks. Another type of political fragmentation is the over-specialisation and compartmentalisation of governing practices which hinders the possibility of achieving holistic, integral and multi-dimensional approaches to challenge inequalities. As we will see later on, multi-dimensional fragmentation is manifested differently across the city and it serves as a lens through which to observe and understand urban inequality.

With the arrival of COVID-19, the structural causes of inequality made visible the high levels of vulnerability and precariousness of various sectors of the city. There is a high correlation between the neighbourhoods in the city of Lima that accumulated the highest number of deaths with those with the lowest economic levels and the lowest presence of recreational spaces and accessibility to public facilities and services (Castro and Huamán 2021) (Figure 3.2). The immobilisation protocols imposed during the first few months to prevent the spread of the virus directly affected the population that earned a daily income in the informal sector, which currently represent 75 per cent of the economically active population in Peru (INEI 2020). The increase in precariousness and the impossibility of generating economic income provoked the massive return of approximately 250,000 people to their places of origin within Peru (Chávez 2021), where they had support networks and better chances of survival (Fort et al. 2021).

The lack of income for those who remained in Lima meant they were facing a series of difficulties such as worsening food insecurity (Pozzebon 2021). According to Peru's National Institute of Statistics (INEI), during the first week of May 2020, 14 per cent of households in Lima were unable to access protein-containing food, 73 per cent of them due to a lack of economic resources (Zegarra 2020). The government's response to this situation focused on the provision of economic vouchers and family baskets for low-income populations. Although these actions were necessary, they highlighted a lack of awareness of the diversity of the population's needs, and of the potential of including citizens themselves in addressing the emergency through the promotion of the initiatives and solidarity networks that were beginning to emerge from within community organisations.

In this rapidly evolving context, we place special emphasis on the spatial and symbolic dimensions of inequality in terms of accessibility to resources, services and infrastructure. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic showed that the structural drivers of inequality and of vulnerability to risk produced an increased exposure to the current health crisis, not only in terms of health but also in its social, economic and political dimensions. Seeking to improve the lives negatively impacted by the pandemic, we worked on strategies to break the reproduction of multi-dimensional fragmentation while challenging growing urban inequality through the co-production of collective care infrastructures and alternative forms of governance and resource management. These processes and objectives will be discussed below.

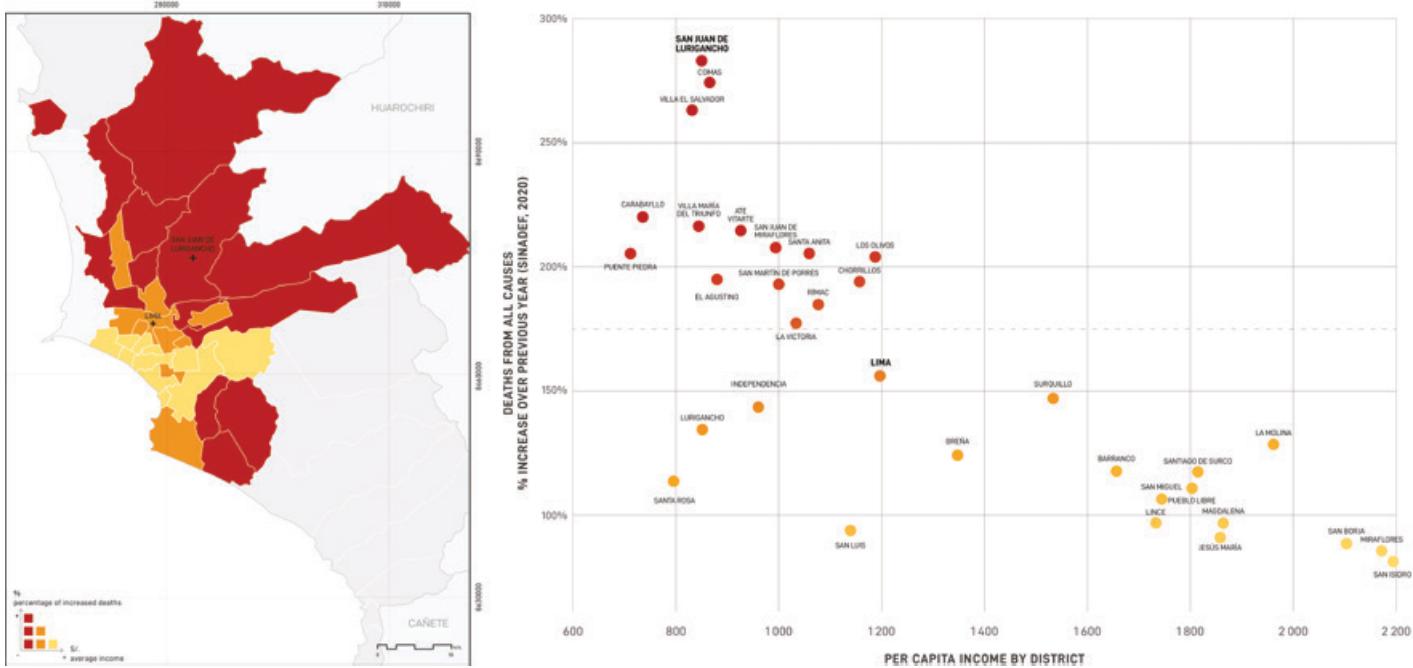


Figure 3.2 Map of Lima with deaths per capita per district. Districts in red depict a higher number of cases per capita. Graph shows income per capita on the x-axis and number of deaths per capita on the y-axis, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima team, based on Sifuentes (2021)

Co-producing social infrastructures to enable networks of solidarity and care

Klinenberg (2018) highlights the role of social infrastructure in supporting the city. The networks of solidarity and care that spontaneously arise in social groups are fundamental for overcoming moments of crisis, as they provide help quickly and effectively. The author suggests that the provision of collective spaces is necessary in any city for encounters between neighbours, which generate exchange and mutual support networks, as repeated encounters turn strangers into friends. Hence, the project places special emphasis on the co-production of social and community infrastructure at the neighbourhood and district scale through collective experimentation. This approach aims to escape technocratic perspectives in the provision of public facilities and infrastructure, searching to provide meeting spaces that promote the strengthening of social networks that, in turn, allow care and solidarity to emerge in moments of crisis (Solnit 2009; Lynch 2014; Jirón Martínez 2020). The consolidation of social infrastructures at different scales helps to challenge multi-dimensional fragmentation through the consolidation of more horizontal and inclusive governance spaces that propel more active citizen participation.

Governing cities creates a perennial contradiction as stable and stagnated legislations and ways of governing attempt to exert control over ever-changing processes of transformation of urban landscapes and networks. This rigidity results in ‘over technological “fixes” and technocratic approaches which do not target the underlying physical and social changes required’ and do not respond to the nuances and particularities of an intricate lived reality (Bulkeley et al. 2015, 11). In Lima, this rigidity occurs in a context with an absence of policies and programmes in planning, where public investment focuses on isolated and fragmented urban projects at the micro-level (Rodríguez Rivero 2017). The necessity to continuously revisit the urban condition forms the basis of emergent lines of thought and action known as ‘experiments’, which seek to promote change through the creation of ‘spaces of containment and exception in the city and their dynamics’ (Bulkeley et al. 2015, 19) that ‘purposively attempt to change both the material arrangements and the culture, norms and conventions’ (Bulkeley et al. 2015, 22).

These proposals respond to immediate necessities while acknowledging broader structural challenges and are thus designed to spark larger transformations, while gaining momentum and support through the provision of measurable and palpable impacts in the short term.

Thus, the success of experiments depends on their ability to acknowledge and incorporate already-existing materialities, politics and economies so that they become pertinent alternatives to current ways of distributing, creating, maintaining and governing urban infrastructures and services.

For experiments to occur, Bulkeley et al. (2015, 16) call for the necessity of ‘niches’, which are described as ‘key spaces where innovation can be deliberately fostered by key actors in the regime,² so that they can bring about a systemic, rapid and abrupt transformation’. Undoubtedly, for niches to be available – and for experiments to occur – political will and support must be present, not only to secure the legitimacy of the project but also to maximise its potential to transform wider processes of institutional and social learning by ensuring their links to city-wide visions of planning and development (Castán Broto and Neves Alves 2018). Hence, actions and projects carried out without the participation, support and involvement of public institutions are unlikely to foster change at broader political and policy levels. *How and when* these actors get involved in the process will undoubtedly vary (as we will discuss in the experiences in Lima), but their support remains crucial for the experiment to reverberate beyond their immediate locality into city-wide processes.

Tactical urbanism is understood by Brenner (2017) not as a series of pre-established techniques or styles, but as a strategy of urbanism capable of questioning, through an integral approach to design, the spatial, social and institutional relations that have generated unequal and/or exclusive development models. Emphasis is placed on spatial and material interventions at the local, neighbourhood scale, unlike collaborative planning. Unlike strategic planning or urban acupuncture, which works at a similar scale, tactical urbanism is not necessarily promoted by public institutions. Moreover, tactical urbanism projects do not necessarily have to be framed and approved by public institutions and can be done without permission as a form of provocation. Brenner advocates for alternative visions of the production of space that address local problems for communities affected by the processes of urban fragmentation or conflict. He proposes the active involvement of communities, who actively co-produce the strategies, spatial design and implementation of these interventions. Tactical urbanism or collective experimentation allows for the creation of a disruptive space where socio-economic conditions, institutional and normative structures, market influence and state action are questioned, along with the rules governing the production, use, occupation and appropriation of urban space (Brenner 2017). In other words, experiments emerge as temporary and context-bound strategies that seek to influence processes or phenomena that go beyond their context,

moving towards visions of alternative models that restructure unequal power relations.

In these scenarios, inhabitants are not seen as passive agents, but as ‘part of the constitution of the field of intervention and the will to improve’ (Li, cited in Bulkeley et al. 2015, 40). As Schwarz and Krabbendam (2013, 6) point out, ‘it is no longer a matter of designing for society, but within it’. Thus, the participation in experiments promotes urban and social justice, in that justice ‘is not merely about creating a better city for its inhabitants, but also the right of those inhabitants to decide on what a better city means’ (Bulkeley et al. 2015, 224). Furthermore, urban justice is not about access to ‘specific individual rights, but rather a process that exposes, challenges and reconfigures the urban patterns of unequal access to resources’ (Bulkeley et al. 2015, 224). Thus, if experiments are politically supported and allow for the participation of a diversity of actors, they become a viable alternative towards the creation of transformative platforms that tackle structural drivers of urban inequality.

Co-production (Mitlin and Bartlett 2018) seeks to make relationships between public institutions and civil society more horizontal by changing the ways in which common spaces and social infrastructure are delivered, turning these spaces into platforms that foster societies capable of overcoming conditions of inequality. Advancing agendas of co-production in the city requires generating new models of cohabitation and co-existence, contemplating not only the redesign and re-appropriation of specific public spaces, but also new forms of governance, as well as policies and programmes that enable the existence, creation and reproduction of these spaces. Hence, spatial interventions, social empowerment and political critique are integrated to generate an alternative and disruptive urbanism.

The realisation of co-production projects is aimed at strengthening relations between different stakeholders, with an emphasis on improving power asymmetries. In these scenarios, the process matters more than the final result. As it evolves over time, the outcome may not be clear from the beginning. Consequently, physical and social ideals may or may not be achieved, and the process might generate unexpected results (Castán Broto et al. 2022). Therefore, assessing the extent to which the experiments were able to provide relevant solutions to challenge the urban inequalities originally identified becomes an important endeavour. The authors apply Jeffrey Hou’s (2010) six categories of action to evaluate the outcomes of co-production projects as a framework to evaluate the impacts of collective spaces and infrastructures projects implemented in Lima.

Hou (2010, 12) established six categories to analyse the construction of ‘insurgent public space’, which he describes as areas that defy ‘the conventional rules, regulations, and wisdom … in support of a more diverse, just, and democratic society’. The six categories are appropriating, reclaiming, pluralising, transgressing, uncovering and contesting, as summarised in [Table 3.1](#). Hou’s approach is used to analyse the physical and social dimension of insurgent public spaces and experiments. From a participatory planning perspective, these projects aim to re-arrange political institutionalism and propose alternative coalitions (Brenner 2017).

Although the experiments presented here are not the ‘usual suspects’ of public spaces as traditionally understood, Hou’s approach, which focused on public spaces, is still useful to analyse how the transformation of shared spaces can affect social and spatial relationships in the urban environment, allowing the development of strategies to address everyday experiences of inequality. We will analyse two pilot experiences developed in Lima during the KNOW research project: community kitchens in peripheral neighbourhoods and local markets in the historic centre ([Figure 3.3](#)). Each experience will be analysed in two distinct moments: (1) how the proposals initially sought to engage and claim each of Hou’s categories; and (2) amid negotiation and discussion with inhabitants and public authorities, how initial objectives evolved and to what extent the final outcomes were able to challenge (or not) urban inequalities. Using Hou’s categories, the projects can be deconstructed into several strategies, rendering visible how each one sought to reduce urban

Table 3.1 Emancipatory outcomes of co-production, 2022

Outcome strategy	Definition
Appropriating	Repurposing urban resources for citizens’ interests
Reclaiming	Using underutilised resources to achieve citizens’ objectives
Pluralising	Adaptation of planning practices to reflect a broader set of interests, particularly incorporating the interests of minorities
Transgressing	Crossing institutional boundaries to deliver alternative visions of existing institutions
Uncovering	Reinterpretation of urban resources to make them visible and usable by citizens and communities
Contesting	Actively disputing dominant framings and modernist city visions

Source: © Castán Broto et al. 2022 , adapted from Hou [2010](#)

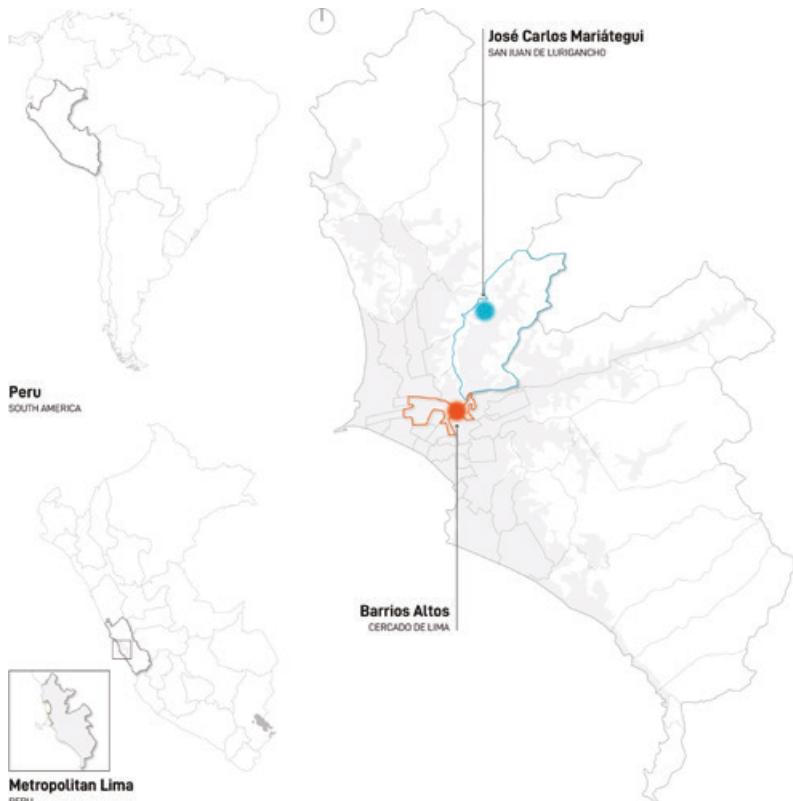


Figure 3.3 Location of Barrios Altos and Jose Carlos Mariategui in Lima city, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima Team

inequalities in practice. In the following section we will briefly introduce the two experiences of co-production of social infrastructure in Lima, followed by the analysis of each case.

Community kitchens challenging food insecurity and social fragmentation

By the end of 2020, the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima (MML) identified 1,068 Ollas Comunes (Community Kitchens – OCs) serving 117,987 families (Santandreu 2021) in the peripheral areas of the

city. One year later, that number increased to more than 2,000 OCs.³ The multi-dimensional fragmentation deepened the precariousness of the living conditions of families settled in these excluded areas, increasing the levels of urban inequality. The situation put at risk the livelihoods of a sector of the population that, in the absence of physical and social security, had to turn to collective organisation and neighbourhood solidarity networks to ensure their food supply during the emergency.

OCs come from a long tradition of women's networks that feed and help the population in difficult times. The Comedores Populares (Popular Dining Halls), the OCs' predecessors, historically relied on donations from the state or private entities. Over the years, their institutional recognition and consolidation did not lead to a change in the focus of public policies towards greater economic and social sustainability; on the contrary, public investment reinforced clientelistic practices and dependency on the state (Blondet et al. 2004).

The resurgence of OCs during the pandemic shed light on the potential of these initiatives, which included their possible evolution towards collective spaces capable of promoting the diversification of uses beyond kitchens. By highlighting the value of the invisible work of many women and the necessity of sharing responsibilities in care activities (Nieves Rico and Segovia 2017), the project aimed to ensure the sustainability of OCs over time by providing spatial infrastructure to support these activities within the city.

The proposal is multi-scalar, understanding that these care infrastructures are immersed within urban systems and are interdependent with other collective spaces for managing social and material resources. The Community Team of Jose Carlos Mariátegui (JCM) in the district of San Juan de Lurigancho ([Figure 3.4](#)), the Urban Development Institute CENCA and the KNOW team in Lima built, through face-to-face workshops and virtual meetings, a collective and integral vision of the territory ([Figure 3.5](#)). A first step was to propose improvements for the infrastructure of the OCs at the neighbourhood level ([Figure 3.6](#)), which was later complemented with a vision of their articulation in networks at the district level. It is within this collective vision that technical guidelines of occupation and urbanisation converge with the redistribution of resources and the management of sustainable livelihoods, thus promoting the strengthening of community capacities and the articulation of their undertakings for the collaborative production of habitat (Jaime et al. 2021).

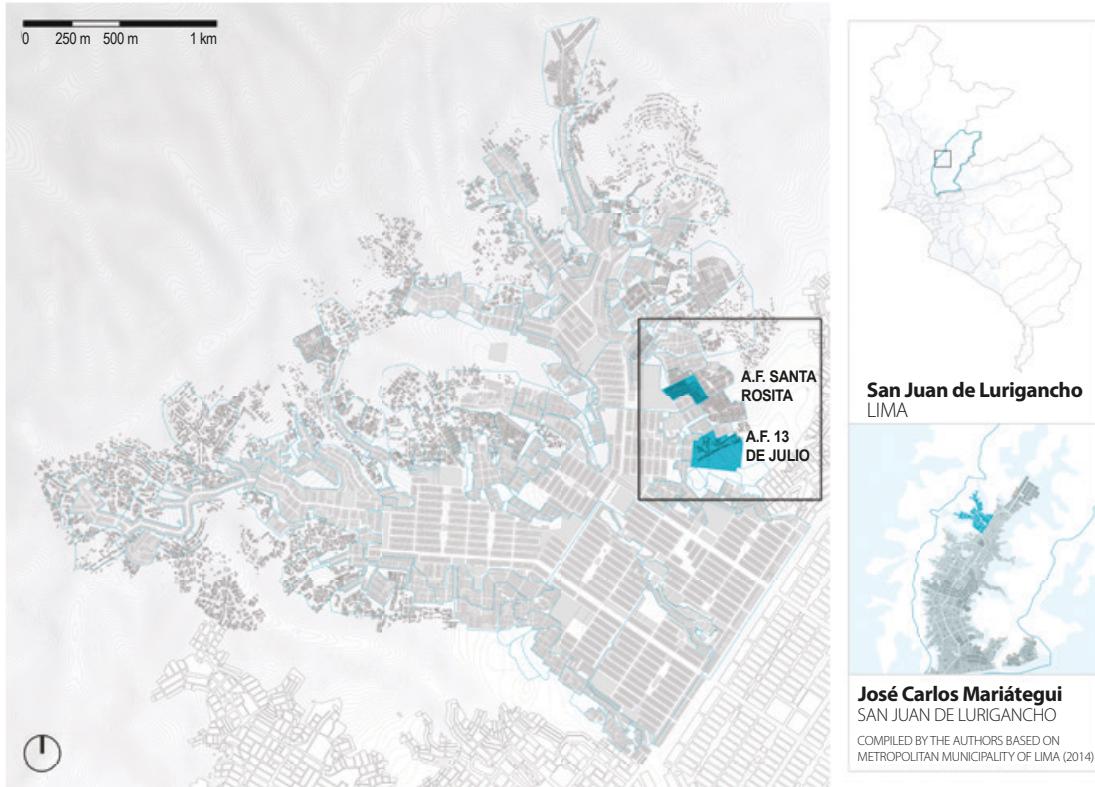


Figure 3.4 Location of the family associations (Asociaciones Familiares – AF) within the Jose Carlos Mariátegui sector, San Juan de Lurigancho, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima Team

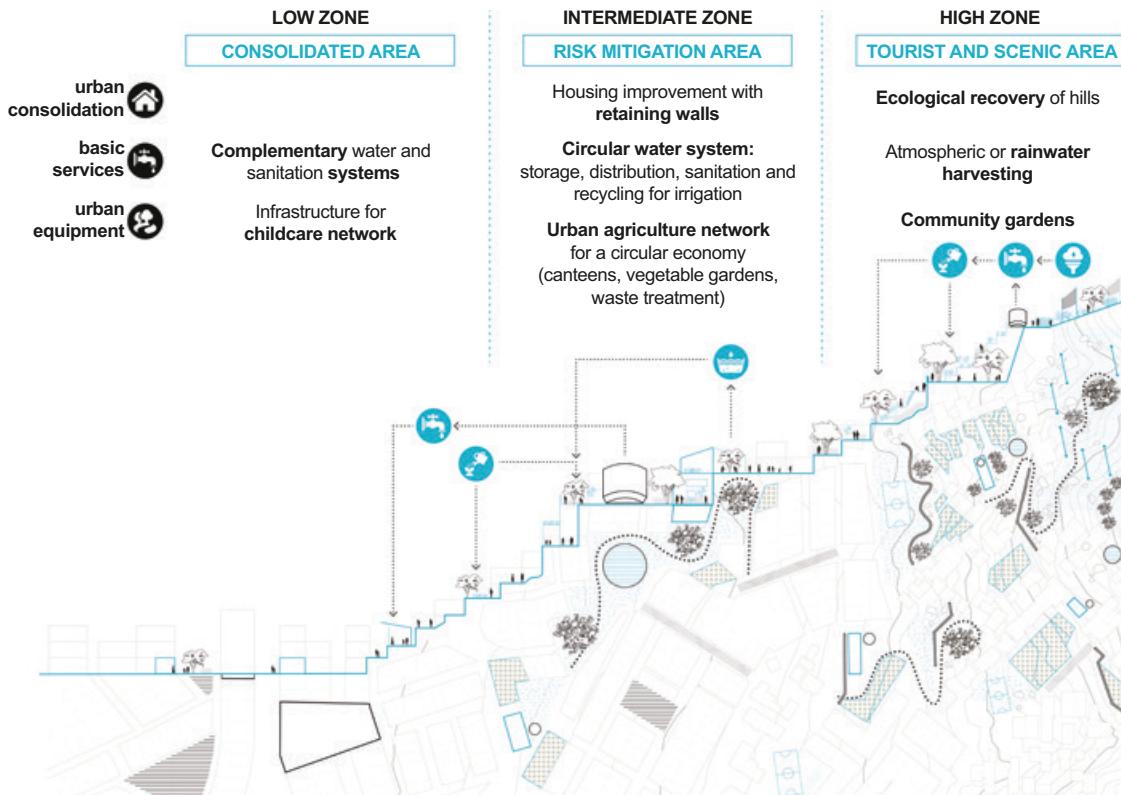


Figure 3.5 Vision of territorial development on hillsides with collective infrastructure and services according to different stages and location of settlements, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima Team

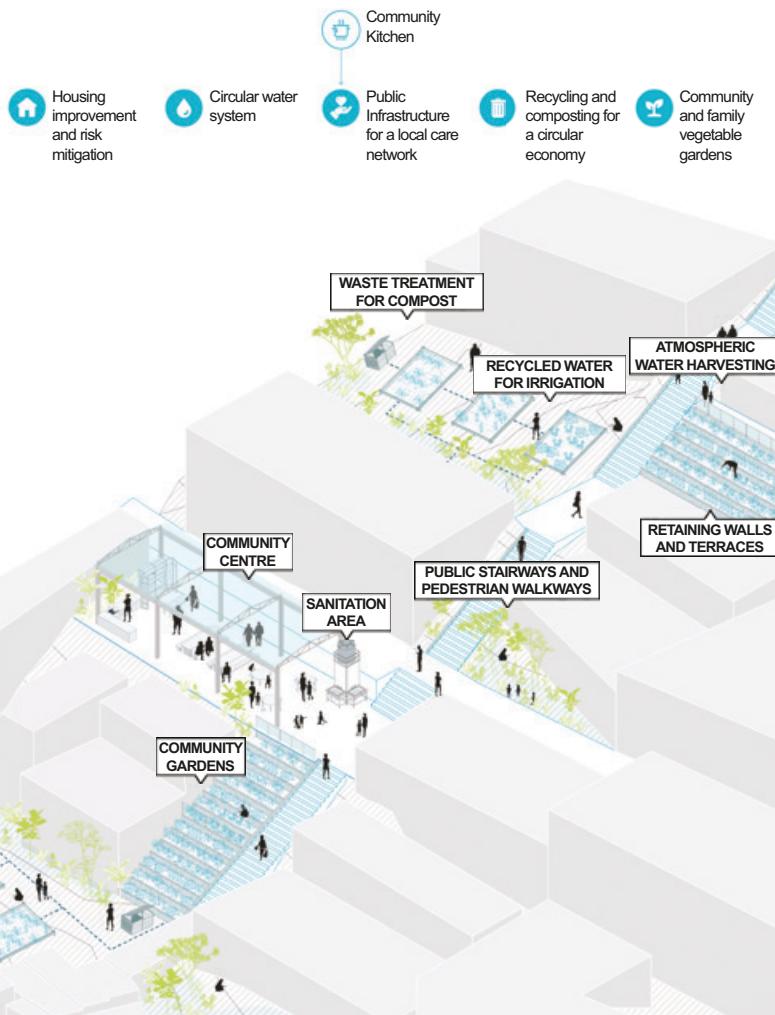


Figure 3.6 Collective view for the progressive and modular implementation of community infrastructure for food security within a circular economy on the peripheries of Lima. Based on discussions with OCs and CENCA, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima

The collaborative diagnosis process (Figure 3.7) allowed us to see the heterogeneity of the OCs, evidencing diverse infrastructural needs and levels of social and spatial consolidation. This diversity is highlighted in the different stages and locations of hillside settlements: low, medium or high. The transformation and integration of the OCs into a public

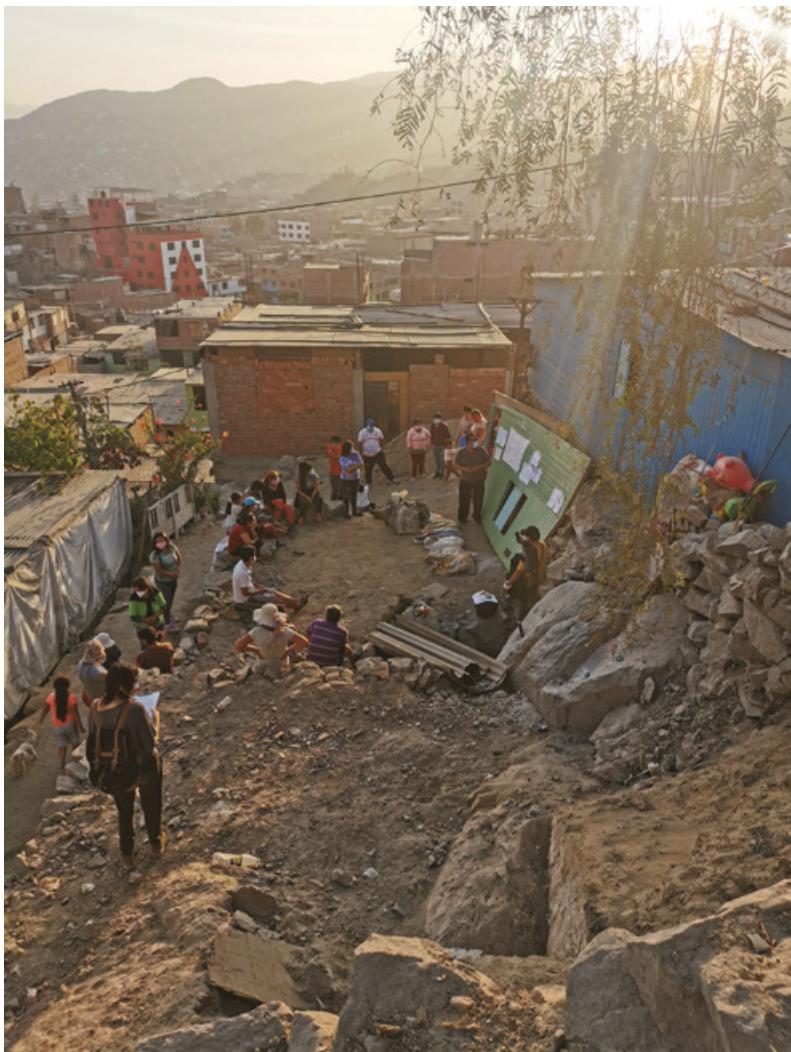


Figure 3.7 Co-production workshop for the design of an OC in Santa Rosita, José Carlos Mariátegui, Lima, 2020.

Source: © Belen Desmaison

infrastructure system involves strengthening relationships between communities and different levels of government for the collective conception and management of the territory ([Figure 3.8](#)). This collective process makes it possible to address territorial fragmentation by providing concrete proposals to improve accessibility to basic services. It also challenges

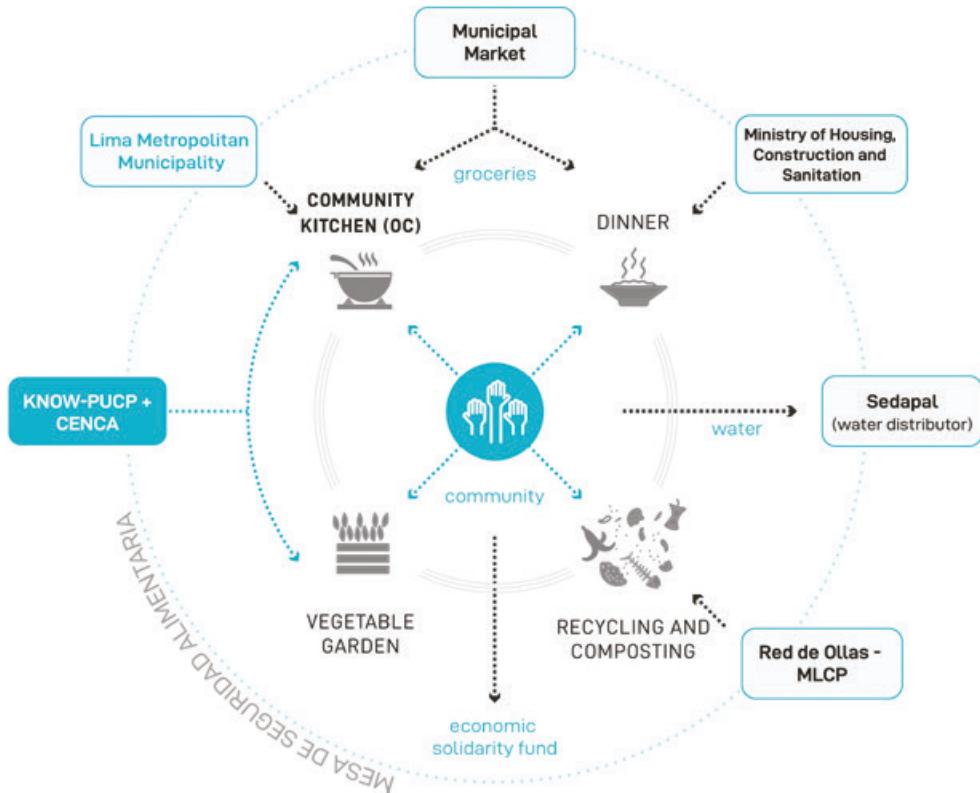


Figure 3.8 Care network for OCs in Jose Carlos Mariátegui, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima Team

social fragmentation by providing care spaces and services, promoting the collective management of natural resources and the empowerment of women caregivers through the recognition of their role in society.

Departing from this broader initial diagnosis, two sites – Santa Rosita and 13 de Julio – were chosen for the implementation of infrastructural experiments. The selection was based on the levels of consolidation at the infrastructural and organisational dimensions, as these two sites had well-organised communities and, due to their location, they could potentially serve food for other communities nearby. The architectural proposal at the local scale included progressive and modular interventions, consisting of five modules: roof and floor, kitchen, sanitary, storage and urban agriculture ([Figure 3.9](#)). The strategy to challenge political fragmentation involves demanding the

Intervention Programme

- ① Restrooms and water tank platform
- ② Lavatory and grease trap
- ③ Public seating and biofilter
- ④ Public stairway and planters
- ⑤ New street

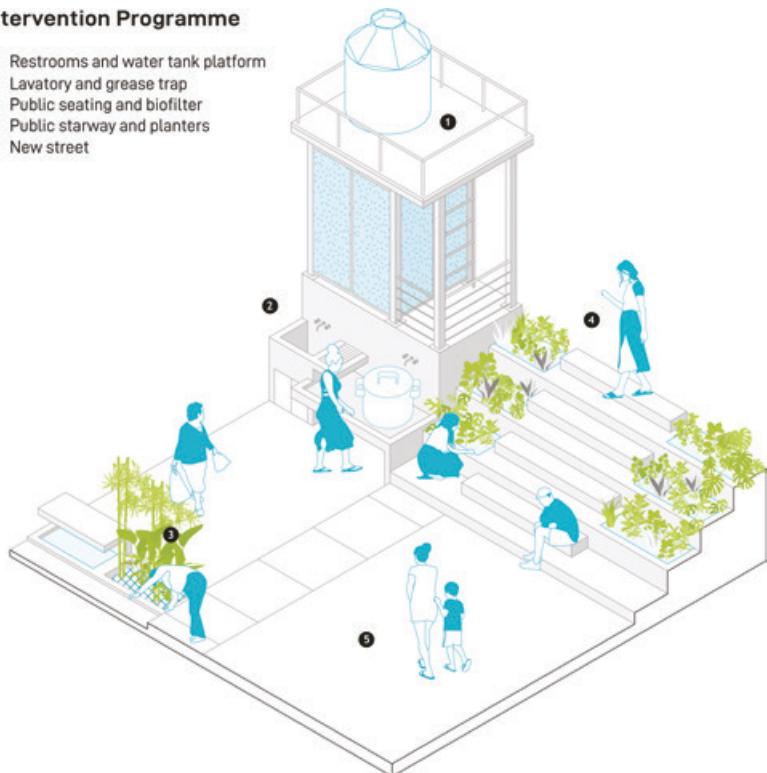


Figure 3.9 The intervention at the OC in 13 de Julio including a sanitation area and the transformation of stairs into a common space, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima Team

integration of these components in public investment programmes towards their replicability in other contexts. To this end, the project was shared with the Mesa de Seguridad Alimentaria (Mesa), a network implemented by the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima (MML) in which OCs, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and private and public institutions got together weekly virtually to discuss ways in which to strengthen the rapidly expanding network and provide food for those in need. The Mesa served as a platform for the wider community working directly or indirectly with OCs to listen to each other, make collective demands to different levels of government and work on collective action towards recognition including protests and mapping possible sources of funding for food or for infrastructural upgrading. The KNOW-Lima team proposed working on the latter by focusing on capacity building of the population and greater cooperation with the different levels of government through construction training workshops, public investment in the improvement of these collective infrastructures, and the recognition of the social management required for the use and care of the space ([Figure 3.10](#)).

Local markets as catalysts of social networks at the district scale

During the pandemic, to continue functioning, neighbourhood markets quickly adapted to the sanitary protocols established by the government. This necessary transition, which represented an important economic investment for shopkeepers, reinforced the challenges that local markets face in a context of increasing competitiveness against large transnational commercial chains. In addition to this challenge, neighbourhood markets in central areas such as the Mercados Mercedarias in Barrios Altos – a popular and residential neighbourhood in the historic centre of Lima ([Figure 3.11](#)) – are run mainly by old shopkeepers, operate in deteriorated physical infrastructure and compete with informal shopkeepers located on adjacent streets. All of this takes place in an urban context framed by social displacement that weakens the urban and social fabric of these historic neighbourhoods, which are adjacent to the Central Market of Metropolitan Lima, a major travel attraction area in the city (Vega Centeno et al. [2019](#)).

As in other historic centres, local businesses are displaced by globalised commercial dynamics that generate spaces designed to promote consumption, but that limit social interaction between



Figure 3.10 Inauguration of the new common area in 13 de Julio, 2021.

Source: © Paola Córdova

strangers – what Augé (1995) calls ‘non-places’. In Barrios Altos, this situation is aggravated by the reconversion of neighbourhood space into warehouses and stores that cater to an oversized movement of private capital, which undermines the area’s residential function and puts residents, workers and visitors at risk (Jaime and Bernales 2021) (Figure 3.12). The transformation of the neighbourhood and the city under a vision that

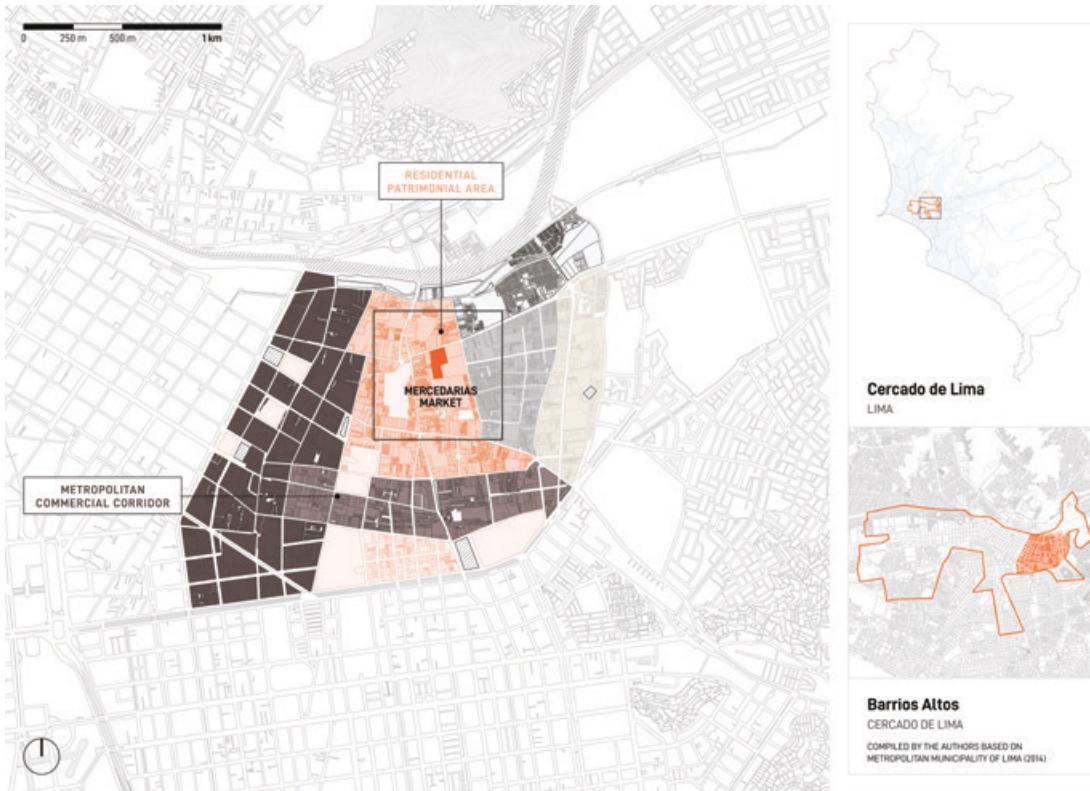


Figure 3.11 Location of the Mercedarias Markets in Barrios Altos, Cercado de Lima, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima Team



Figure 3.12 Emerging and often illegal storage facilities that deteriorate the residential character of Barrios Altos, Lima, 2020.

Source: © Kelly Ros Mery Jaime Arias

serves private interests prioritises the commercial value and profitability of these spaces over their social and symbolic value, which shapes collective identity and memory. The urban deterioration of the area leads to the weakening of its social infrastructure, which is fundamental in facing times of crisis and promoting the defence of the residential and popular character of these neighbourhoods.

In this context, the KNOW-Lima team, in seeking pathways to reduce urban inequalities, sought to revitalise and strengthen the local market, which was seen as a basic infrastructure of the neighbourhood's residential character that served as a meeting place, with the understanding that shopkeepers are also residents of the neighbourhood and form a fundamental part of its social fabric. The local market is a space where different social groups exchange, socialise and meet; where, as al-Sabouni (2021, 66) points out, 'the majority of consumers have faces; they are not mere

numbers; they are customers ... social bonding in such an environment grows organically and evolves into the most essential element in sustaining the life of a city, namely its social fabric'. The loss of the traditional market puts at risk the survival of the social networks that make up the culture and identity of this historic neighbourhood. For this reason, recovering the market as a popular space and public infrastructure had the potential to strengthen neighbourly relations of trust (Hernández Cordero 2017), consolidating the residential nature of Lima's historic centre.

The specific case of the Mercados Mercedarias (the Mercedarias Markets) illustrates the overlapping of the economic role with its social – even institutional – function within the neighbourhood: the co-existence between a market that functions as a place of reference for the community; a place of work that brings together generations of families who became stable shopkeepers (Figure 3.13); and a municipal market around which the local government provides other complementary services to the community, such as a centre for adolescents. At present, there are tensions with informal street shopkeepers who sell their products in the



Figure 3.13 An undated photograph (mid-twentieth century) at the Mercedarias Markets. Some of the children that appear in the image are currently shopkeepers. The photograph is currently in their main offices.

Source: Reproduced with the permission of the Association of Shopkeepers of Mercedarias Markets

streets outside the markets. This situation is accompanied by the decay of the public space adjacent to the markets, where loitering and a perception of insecurity are common. These busy streets are in stark contrast to what happens inside the markets, with large unused areas in both markets, which are separated by a wall. The progressive deterioration of the markets is additionally reflected by abandoned stalls ([Figure 3.14](#)).

A joint action between shopkeepers and the MML sought to develop strategies for the recovery of the markets as centres of attraction and dynamisation of neighbourhood life ([Figure 3.15](#)). The first step was the prioritisation of interventions in the short term, such as the treatment of the shared space at the entrance of both markets, currently used as a car park ([Figure 3.16](#)). Barrios Altos has a deficiency of social meeting spaces, so this space, currently under-utilised, could fulfil this function while reinforcing the social links between the market and the neighbourhood. The discussions towards the co-design and co-management of the intervention made it possible to progressively incorporate the broader community into the management of this common space, creating a replicable model for the upgrading of local markets.



Figure 3.14 Abandoned stalls at the Mercedarias Markets, 2020.

Source: © Belen Desmaison

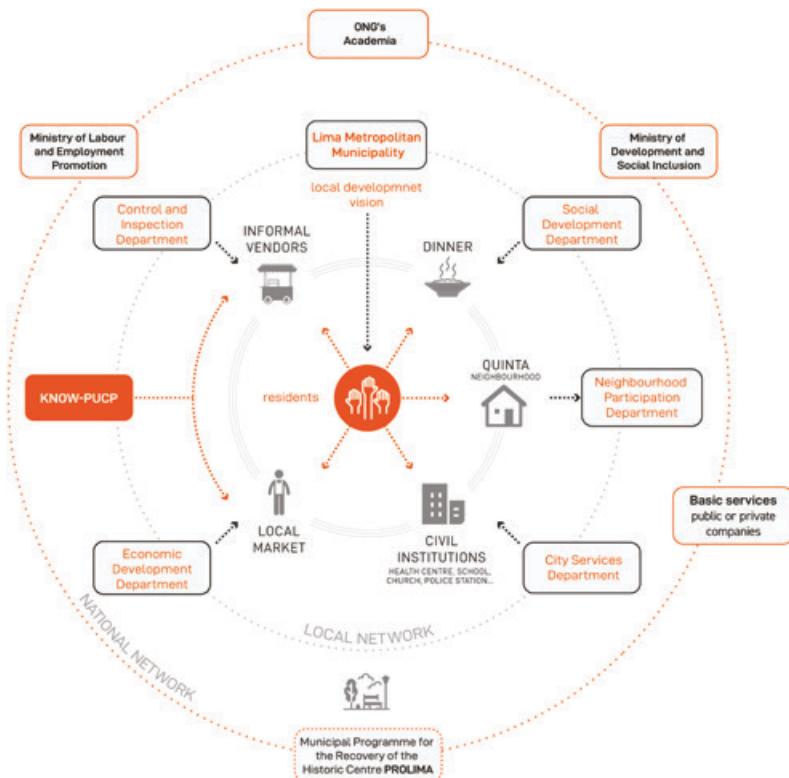
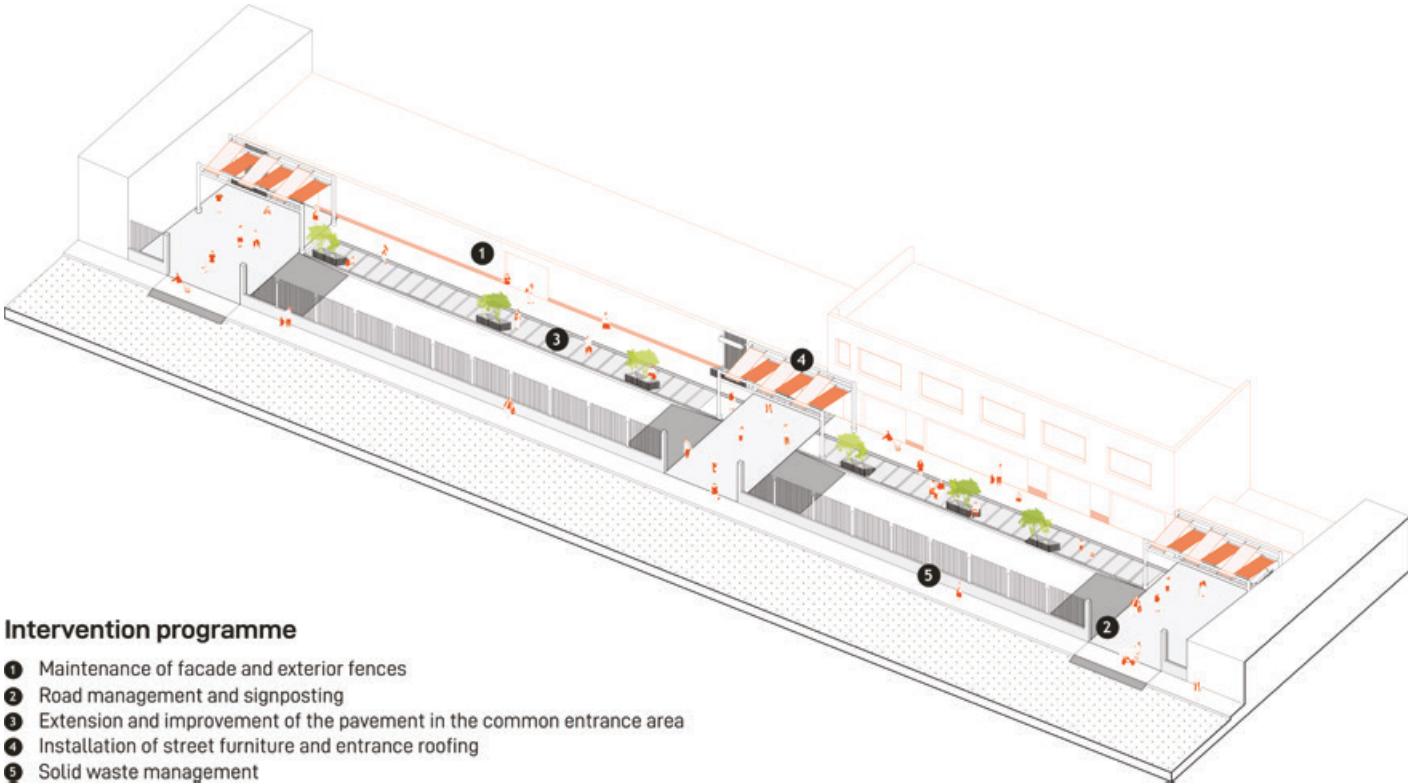


Figure 3.15 Care network for local markets in Barrios Altos, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima Team

As it is located in the historic centre of Lima, the proposal had to comply with the regulations and institutional framework governing these areas and this specific type of land use, which motivated a greater exchange with different units of the MML. In the long term (Figure 3.17), the broader vision of the upgraded markets includes the recovery of the abandoned stalls to be used by street shopkeepers. Later stages also include a bio-garden that complements the centre for adolescents and generates exchanges with the Comedores Populares operating in the neighbourhood. Lastly, aiming for the consolidation of complementary uses, the shopkeepers identified a place for a food court to eat the meals prepared and sold daily and a nursery for the childcare of both visitors and shopkeepers alike.



Intervention programme

- ① Maintenance of facade and exterior fences
- ② Road management and signposting
- ③ Extension and improvement of the pavement in the common entrance area
- ④ Installation of street furniture and entrance roofing
- ⑤ Solid waste management

Figure 3.16 First stage of the proposed intervention at the Mercedarias Markets: the improvement of the common entrance, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima Team

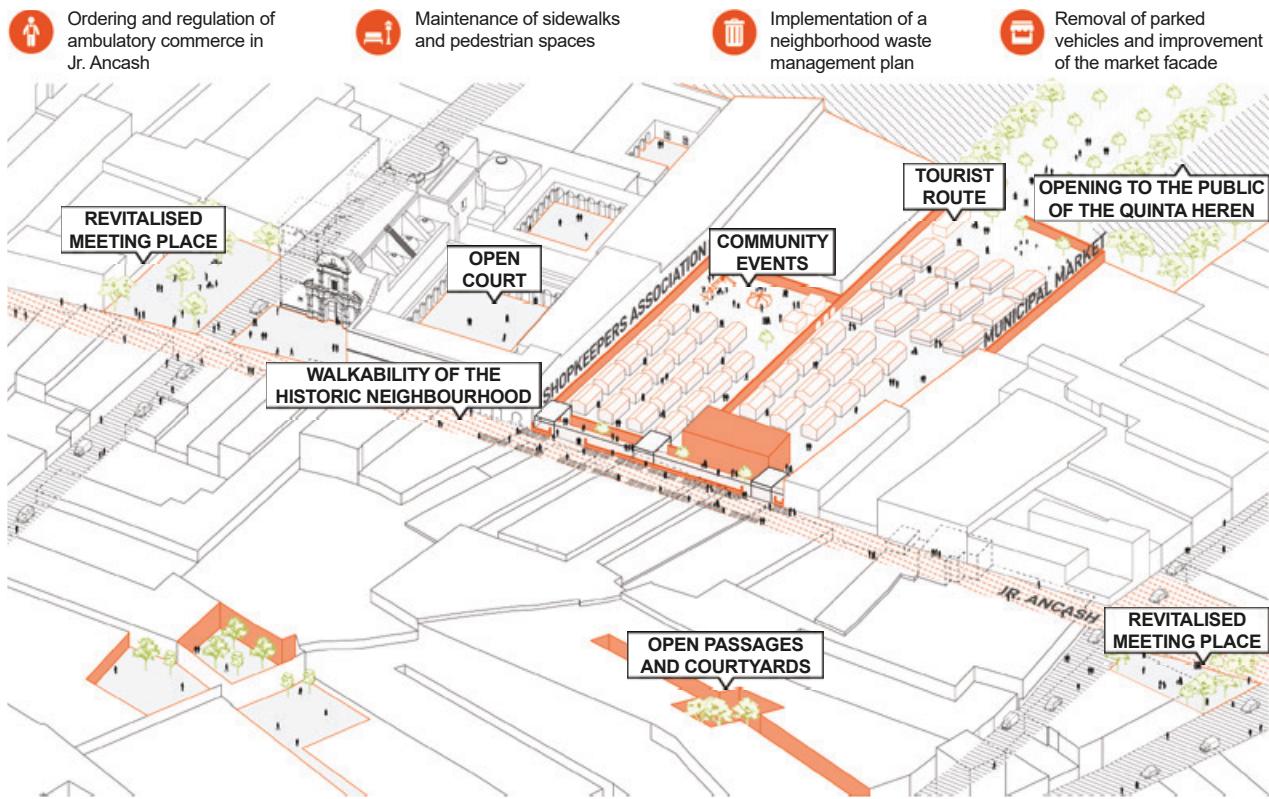


Figure 3.17 Under a vision of a revitalised historic centre, the proposal on the Mercedarias Markets brings together guidelines for action towards markets as social spaces, 2021.

Source: © KNOW-Lima Team

Analysis

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 summarise the initial approach each case study had towards Hou's strategies, as well as describing how the process evolved in time to depict the unexpected outcomes resulting from the co-production processes. During the analyses of the experiences, we were able to identify that two of the strategies proposed by Hou were able to convey with greater clarity the main objectives sought in each case. For the local market in Barrios Altos, the two strategies were reclaiming and uncovering, whereas for the OCs the strategies were pluralising and contesting.

Peripheral urbanisation processes in Lima are characterised by a history of cooperative work between residents of neighbourhood associations in their quest for access to urban services, the consolidation of their dwellings and the recognition of their associative unit. The consolidation of the peripheries of Lima can be clearly traced in time, with older and more numerous associations located at the bottom of the hillside and newer ones at the top, in higher-risk and less accessible land. Urban services and infrastructure are scarce there as shown by the lack of Comedores Populares, community kitchens recognised by the state that have infrastructure and receive food donations.

The main objective of the intervention in José Carlos Mariátegui was to transform the relationships between citizens and different levels of government attempting to break a cycle of dependency by contesting current policies and demanding the recognition of OCs. These efforts included a search for pluralising the uses for the infrastructure provided for OCs so that they could become more than kitchens, offering spaces for marginalised groups within the community that currently lack meeting and working spaces. In that way, along with the Mesa and the Ministry of Housing, we designed a proposal for a programme that included not only the implementation and improvement of current infrastructure but also capacity building and the recognition of non-remunerated work. Part of this proposal was implemented in two neighbourhood associations: 13 de Julio and Santa Rosita. The relationships built during the process are still ongoing and gained momentum due to a shared interest in ameliorating food insecurity. However, breaking the cycles of dependency and the status quo remains a task that requires time and constant discussion as it is deeply ingrained in the collective imaginary and in the way in which municipalities and other public institutions operate.

In Barrios Altos, the gradual decay of the space within the markets and of their surroundings contributed to the deterioration of their social

Table 3.2 Analysis of the intervention in José Carlos Mariátegui as planned at the beginning of the project (June 2020) and with outcomes by December 2021

Intervention for the Ollas Comunes in José Carlos Mariátegui		
Hou's insurgent planning strategies	Initial objectives	Outcomes
Appropriating (repurposing urban assets)	Activating social networks and incorporating them into the management of existing resources for the improvement and better use of existing spaces and common goods. Greater diversity of collective uses	Communities lead intervention processes. There is difficulty in overcoming the over-localised scale in which neighbourhood associations advocate for their individual interests, which limits the construction of a collective vision. Leadership of the OCs, supported by NGOs, push for a political agenda, calling for the re-activation of networks of organisations, strengthening spaces for citizen engagement such as the Mesa.
Reclaiming (adapting underutilised assets)	Improving existing infrastructure/spaces (vacant lots, community centres) aiming to provide basic needs and beyond. Potentiating local economic and environmental resources through a comprehensive territorial governance scheme	Intervention not only meets the need for basic services (water and drainage) but also creates a space for meeting and care, addressing other dimensions of habitat, thus challenging spatial fragmentation
Pluralising (adaptation for under-represented communities)	Transforming the OCs into spaces that provide services for under-represented groups (women, the elderly, children), through the recognition of differentiated needs. Moving beyond the emergency by meeting demand for other spaces of care and socialisation. Incorporation of a territorial approach to recognise the different needs according to settlement areas	In the co-production process, we saw the emergence of new leadership by women, who recognised the need to offer spaces with multiple uses. The implementation of multi-functional care infrastructures that adapt to local needs and activities helps to challenge social fragmentation as people get together There is still pending work in replicating the experience and expanding the scale of work

(continued)

Table 3.2 (Cont.)

Transgressing (crossing official boundaries)	Seeking to empower citizens in decision making through their inclusion in institutional discussion tables and in policies aimed at challenging food insecurity and the impacts of the pandemic	Defining the location of the intervention generated a debate among the community about the possible impacts of this type of infrastructure in the area. Choosing between an already-consolidated area to discourage urban sprawl or newer and more vulnerable areas. Sparking a discussion that recognised their territory beyond their immediate neighbourhood association
Uncovering (making visible assets)	Potentiating the relations between associations and with city-wide associations and institutions through territorial but also social and political networking. Articulating already-existing practices within a wider system and in the production of a shared vision, challenging territorial fragmentation and power disputes	Targeting one aspect of multi-dimensional fragmentation highlights the need for comprehensive interventions that extend beyond the physical dimensions and tackle social and political challenges. These efforts take more time and need to be constantly revisited and discussed. Rigid institutional frameworks and limited resources hinder the sustainability over time of bottom-up efforts that are unable to fully thrive
Contesting (disputing over assets/claiming)	Breaking the clientelist relationship between the state and community kitchens towards the co-construction of more relevant state programmes that aim for capacity and knowledge building of the women running the OCs. Breaking down mistrust between institutions towards the generation of collaboration for the common good	Clientelistic relationships are deeply rooted. Demands made by the population are of this nature, self-recognising their dependence on the state or NGOs. This situation limits radicalisation or the long-term and broader collective imaginary of what different relationships could look like and their impacts. Suspicion limits collaborative relationships for the achievement of common objectives

Note: Strategies in bold depict main strategies sought after for the intervention

Source: KNOW-Lima team based on Castán Broto et al (forthcoming) and Hou (2010)

Table 3.3 Analysis of the intervention in Barrios Altos as planned at the beginning of the project (June 2020) and with outcomes by December 2021 using Hou's Insurgent Planning Strategies

Intervention at the Mercedarias Markets in Barrios Altos		
Hou's insurgent planning strategies	Initial objectives	Outcomes
Appropriating (repurposing urban assets)	New uses for under-utilised urban spaces: urban gardens, community centres and food courts. Integrating them with their broader urban environment	Appropriating urban space potentiates interrelationships between the market and the community. However, the current conflicting relationships and generalised deterioration of the urban environment demand more negotiations between stakeholders, as well as the need for greater public intervention as the current Master Plan does not prioritise these areas, directing funding towards other sectors with less vulnerability but more tourism
Reclaiming (adapting underutilised assets)	The self-management of privatised stalls without consideration of common spaces results in a differentiated and exclusive management of urban space. The proposed strategy was to adapt under-utilised spaces to become meeting spaces – for example, a car park becomes a shared entry and meeting point, open areas within the markets become food courts and gardens, and provide a nursery	The regulations governing the use and management of the space led to an incremental and temporary intervention. The first phase was implemented in the most visible place (entrance), common to both markets. This experience constituted a first consensus of collective management of a common space

(continued)

Table 3.3 (Cont.)

Pluralising (adaptation for under-represented communities)	The use and management of space raises the need to build a consensus between different stakeholders, including informal street shopkeepers, tuk tuk drivers and neighbours. The desire to include them led to the proposal for urban gardens and community centres (with a particular emphasis on youth and children) within the markets	Gaining momentum for the participation of stakeholders beyond the market requires greater cooperation from different units within the MML, portraying a clearer institutional position and vision. In operational terms, this includes greater involvement of other municipal units such as citizen participation and economic development
Transgressing (crossing official boundaries)	Greater involvement of the MML in projects that arise from the needs and demands of shopkeepers and neighbours. Municipal understandings and approaches of heritage and security are expanded, going beyond touristic neighbourhoods to the needs of the local population	The MML became more involved, carrying out activities that were not previously planned (for example, survey or coordinated work with other units). This is seen as a first step towards much more comprehensive actions. However, challenges for a more horizontal sectoral management of urban space at the local scale continue
Uncovering (making visible assets)	The spatial design of the market promotes social and community exchange, uncovering the potential of social interaction that disappears in supermarkets, where consumption is mainly encouraged. The local market is recognised as a generator of social and care networks, reinforcing the residential character of the neighbourhood	Work at the entry has not yet been completed, so no impact can be measured. Interventions inside the market are still pending. This is the first intervention in the area that prioritises urban facilities necessary for the community, which are characterised by general deterioration
Contesting (disputing over assets/claiming)	Collaborative relationships between the local authority and the different actors generate spaces for consensus and participation in the decision-making process of the project, contesting top-down planning	Bureaucratic processes limit collaboration. Previous failed attempts at tactical interventions in the area generate mistrust in current processes

Note: Strategies in bold depict main strategies sought after for the intervention

Source: © KNOW-Lima team based on Castán Broto et al. (2022) and Hou (2010)

and symbolic significance in the configuration of a residential neighbourhood. This situation is aggravated by a lack of public investment in the area as the MML prioritises the maintenance and upgrading of areas which are more attractive for tourists. Hence, in Barrios Altos we witness territorial fragmentation in the decay of public space, particularly in residential areas. This situation aggravates and reproduces the displacement of residents and local shopkeepers alike as commercial use overtakes the neighbourhood. Political fragmentation is seen in the sectoral approach towards the historic centre within the MML, in which each unit operates separately and prioritises investment in areas of the district that attract tourists.

In this scenario, the intervention sought to reclaim under-utilised areas of the markets that were currently in decay (empty stalls and vacant open areas), offering complementary services to the markets such as spaces for informal vendors currently occupying adjacent streets, urban gardens to strengthen the bonds between the markets, the adolescent centre and Comedores Populares in the area, a food court to enjoy the meals prepared by some of the shopkeepers and a nursery space for children of visitors and shopkeepers alike. In this way, the proposal aimed to uncover the social value of the market as a meeting place that reinforces the residential identity of the neighbourhood.

The process made room for new kinds of collaborative projects between the municipality and shopkeepers, and between different units within the municipality that rarely worked together before, focusing on an area often left behind in public investment. Adjustments had to be made and the original spatial design varied considerably to comply with regulations. However, this was not perceived as a limitation as it was understood as a necessary step towards the consolidation of the relationships of trust between stakeholders, leaving room for the continuation of discussions and implementation of other phases of the wider project. Implementation of the first phase is still ongoing at the time of writing and its impacts cannot be measured. This experience depicts the inherent social value that local markets have and their fundamental role in the constituency of collective imaginary and identity.

Lessons from Lima in understanding urban inequality and co-production processes

The experiments undertaken in Jose Carlos Mariátegui and Barrios Altos allow us to see the diversity of co-production processes. Each intervention generates different kinds of relationships and levels of responsibility for

each stakeholder. For instance, in the case of the OCs, the MML (through the Mesa) became involved at a later stage and the Ministry of Housing also became involved in the project once the experiments were already partially implemented. In other words, public institutions participated in the project once decisions were already made by residents and leaders. On the other hand, in the case of the local markets, the MML was present in the process from the beginning. This difference is likely due to the different scales in which each infrastructure operates, as well as the different stakeholders involved. Co-production towards infrastructure upgrading for the local market would not have been possible without the recognition and approval of the MML. Thus, the decision of when public institutions should enter the co-production process varies on a case-by-case basis.

Additionally, in recognising the various ways in which multi-dimensional fragmentation manifests in the reproduction of urban inequalities, each project sought to attend to the particularities of each context. Fragmentation can be observed in tensions within public institutions (that is, different units within the Metropolitan Municipality or the Ministry of Housing), within market vendors and between market vendors and informal vendors. Despite these differences, and among different scales in which each social infrastructure operates (the community kitchen at the neighbourhood level and the local market at the district level), it is possible to draw similarities in the ways in which both cases portray instances in which marginalised social groups got together to face challenging times, advocating for greater power in the continuous transformation of urban space and its management.

The experiences in Lima highlight important lessons in how co-production is not to be understood as a set recipe – it is an approach leading to unique processes in each context, with clear differences even within the same city. The understanding of this heterogeneity can also be applied to approaches to urban inequality. Multi-dimensional fragmentation is a lens that facilitates deconstruction, helping to create links and comparisons between different manifestations and structural causes of inequality from a temporal and spatial perspective. Co-production, in bringing together multiple voices recognised as equals, remains an important methodology to navigate and challenge the complexities of inequality. It is also a pathway to overcome individual interests and working together towards a common goal.

Practitioners involved in co-production must be flexible, creative and adept at negotiation to successfully navigate and integrate two distinct processes: the formal procedures of institutions and organisations, such as academia and municipalities, and the informal, everyday realities

where interventions take place. Balancing these formal institutional requirements with the dynamic and often improvised nature of real-world contexts is essential for effective interventions.

In these complex contexts, finding alternative solutions when problems arise and being open to spontaneous partnerships are essential for continuing the work. Planning such interventions should be viewed as a dynamic and responsive process, emphasising the identification of critical decision points rather than adhering to rigid stages. Additionally, in the context of a pandemic, the subjective aspects of co-production become more apparent. This involves managing expectations, conflicts, emotions and other issues that may emerge during implementation and decision-making processes.

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Notes

1. KNOW was funded by UK Research and Innovation under the Global Challenges Research Fund and led by University College London. For more information, see www.urban-know.com.
2. Regimes are current ways of organising urban systems that are characterised for being rigid and bureaucratic (Lydon, cited in Steffens 2013, 9).
3. For updated numbers, see <http://ollascomunes.gpvlima.com/>, where the Municipality of Lima monitors and maps OCs.

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Sentipensante: learning from Fals Borda's Participatory Action Research

Catalina Ortiz

Introduction

Debates about knowledge co-production overlook the legacies of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as its intellectual precursor. This chapter reflects upon the legacies of the Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda (1925–2008), pioneer of PAR, and the underpinning notion of *sentipensar*. As Fals Borda (1999, 16) puts it, PAR ‘has been viewed not only as a research methodology but also as a philosophy of life that converts its practitioners into “thinking-feeling persons”’. That is why understanding the premises that underpin thinking-feeling is crucial to bring about synergies of empathic knowledges. *Sentipensar* as a verb can be translated into English as feeling-thinking or sensing-thinking and *sentipensante* as a noun can be translated as the one who feels while thinking. Western thinking relies on a binary perspective; *sentipensar* challenges this view that separates body/mind, reason/feeling, materiality/spirituality, sensibility/consciousness, nature/society and so on. *Sentipensar* is understood as to think and feel with the territory using ancestral knowledges, collective affection, grounded in people’s economies (Botero 2019). *Sentipensar* contributes to expressing the interlocking idea of politics, research and sentiment by linking the rhythms of a place, territorial struggles, celebration, truth telling and popular resistance (Ortiz 2022). *Sentipensar* is a notion currently used in decolonial debates, post-development studies and political ecology in Latin America. Why do knowledge co-production debates and practices need to revisit PAR? I argue that if knowledge co-production practitioners want to embed an emancipatory ethos, it is imperative to revisit the legacies of PAR and the

notion of *sentipensar*. The potential of this notion is precisely its anti-capitalist impetus, the storytellers' epistemology and the multi-layered territorial interdependence embodied in it.

Achieving transformative change is paramount for PAR and knowledge co-production alike. PAR since its inception has dealt with the question 'Who has the right to create knowledge?' (Hall 1977, 34) to embrace the epistemological assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and that it is possible to theorise from multiple subject positions. PAR practitioners call for a 'diálogo de saberes' (dialogue of knowledges), as a practical, political dialogue in a dialogical relationship between research and political action (Hall 1977). More recently, knowledge co-production scholarship has defined that it is necessary to go beyond mere collaborative efforts and to deliver shared outcomes based on long-term, adaptable partnerships to challenge epistemic injustices (Castán Broto et al. 2022). This approach situates the process of knowledge production in a global history of colonialism and places knowledge co-production for urban equality as part and parcel of recentring multiple forms of knowledge that have been degraded and dismissed (Castán Broto et al. 2022). This chapter is structured into four sections: the first sections contextualises Fals Borda's trajectory and contributions to PAR; the second explains the legacies of PAR; the third focuses on the origin story of where the notion of *sentipensante* emerges; and the fourth and final one explains the potential this notion holds in terms of informing practices on co-production of knowledge.

Fals Borda, the PAR pioneer

The Latin-American reality in transformation deserves its own ideas to be explained ... we seek to declare intellectual independence, to stimulate our talents and our own dignity, fighting colonialism. Obviously, this does not mean rejecting what other groups from different latitudes do just because they are from strange nations; such a thing would be myopic ethnocentrism, a real symptom of inferiority. (Fals Borda 1970, 235)

Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda brings a singular critique of colonialism underpinned by challenging the academic elite, the state configuration and territorial development. His work frames liberation as the broader horizon of the theory-political praxis through an 'alternative ethos' (Fals Borda 1998b). He and his colleagues preceded the

modernity/coloniality programme and emerged in Colombia in the 1960s and 1970s in the context of blooming critical thinking in Latin America. In the seminal piece *Ciencia propia y colonialismo intelectual* (*Own Science and Intellectual Colonialism*) (Fals Borda 1970), he condemned the universality of science that overlooks the cultural specificities of tropical and sub-tropical societies, but acknowledged a universally shared political challenge for emancipation. In that light, they expressed: 'I believe, precisely, that what was attractive about our work was that we felt no need to appeal to any authority in the tradition called "the Western academy" in order to achieve our approach to our own reality' (Fals Borda and Brandão 1986, 17).

Fals Borda denominated as 'intellectual colonizers' the academics and massive media leaders reproducing Eurocentric interpretations of the world. He described them as follows:

the Euro-Americans, evidently, make progress and profit from the techno-scientific development, at expense from us the ones from the Third World ... the new Faustus attempt to re-encounter the key to the enigma of the experiences that still beat in societies that are called behind, rural, primitives, where still their original praxis have not been destroyed by the industrial capitalism. (Fals Borda 1970, 368)

He also advocated for a reorientation of the sciences in the 'Third World' to combat academic colonialism itself.

Fals Borda championed academic-political praxis as the basis for what he called a 'committed sociology' resonating with the spirit of the times in Latin America. This generation pursued the idea of having committed social sciences to make the nexus academic-politic praxis. With Camilo Torres, Fals Borda co-founded the Sociology Department at the National University of Colombia. Similarly, María Cristina Salazar, Fals Borda's partner and the first woman to be awarded a PhD in Sociology in the country, founded the Department of Social Work at Javeriana University. In his work *El problema de cómo investigar la realidad para transformarla* (1978), he framed universities' potential for social transformation while maintaining an active political militancy. He was involved in popular and democratic struggles, mostly in defence of the Colombian peasantry. He and his wife were subjected to political persecution and detention in the late 1970s. He was also actively involved in politics from different angles in his posts as President of the Alianza Democrática-M19, city councillor of the municipality of Chocontá, Viceminister of agriculture, member of

the National Constitution Assembly and honorary president of the political party ‘Polo Democratico Alternativo’ until he died in 2008 (Pereira Fernandez 2009). When the conditions to stay at the university became very adverse, he also promoted the group La Rosca of Research and Social Actions, the Foundation for the Analysis of the Colombian Reality (Fundarco), and the editorial *Punta de Lanza* and the *Alternative* magazine. Based on this plethora of initiatives, Fals Borda described himself in a letter to his colleague the biologist Luis Eduardo Mora-Osejo in 2003 as an ‘intelectual del tercer mundo’ or ‘sentipensante tropical’. These labels convey the idea of an intellectual that advocates a profound democratisation of society and of power (Diaz-Arevalo 2022).

Fals Borda actively promoted a refusal of ‘development’ as a canon for social change that underpins capitalist exploitation. Rather than ‘desarrollo territorial’, he ascribes to reframe it as ‘ordenamiento territorial’ (that is, territorial ordering or spatial governance) inspired by the notion of *Kaziyadu* that comes from the Huitoto language and means the sunrise or the people’s awakening. This notion highlights a collective, cultural, psychic and more dynamic conception of social change (Fals Borda 2001a). Most of Fals Borda’s work builds on a deep territorial understanding of the Colombian biocultural regions and advocates for regional autonomy. His initial work on agrarian reform gave him a thorough understanding of the violent land-grabbing processes that preface a key mechanism of oppression of peasants and ethnic groups. It is also in this context that he pursued studying the *longue-durée* of social rhythms of violence and researching the insurgency movements. As a product of this work, he left an invaluable legacy on the understanding of the history of structural violence in Colombia in his co-authored book *La violencia en Colombia. Estudio de un proceso social* (*Violence in Colombia: The study of a social process*) (1967). He was also part of an independent peace commission in the 1980s, when violence was at its highest peak in the country. His work showed the entanglement between deep inequality and territorial violence that still shapes the contemporary situation, despite several peacebuilding processes.

Fals Borda’s ideas are kept alive and resonate with contemporary debates across social sciences. The work of an important and vigorous group of scholars and practitioners uses the sites of social struggles as departing points for the generation of urban knowledge in informing theory and social policy, and popular education and critical pedagogies (for example, the Habitat International Coalition, the working group of CLACSO: ‘Sentipensante network on participatory methodologies’). These groups focus on the link between academia, territories and

communities, and the lessons learned from participatory methodologies for social change. Learning from these initiatives could contribute to challenge technocratic perspectives of city making and authoritative knowledge in urban learning processes (Ortiz and Millan [2022](#)).

PAR legacies

These are the spaces where endogenous rights to variety, diversity and creativity are part of everyday life, where people, using collective memory and oral communication, ‘weave the present with the threads of their own history’. (Fals Borda [2001a](#), 32)

Fals Borda was a pioneer of PAR. Notably, in the 1977 World Symposium on Action-Research and Scientific Analysis held in Cartagena (Colombia), he presented an elaborated version of PAR as an alternative scientific paradigm (Diaz-Arevalo [2022](#)). In his and his co-author’s words:

We started to understand PAR not merely as a methodology of research with the subject/subject relationship evolving in symmetrical, horizontal, or non-exploitative patterns in social, economic, and political life. We saw it also as a part of social activism with an ideological and spiritual commitment to promoting people’s (collective) praxis. (Fals Borda and Rahman [1991](#), 25)

In this way, PAR has been defined as a methodological-political horizon that brings together an amalgamation of research methodology, pedagogy and politics (Rappaport [2020](#)). According to Fals Borda ([1991](#), 8–9), this approach ‘should be collective, the group playing a central role in collecting and analysing information; it should engage in the critical recovery of history; it should value and apply folk culture to mobilize the masses; and it should produce new knowledge through materials oriented to diverse publics’. This approach emphasises the role of multi-dimensional local histories as the basis for both action and further reflection, as well as the crucial role of communication for social change.

Fals Borda was committed to a radical interdisciplinarity, questioning when and how research takes place. He advocated for ‘the elimination of sharp distinctions between observers and the observed by creating a new research methodology that valued popular knowledge while defending empirical rigour’ (Robles Lomeli and Rappaport [2018](#), 1). This alternative paradigm of knowledge production based on

linking popular wisdom and academic knowledge with rigour was also thought to be prone to co-optation; in this vein, Fals Borda warned that PAR needed to be carried out ‘without letting the academic intellectual elite to frame it inasmuch as they act like guardian dogs of the knowledge of the dominant paradigm’ (Fals Borda 2009, 335). The PAR, as a philosophy of life, is an open project of constant exploration that seeks to combine the ethics with the praxeological, the active involvement with real-life community problems, and to break the intellectual isolation of the academic jargon. He contended that ‘Participatory Action Research, along with geography, ecology, and systems theory, recognizes that it deals with slow processes of individual adjustment and social change to improve local conditions, stimulate the power and dignity of the people, and reinforce the self-confidence of people in their communities’ (Fals Borda 2002, 330). This approach is inspired by Paulo Freire’s (1993) concept of popular education and, while it has been criticised as being anti-scientific, a global network of PAR practitioners continues to engage with questions of validity (Fals Borda 1999) and regularly convenes to advance and refine the collective project.

PAR is grounded in four core pillars (Rappaport 2020), which are as follows.

Participation

In the mid-1970s, Fals Borda and the La Rosca group proposed a guiding framework for militant research and ‘participation-insertion’ informed by historical materialism (Diaz-Arevalo 2022). ‘Participation-insertion’ resonated with liberation theologians’ ideas on ‘insertion among the poor’ and represented a break from traditional ethnographic techniques. He saw a need for intertwining theoretical development and direct engagement in empirical investigation as a means for acquiring deep knowledge of the local groups, while advancing the peasant movement’s political agenda (Diaz-Arevalo 2022). As Molano (1978) suggested, the approach of militant research required open political commitment to *campesinos* and the working classes by living and sharing the struggles of the community under study, despite the asymmetries of power. Fals Borda proposed a shift from participation by to participation with the people as a self-critique of his praxis with the peasant movement by suggesting several interrelated obstacles which prevented the realisation of his ‘science of the proletariat’ (Diaz-Arevalo 2022).

Systematic devolution

Fals Borda and the La Rosca group considered that *vivencias* (everyday knowledge) is owned by the communities and workers' organisations and that implied a duty of researchers to 'give back' as well as to contribute to 'deconstruction of global uniformities' (Kinsey 1999). As such, a systematic devolution process involves a participatory strategy for stimulating grassroots analysis to link experiential and theoretical knowledge (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991). They framed this methodological approach as one of 'scientific humility and local realism' (Fals Borda et al. 2007, 20). This process highlighted the constant tension of striving for a more horizontal relationship between theory to practice, of subject to object, and between different forms of knowledge. In this imperfect and partial process, Fals Borda was also focused on the need to discuss the priorities for the use of the knowledge analysed, as well as determining the authorisation and conditions for its publication, dissemination or use (Rappaport 2020).

Engagement and reflection

Fals Borda's conceptualisation of PAR intertwines investigation and activism with moments of reflection. The moments of reflection were deemed integral to the methodology for assessing research, their insertion in political activities and the decisions about future goals (Fals Borda 1978). The engagement of activism was framed as a productive clash between not entirely compatible worldviews that aimed at building bridges between scientific practice and other forms of knowledge (Rappaport 2020). In this process, a convergence needed to take place, on the one hand, to transcend usual scientific knowledge and, on the other hand, to move beyond the immediate needs of the grassroots. This process of convergence and iteration creates a process of 'sedimentation' where the progressive consolidation of the reflection was fleshed out in written materials that were subsequently recycled into action (Rappaport 2020).

Critical recovery

Fals Borda advocated for involving artistic sensibilities as an essential part of social sciences. His belonging to a chorus also influenced his ideas about framing PAR as a stereophonic creation and a polyphony of encounters. In this context, he proposed a triad between dialogue,

communication and art to modify the interpretation of everyday life realities. In this context, *critical recovery* refers to a process of engaging historical interpretation to make the strategic narratives of social movements more legible and understood (Rappaport 2020). An example of this is Ulianov Chalarka's graphic histories, which depict the communal agrarian societies formed on public land during the socialist struggles of the 1920s. His comic-based research captures these histories through expressions of sound and emotion, offering a sensory dimension to historical experience.

Fals Borda insisted on the need to embrace feelings and aesthetics to create mechanisms of symbolic efficacy for emancipation. An example of this proposal was the inclusion of the stream of the *language of the arts* in the PAR international congress engaging with dance, painting, music and singing with messages committed to popular participation from different countries and regions experiencing social, ethnic or religious conflict. These artistic practices are considered participatory because they moved beyond intersubjective dialogue to embrace collective creation as a valid form of popular knowledge and fostered relational symmetry through shared enjoyment. Notable examples from Colombia include the *cantos de lucha* (sung struggles) from the Valle del Cauca region and the *vallenatos de protesta* (protest vallenatos) from the northern coast. In addition, visual arts were involved and used to mobilise the emotions of the participants who were considered crucial for igniting political organisation. These core aspects of Fals Borda's background and legacy allow us to locate the origin, relevance and meaning of the notion of *sentipensante*.

Sentipensante's origin story

It is easy to see and understand the incompatibilities between capitalism and the ancestral attitudes, if we also examine that vital, anti-war collectivism that characterized here the peasant, black and indigenous diaspora since the end of the 18th century, in the Tierras de Loba. Our ancestors fled the Magdalena River and entered the unknown canyons of the Depresión Momposina when the great river became an avenue of death with armed men and armoured ships during times of civilian conflicts. The authentic peasants fled the war to build peace in virgin communities, where autonomous settlements arose, with their own authorities and interesting inventions, in the happy absence of the polluted central governments. (Fals Borda 2001a, 34)

The concept of *sentipensar* – which means ‘feeling-thinking’ or ‘sensing-thinking’ – originated on Colombia’s north coast within the context of PAR. From the beginning, PAR aimed to explore the ideas and images behind conflict, violence and repression, as described by Fals Borda (1999). As a verb, *sentipensar* captures the act of thinking with feeling, while *senti-pensante* refers to a person who not only reflects and empathises but also takes meaningful action (Rappaport 2020). ‘Sentipensante’ was a term expressed by Afro Colombian fishermen in the San Jorge River to Fals Borda in his participatory action research in the 1980s. This engagement was captured in his landmark series ‘Historia doble de la costa’ (1979–86), in which he examines how communities living in marsh and river regions have responded and adapted to their natural surroundings. He emphasised the significance of the Caribbean’s non-violent anti-heroes, elevates the importance of local civil resistance and reimagines the Macondian landscapes of the San Jorge River region – Macondian referring to the magical, surreal qualities of everyday life depicted in Gabriel García Márquez’s fictional town of Macondo. In this piece, he used a historical narrative combining the universal (channel B, ‘the logos’) with the regional (Channel A, ‘mythos’) without losing the cultural flavour of the environment’s identity (Fals Borda 1998a). He explained that his narrative work is inspired by writers such as Galeano, García Márquez and Carpentier, and in doing so he attempted to contribute to adding local history to the literary morphology of the region.

The methodological moves that underpin the book on the conversation of channels A and B ‘is not a typical ethnographic dialogue in which the researcher extracts information from an informant, nor is it the product of a research strategy through which an external expert imposes his worldview on peasants. Instead, Fals Borda shows us a two-way conversation in which both parties are transformed by the exchange’ (Robles Lomeli, quoted in Robles Lomeli and Rappaport 2018, 3). This dialogical approach demonstrates the creative and generative potentials of PAR. In this book, ‘the storytellers of Channel A lay bare the contradictions of the theoretical arguments considered in Channel B, whether those be orthodox science and philosophy, theories of capitalism, or Fals Borda’s own notion of PAR and his attempts at historical reconstruction’ (Robles Lomeli and Rappaport 2018, 4). In other words, the main assumption proposed by Fals Borda is that knowledge cannot be separated from life and knowledge creation cannot be separated from the poetics and narratives.

The attentiveness to popular art and a storytelling epistemology is essential for Fals Borda’s work. It was precisely the knowledge and

poetics contained in the songs of vallenatos by troubadours across the region and the festivals that enabled Fals Borda to frame the ethos of the place and the untranslatability of the sentiments contained in the lyrics of the songs. For Fals Borda, the inhabitants of the region were the storytellers of the territory dynamics in an entanglement of collective affection for the place. The notion of *sentipensante* draws from a message of popular resistance embodied in the myth of the Hicotea man spread through the lyrics of vallenato. The Hicotea is a freshwater turtle that sleeps in summer and goes out in the rainy season; in this light, the Hicotea man refers to the people's technologies for creating an amphibious life that adapts to the dynamics of rivers, marshes and swamps. The people of the San Jorge River, much like the Hicotea turtle, live in close interaction with the river, relying on it for their livelihoods during favourable seasons, and embracing both celebration and rest with the same spirit they apply to confronting hardship and scarcity. In particular, the book explains the social mechanisms to produce food, water engineering systems, pile dwelling architectures, political organisation and artistic expressions. It captures the mix of festivity and work, enjoyment and technic, passion and consistency. In the face of armed conflict, Fals Borda also characterised the 'hicotea man' as disarmed beings or, rather, beings armed with love, physical resistance and 'sentipensamiento'. In sum, he considered these groups as pre-capitalist societies based on cooperation links close to the ideals presented in socialist utopian and anarchist societies.

The *sentipensante* brings to the centre the production of empathic knowledge and links to the poetics of everyday life. Fals Borda considered the population he engaged with as the protagonists of history and therefore as interlocutors rather than 'informants'; the role of the researcher is central to converting stories into usable political tools. In this light, social processes were intimately articulated with people's feelings and desires and the notion of *sentipensante* to express the interlocking idea of politics, research and sentiment (Robles Lomeli and Rappaport 2018). In a later articulation, the writer Eduardo Galeano in his *Libro de los abrazos* (1989, 320) amplified the notion of *sentipensante* by saying 'the language that says the truth is the sensing-thinking language. It is the one able to think feeling and feeling thinking. Without divorcing the head from the body and the emotion from reason'. This interpretation of the notion adds a relevant element of truth telling as an integral part of conceiving the relationship between body, landscape and political projects. In that line, Fals Borda argued that 'the heart, as much as or more than the reason, has been to this day an effective defence of the spaces of

grassroots peoples. Such is our secret strength, still latent, because another world is possible' (2009, 60). By engaging with the epistemology of storytellers, the concept of *sentipensar* captures the rhythms of place, territorial resistance, celebration, truth telling, popular mobilisation and shared emotional bonds as essential strategies in the pursuit of justice.

Working with *sentipensar*: informing urban knowledge co-production

Sentipensar brings an anti-capitalist impetus, the storytellers' epistemology and the multi-layered territorial interdependence embodied in it. Rather than offering a set of fixed premises, I delineate some entry points and questions inspired in Fals Borda's emancipatory theories that further a pluralist utopia and an alternative ethos (Fals Borda 2009). *Sentipensar* is a radical vision of the world that not only questions the capitalist modernity idea that territory and body are separated, but also allows us to weave territorial struggles, storytellers' epistemology, truth telling, popular resistance and collective affections to reframe our understanding of the urban (see Figure 4.1). Here I propose four strategies for knowledge co-production practitioners to honour the legacy of PAR and its kernel notion of *sentipensante*.



Figure 4.1 Mapa frágil de la esperanza, 2019.

Source: Dubian Monsalve

Fostering narratives of liberation

Dwelling into the storytellers' epistemology, Fals Borda advocated for transforming the narratives of resistance into narratives of liberation (2002, 285). Liberation involves an individual and collective project in the spiritual, political and intellectual dimensions that influence the humanisation of economics. In this context, PAR, in conjunction with post-development studies, is conceived as a tool for achieving liberation and enabling truth telling. The narratives of liberation operate in a symbolic and representational space to reveal the ethno-territorial and ontological struggles in the context of violent extractivist logics advocating for the multiplicity of worldviews and counter-capitalist projects such as those coming from black and indigenous communities in the Colombian Pacific Coast documented by Arturo Escobar and others. Therefore, placing storytelling at the centre through a *sentipensante* lens offers a pathway toward advancing epistemic justice. As Quijano (2007) argues, 'those who control knowledge control subjectivities', and the construction of subjectivities – and the persistence of colonial ways of being – is deeply shaped by the narratives we absorb and reproduce. Narratives of liberation encompass not only alternative ways of knowing but also diverse repertoires of regional autonomies and self-governance. These are central to territorial 'ordering' and are embodied in the notion of Kaziyadu or the people's awakening (Fals Borda 2001b). In sum, this entry point raises the following question: what would be the narratives of liberation we need to harvest and imagine collectively in our cities?

Tracing territorial inscriptions of stories

The *sentipensante* makes it possible to anchor the territorial inscription of urban stories and the ontological unity between bodies and territories. The Hicotea man (*sic*) is both human and animal, shifting with the rhythms of the landscape. Through this myth, Fals Borda's work illuminated the deep interconnection between cultural practices, ecological environments and regional cosmologies. Framing the urban from this perspective aligns with the ideas on radical interdependence and re-earthing cities, where Escobar (2019, 139) explores the deconstruction of the rural/urban binary and the potentials of biophilic urbanism for 'the reimagining of cities as living entities through ontological metrofitting'. In this process, the role of stories is key, as the basis

for the relational turn is ‘about the politics of how to tell stories, to provide different kinds of actors with storylines through which they can find pathways to each other’ (Simone and Pieterse 2017, 188). Based on the idioms and principles of autonomy, communality and pluriversality Escobar (2019, 139) suggests the ‘re-localization of activities (food, energy, transport, schooling, healing) and the re-communalization and depatriarchalization of social life’. In this vein, current debates on decolonial feminisms expand the understanding of the body as space that is impacted by extractivist practices and violence, making it a surface marked and transformed by culture. Therefore, tracing the territorial inscriptions of stories relies on understanding that ‘knowing is a bodily political practice’ (Rivera Cusicanqui 2020, 79) that requires empathy and is inextricably linked to the territorial dynamics. In this vein, Latin American ecofeminist perspectives bring the notion/methodology of body-territory (*cuerpo-territorio*) to address a multiscalar perspective of the territory where the body is the first territory of struggle and centre of community life (Zaragocin and Carreta 2021). In sum, this entry point raises the following question: how to expand the methods that explore the connection between embodiment and urban territories?

Amplify the polyphony of territorial stories

The *sentipensante* is premised on a polyphonic methodology to depict multiple stories and histories. *Sentipensar* is part and parcel of a methodology of combining simultaneously two languages that Fals Borda called ‘logos-mythos’, which linked ‘hard data’ with local narratives through an imaginative and artistic interpretation learning from the regional literature and the singing on a chorus. In this way, territorial stories are considered political tools for liberation and as such also entail narrating the poetics of everyday life. As seen in *Historia Doble de la Costa* and the *Taller de Historia Oral Andina* led by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, ancestral knowledge is primarily transmitted through oral traditions. These must be actively gathered and collectively interpreted to support political struggles. As a result, spatial narratives are valued as sites of multiplicity and as central to decolonial praxis (Rivera Cusicanqui 2012). In this sense:

Rivera Cusicanqui argues that oral forms of indigenous history provide a privileged space in which to discover the profound implications and tactics of the colonial order. By viewing through

the oppressed eyes, history loses its chronological/linear perspective and becomes a dialectic cycle where colonialism finds a way to renew and transform itself. (Loyola-Hernandez [n.d.](#), 1)

The polyphonic methodology examines the *pluriverse* stories that show a ‘world where many worlds fit’, as the Zapatista slogan puts it. This plurality requires an anti-hegemonic ecology of knowledges that follows narratives that are not contemplated by the Western, critical tradition (de Sousa Santos [2014](#)). In this pursuit, to advocate for a horizontal co-existence of non-dominant forms of knowledge and life is an imperative for the unfolding of an emancipatory transformation of the world. In sum, this entry point raises the following question: whose territorial stories need to be amplified and through what means to portray the rhythms of place?

Learning from reparative praxis

The *sentipensante* refers to the art of living based on thinking with both heart and mind (Escobar [2016](#)). This art of living is conceived as active resistance to the triad of capitalism by dispossession, war and corruption. For Fals Borda ([2002](#), 330), the new kind of social liberation needed lies in seeking peace through the ordering of territories and the best use of geographies. The territorial struggles over the reconstruction of communal spaces and for reconnecting with nature is part of the planet’s ontological reconstitution (de la Cadena [2010](#)) and applies ‘to the ontological occupation of popular neighbourhoods in many of the world’s urban areas’ (Escobar [2016](#), 21). This reconstitution resituates the human within the ceaseless flow of life (Escobar [2016](#)) and therefore promoting a reparative justice. For territorial reordering, the generation of empathic knowledge and reconciliation experiences is essential for a culture that wants to declare peace in Colombia. Feminist post-development scholars give centrality to collective affections contained in the territorial struggles. For instance, the experiences from the Black Women Collective in Colombia – victims of armed conflict, sexual violence and environmental extraction – define themselves as caretakers of life and ancestral territories, proclaiming that ‘our policy is founded on collective affection, love and kindness’ (Mina Rojas et al. [2015](#), 3). This collective retells the living history of the existent links between ancestrality and futurity. In sum, this entry point raises the following question: how to harness the futurity of reconciliation through the collective affections that shape the urban?

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that knowledge co-production practitioners need to acknowledge the legacies of the pillars of PAR to embrace its historical emancipatory ethos. On the one hand, knowledge co-production processes could reassess the phases of participation, systematic devolution, engagement and reflection, and critical recovery. On the other hand, I have pointed to the notion of *sentipensar*, as it provides an orientation to cultivate a different sensibility for engaging with our understanding of the urban and the engagement with different urban knowledges. I have outlined several entry points and questions, drawing on Fals Borda's (2009) theory-practice, that contribute to imagining a pluralist utopia and propose an alternative ethos – one that connects with the epistemologies of storytellers, popular resistance and collective affect as key to rethinking the practice of knowledge co-production. It advocates framing different strategies to generate empathic knowledge, polyphonic approaches and links to the poetics of everyday life. But the most important point is to understand that the political horizon of attuning with *sentipensar* is liberation.

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Part II

Experiences of co-production

Co-production as a practice of emancipation: perspectives from a community development and savings network in Yangon, Myanmar

Marina Kolovou Kouri and Shoko Sakuma

Introduction

In Yangon, housing for the urban poor has been either the product of a top-down planning and implementation process (conventional public housing) or self-built, ‘unplanned’ and under-serviced settlements. Between these two extremes, both of which are in many ways inadequate in terms of addressing people’s need for shelter and access to urban citizenship (Kolovou Kouri 2021), an alternative approach has been practised since 2009 by grassroots women with the mediation of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) called Women for the World (WfW). This housing scheme consists in mobilising women’s groups, which, after a period of collective saving, access loans and purchase land to construct their simple and affordable housing units. Over time, these community groups established their own entity, the Women’s Savings and Development Network (WSDN).

In the context of this grassroots-driven model, co-production is both a principle and an everyday practice. As a principle, it is grounded on the premise that marginalised groups need not only be occasionally included or consulted about decisions that affect them, but also be active agents in shaping the direction of their development and contributing their valuable knowledge that is so often dismissed. As a practice, co-production is a pathway that enables urban poor communities to address their needs and make their responses more effective and sustainable.

It involves collaboration with different actors at different moments and the confluence of resources, time, inspiration and ideas (Boonyabancha and Kerr 2018).

Co-production emerged as a form of engagement *without* the state within a context of political oppression, criminalisation and disenfranchisement of the poor, and exclusive land and housing policies. Instead, this model sought to consolidate alliances with non-state stakeholders that engaged with low-income communities (former squatters and renters) to deliver housing solutions, driven by people's demands and aspirations. Community members and local authorities work together to map available land plots for housing development, local and international students and community architects have been engaged in the participatory design of housing and infrastructure solutions, and a regional network of development practitioners under the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights has been supporting the transfer of knowledge across communities and countries, not least through exposure visits to other cities to learn from their local practices (Boonyabancha et al. 2012).¹ In addition, with the mediation of WfW, the communities manage their communal affairs through their own administrative system and also started a partnership with a microfinance company that gives them loans for housing and other development needs. Such a participatory approach has been in many ways new to Yangon's development pathways.

Co-production in the sense of collaboration with the state was an aspiration that was progressively formulated into a claim through setting precedents and negotiation. Indeed, after decades of authoritarian rule, the transition to a quasi-civilian government opened up new ways for engaging the state, and WfW and the community networks stepped up their advocacy to reach local and regional authorities. By demonstrating a housing model founded on people's hard work and ample capacity, and entering into negotiations with the state at moments of opportunity, this activist practice – completely unsupported and navigating a narrow space between legality and illegality² – managed to gain 'formal' recognition a decade after its emergence. In 2019, the Yangon Regional Government announced its housing delivery would include low-cost housing on government-owned land, with collective land use rights, largely based on the model of WfW and the network. This initiative was piloted with the name Mae Myit Thar (meaning 'motherly love')³ and, given its status as a public project, it would include basic infrastructures, like electricity, water supply and drainage provided by the municipality.

The trajectory of this alternative practice demonstrates at the same time the evolution of co-production and how organised communities and

their networks have incrementally paved the way for more integrated collaboration with various stakeholders, notably including the state. As identified in other contexts, co-production aimed not only to respond to immediate needs but also to reshape the relationships between communities and authorities and shift the power balance towards more equitable city making (Mitlin 2008; Mitlin and Bartlett 2018). If co-production is understood as a political process in which the engaging partners can develop trust and interpersonal networks (Healey 1999; Innes and Booher 2004), then it is evident that its impact depends on who it involves, to what degree, and which power dynamics characterise their relationships. By bringing together grassroots women's groups, carpenters and construction workers, architecture students and young professionals, private companies, universities, civil society organisations and eventually authorities, the communities and their housing projects have become sites of co-production – of knowledge, dwellings, infrastructure, and political, cultural and social identities. From this point of departure, this chapter conveys some of the stories of collective housing members and the tangible and intangible accomplishments of this participatory approach. Specifically, we want to highlight the emancipatory impact of this co-production, which permeates different domains of daily life, from the ways in which urban poor communities conceive of their own status in the city to how they self-organise, make claims and engage in urban transformations.

Voices from Yangon's community and savings network

On a different level, the process of tracing the impacts of this collective housing model also occurred through co-production. Presented below are edited *life stories*, based on interviews⁴ with residents and community leaders. In our project, we also collected the *photographs* they shared, either from their archive or recent snapshots they took for the purpose of this activity as a means to engage with the landscapes of their lives.⁵ In both modes of inquiry, the central issue was 'what has been possible for them since joining this collective housing scheme'. Some of the participants chose to accompany their photographs with short commentaries, in the form of text messages or handwritten notes photographed with their phones. This 'raw' material brings out more nuanced aspects of co-production, like the affective dimensions of community building, the importance of solidarity, and the self-recognition of residents. Furthermore, this process itself created space for additional reflections

and conversations among community members, all of which play a role in incrementally strengthening their practice and recognition of their position. Consequently, the very methods used to reflect on the impacts of housing co-production helped to bring different bits of people's knowledge to light and *co-produce* new learnings of value to the communities themselves, practitioners and allies.

Ma Khin Yu Maw

Ma Khin Yu Maw, a resident from the Pan Thazin project – the first in the trajectory of collective housing projects – highlighted the long way to recognition and successfully claiming the community's rights. First, we see a snapshot from one of the regular savings meetings inside the community centre. Typically, each savings group gathers every Sunday when the members are free from work obligations, do their logistics and update each other on all sorts of news. Next, she shared a group photo from one of the annual meetings of the WSDN, with more than 100 representatives of the city-wide network. As a 'veteran' savings group member, Ma Khin Yu Maw has been among the people who have spread the methodology of collective savings to many more communities. From the oldest to the most recent housing projects, residents have a deep understanding of the value of joint savings, not only for the aspect of finance but also (and perhaps more importantly) for their unity and community building. She showed a picture in which members of the housing project were working together to pave the access road of their settlement. Virtually everything in the housing projects is planned, financed, implemented and maintained collectively:

The biggest change I have felt since joining this housing project is in my social presence. I used to be afraid to talk in public; I was even afraid to ask permission to join the savings group. Once I overcame that, I realised that we all were in the same boat, and I felt encouraged. The way I speak and interact with others has changed; I have experienced the beauty of teamwork. In the past, when I had a problem, there was no one to consult, and I would only speak out when I thought it was appropriate. The recognition of our community did not come right away. People in the neighbourhood did not think much of us; they saw us as squatters. The household leaders, in particular, thought that we could not contribute anything to the ward. One day, they came to our settlement and asked us to pay

for paving the main road. We couldn't pay monthly, as they asked, but we saved up money and collected donations and, in the end, we contributed one million Kyat – more than anyone else in the neighbourhood. Since then, we have been given priority for whatever activities happen in the ward, and are invited to events and meetings. We also got household certificates and registration cards, and became eligible to apply for electricity. This is not the end; we are ready to pass on this knowledge to our offspring. We are already doing so.

Daw Than Than Hla

Daw Than Than Hla from the Khit Thit May housing project is one of the senior members of the WSDN. She shared a picture of herself standing in front of her house. The upgrading works she has undertaken are visible, albeit modest. Small details reveal the care that has gone into everything. The entrance is defined by a brick and concrete bench and a small plant box for growing flowers; a gutter collects rainwater that is filtered with a *longyi* (traditional clothing) placed on the barrel opening and is stored in containers. The innovations from one project are carried on to the next, with people replicating useful practices thanks to the continuous exchange. She also showed an image that portrayed the main road of the linear settlement, with a handful of children playing in the afternoon. Another picture she shared illustrates the settlement entrance during the COVID-19 lockdown, where the community organised an informal checkpoint and a handwashing station to serve anyone visiting the settlement and protect the residents from infections. In her account, the individual and the collective are intertwined:

No one will give us housing; we have to do it ourselves. If we rent, our situation can never change. So, I joined the savings group and started spreading the word to my neighbours. I will continue doing this, and my children will continue doing this. This is what bonds us together like a family. Otherwise, we would be strangers in a regular ward. Seniors from other projects came to teach us how to take loans, pay them back, and plan our housing. Then we were put in touch with WfW, and we started looking for land. In July 2017, we found this plot. We were happy with it because it is suitable for children's education and job opportunities. We divided plots of 14 × 40 feet. If we had gone larger – 20 × 60 feet – we could eventually

convert the land title to grant land,⁶ but that would mean individual ownership, and we did not want that. So now, we can only have collective ownership. This brings security to all 88 families of our project; it's our agreement. We plan to stay here, not sell or rent. If I did that, we would be homeless again. We, poor people, want to live like everybody else. We might not be able to afford this alone, but as a group, we can.

Daw Thin Thin Zan

Daw Thin Thin Zan showed a photo posing in front of her house in the Mae Myit Thar project in South Dagon township. In the picture, her hand touches the flowers she has been growing in front of her home – the outcome of an organised initiative to green the communities during the pandemic by planting vegetables, fruit trees and flowers for food security, for shade, and for engaging in a pleasant and calming activity. Another picture she shared portrayed her and her family and friends sitting in the space underneath her raised house. During the dry season, many dwellers spend the hottest hours of the day there, taking a nap, chatting or exchanging news, while young children play games. The space underneath the house was considered a desired feature during the design workshops with prospective residents – a typology frequently seen in rural contexts and reimagined by urban low-income dwellers. Knowledge and ideas are exchanged, shared and adapted to fit into what is actually feasible both technically and financially for such a low-cost project:

Living on rent meant that we always had to give notice to the owner, whatever we did. My mind is finally peaceful since my family moved in this project. I feel very fortunate, especially during these challenging times. If we had been living scattered across the ward, without a community, I cannot imagine that we would get any support. Now that we are a recognised and organised community, we receive more help from neighbours and donations. We are more secure against any threats. I don't have to worry about my children; everyone in this housing helps each other, so our living is much better. The collective ownership of land is what binds us together, what makes us all united. When problems arise, we try to solve them by ourselves. We still need guidance from WfW since we are still figuring out certain aspects of living together. But I am trying hard to become a good leader myself and support the committee in any way I can. This project

allows grassroots people to improve their living standards and learn to live with rules and regulations.

Ko Naing Gyi

Ko Naing Gyi, a resident of the Mae Myit Thar project in Shwepyithar township, shared a photo showing young children playing on the road in front of his home, protected by the collective awareness and care of the neighbourhood. This image stands in stark contrast to the perceived lack of safety people felt in their previous conditions, surrounded by ‘strangers’ and faced with lots of traffic and frequent accidents. The resident shared another photo showing the same part of the road at night, illuminated brightly for the Thadingyut festival. Candles are placed in front of people’s entrances, and most residents are on the street exchanging greetings. Within each housing project, people come together to organise and celebrate all kinds of religious and cultural events, like weddings and funerals, or donations, keeping their traditions alive, preparing food together and further strengthening their bonds. Residents have both more resources to spare for such occasions and, equally importantly, they have the needed stability and mental space to care about this kind of heritage:

I appreciate this style of working together. In the hostel where we previously stayed, we had to pay rent, but no matter how long we stayed, we would never own the house. Here, the monthly loan instalment is similar to our rent, but after six years, we will own this place. It is much better to live and work when you have your own house. Now I can focus on my business and leave home every day without worrying about our security. Whenever possible, I want to upgrade the house; to make it different from all the other houses. And make our road better than all the other roads. In the beginning, we were not as united as we are now. There were challenges with communication. If there is unity, this collective landownership is good; otherwise, there might be problems. Yet, everything about this project is done very systematically. We hope that the government will keep its promise and allow us to stay here, generation after generation. I feel happy when I hear my kids tell their friends that we no longer live in a hostel, but own our house. They can invite their friends to come over and play freely. I am glad that this system gives us breathable spaces and allows us to live peacefully in this area.

U Thein Win Htike

The story of U Thein Win Htike resonates with that of many of his fellow neighbours, dealing with insecure tenure despite having purchased land on the peripheries of Yangon. Contrasting this fragile condition, his photographs show how his family has been taking root in their new settlement. The first photo he shared is from his house in East Dagon's Mae Myit Thar project. Even though the picture was taken months after they moved into the project, his family had already constructed an additional room to the side and a small veranda where his wife rests in the afternoon hours. These possibilities for extension were discussed and decided together with the residents, young architects, senior WSDN committee members and WfW, building on the experience from earlier projects. In the same spirit of co-production, residents of the Mae Myit Thar projects have contributed their knowledge to interventions aimed at mitigating extreme heat, which is one of the uneven impacts of climate change on low-income communities. The empirical knowledge that many dwellers carry from their rural backgrounds is weaved together with other forms of expertise to develop affordable, sustainable and effective practices. Another two pictures he shared show how the community members interpreted these ideas and started greening their communities, not only for shade but also for food security, flood mitigation and their psychological well-being. As U Thein Win Htike explains:

I moved to Yangon eight years ago, and sometime later, I purchased a plot of land in East Dagon. Soon after, I realised the land was informal, so I moved. I could have possibly stayed there, but I was feeling insecure. When WfW did a household survey in our area, I learned about this collective housing project. Even though we all came from the same area, I didn't know any of the other members, but I trusted the organisation and joined the process. Everything is going well now. I think everyone in this housing is like my family. We live together in an organised way, which makes us more secure; that's why I chose to come here. The market and school are far [away] and although we cannot go around during the pandemic, this won't be easy in the long run. WfW will help us build a school here. Many people don't have a good education, so I think it's very important. The settlement hasn't received electricity yet, but I have a generator, and we have an arrangement where neighbours donate fuel, and I run the generator for my street. This way, I do my best for my road. We are still learning to live with the rules; some problems can occur, but we solve them

with understanding. We are building deep connections with each other, so I believe we can manage this settlement for many years to come. We value this opportunity because we have suffered a lot from the lack of recognition of our land titles.

Dimensions of the emancipatory impact of co-production

From their own perspective and in their own words, people's stories illuminate different aspects of co-production and the impact they have experienced as a result of this community-led development. Conceptualisations of co-production as a pathway to 'shift power relations [to] reduce inequalities and expand the space for urban citizenship' (Mitlin and Bartlett 2018, 356) resonate greatly with the residents' narratives, even though they are expressed in different terms. But this was precisely the motivation behind the life stories: to centre people's experiences, perceptions and interpretations of co-production, and understand the defining moments or processes in their development path. From their accounts, it appears that co-production is closely linked to the collectivity that characterises most operations and activities of the communities. It is just as much the outcome of a conscious effort to work together (for example, through workshops, meetings, gatherings and deliberations) as it is the outcome of intuition (as seen, for instance, in the ways people replicate – and often improve – interventions from one project to the next). As their narratives and photographs illustrate, this co-production translates into interconnected and mutually reinforcing dimensions of emancipation that cut across material, affective and socio-political aspects.

The material dimension

The collectivity that permeates this housing practice, from savings to land use and development, has been a defining factor for residents to access resources and become more independent. The most evident manifestation of this is that they own (or will soon own) their houses and no longer face the exposure and vulnerability as informal renters or squatters. Moreover, the collective savings method gives poor people improved access to finance, not only thanks to the cheaper loans they can receive from their savings groups but also because of their improved financial literacy and management skills. Without chronic indebtedness, people are in a better position to choose how to spend their common

funds and decide collectively on the community's priorities, and do not have to rely on loan sharks – even in times of crisis, as the pandemic demonstrated. To a great extent, secure land and housing and the self-help savings groups are a gateway to address other aspects of life, like access to education, livelihood improvement and infrastructure development. Importantly, all these procedures are not fixed, but are continuously reshaped with and by the communities in order to better reflect their needs.

The affective dimension

Another aspect that emerges strongly from people's stories is the affective dimension of emancipation. This primarily refers to a sense of *liberty* for having their own house and *ownership* for their accomplishments. Regarding the former, people associate being part of this process and project with freedom. This translates into different things: not having to please a landlord to avoid eviction, not being on edge anticipating the next development project that will displace them, being able to focus better on their employment or education, or feeling safe enough to leave the door unlocked. At the same time, people's involvement in virtually every stage of their development projects cultivates a strong sense of ownership of and, by extension, pride in their achievements. The collective production of their housing projects also fosters deep bonds among its members, who often equate their communities with family. With freedom and self-recognition, residents can better plan for their future, overcome negative stereotypes and redefine their own narrative. In other words, the collective housing mechanism and savings network are designed to sustain and deepen people's emancipation from a state of displaceability, insecurity and individualist survival.

The socio-political dimension

One of the fundamental principles of this collective housing practice is valuing and centring people's knowledge, and grafting that with different forms of expertise to deliver more suitable, sustainable and integrated solutions that address their needs. As the life stories illustrate, such bits of knowledge can refer to construction methods, vernacular ways of climate adaptation, cultural heritage and customary forms of social organisation. Top-down approaches often ignore or dismiss this significant social and cultural capital, perpetuating perceptions of grassroots

mechanisms of city making as ‘backward’ or ‘out of place’. By contrast, the valuation of their knowledge and capacity grants residents new channels to rework their social and political standing. They agree on the rules and regulations that govern their settlements and are accountable to each other for their enforcement. They established their own administration system with guidance from WfW and set up committees to manage various aspects of their communal life. They elect their representatives through democratic processes and organise to make collective claims and negotiate with local authorities on different fronts. The skills to engage in these negotiations are derived mainly from the long-established co-production, which has equipped people with leadership and management skills, critical thinking and confidence. The manifestation of their knowledge in their space, communities and practices strengthens their sense of ownership and becomes the foundation for their continuous development. Notably, these accomplishments are actively carried on horizontally (to more and more communities) and vertically (to the next generation), paving the way for long-lasting change and more equitable development processes.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the positive impact of co-production on people’s increased independence and leverage capacity, it is by no means a panacea to developmental and housing challenges. First, we acknowledge the difficulty of capturing all diverse voices and knowledges that are present in each community. Inadvertently, the collective nature of procedures and consensus-based decision making may overshadow divergent voices. Second, we recognise that the burden of housing and infrastructure delivery continues to fall disproportionately on the urban poor. The principle of co-production should not be exploited to have the state in the role of the passive facilitator. Instead, the learnings of such participatory processes should inform more targeted responses by the public sector and support the integration of people’s voices and capacities in building more just systems. Third, by no longer being ‘in opposition’ to the state ever since the collaboration with the government commenced, there may be changes in the communities’ and organisations’ positionality. The power dynamics – between communities and other stakeholders, but also *within* communities – need continuous reflection and recalibration in order to lead to more inclusive outcomes.

Despite the limitations, the tangible and intangible achievements of co-production have catalysed various expressions of emancipation by giving voice to marginalised communities, valorising their knowledge and capitalising on their solid organisation. This, in turn, has enabled them to scale up their actions, reshape their relationship with the state and advance their self-recognition. Importantly, their co-produced knowledge is not static, but very much ‘living’ and transformable, and it continuously shapes better outcomes for individuals and their communities. While the persistence of systemic obstacles is undeniable, the progressive integration of grassroots people’s values, needs and aspirations into housing and development trajectories marks a significant step forward. The survival of these systems, practices, knowledge and solidarity in times of crisis is the most substantial evidence of the emancipatory impact of collective housing, demonstrating possibilities to assert rights, resources and recognition, and to move closer to a more equitable society.

Afterword: a note on the practitioner’s role in co-production

The practitioner’s role in co-production is to serve as a facilitator – supporting, rather than directing, the community’s own processes. Communities often possess deep local knowledge and innovative ideas that merit attention and respect. While technical assistance and guidance may be necessary, it is essential to ground this support in active listening and to create space for communities to lead, act and shape their individual and collective futures. This might involve practical tasks – such as improving infrastructure or greening public spaces – but the deeper aim is to empower communities to define and implement their own priorities. Practitioners must remain agile and responsive, resisting the urge to impose solutions and instead embracing a co-learning process that centres community autonomy.

At the same time, by recognising that no community is homogeneous and that not all members are familiar with collective ways of working, practitioners can help ease the path by creating opportunities for shared experiences. Through small, manageable projects, communal meals, games or group tasks that build trust, encourage collaboration and make space for diverse voices, the groundwork for deeper cooperation can be laid.

In many contexts, the value of co-production remains poorly understood or under-appreciated. Though frequently cited in theory and policy, it is still rarely practised meaningfully on the ground. This may be due to the coordination it demands or the discomfort associated with embracing uncertainty. Conventional development approaches often reinforce these barriers by imposing rigid frameworks and prioritising outputs over process. In such cases, practitioners can play a vital advocacy role by setting precedents and enabling others to witness co-production in action.

As explored throughout this chapter, co-production is not a fixed method, but a dynamic, transformative process that demands flexibility and humility. Within this process, the practitioner's role is to support, mediate, advocate and connect – helping communities build the tools and confidence to act autonomously. By remaining critically aware of the tensions and constraints that surround this work, practitioners can help create and protect spaces for genuine collaboration – spaces where all actors can grow more confident, more engaged and more committed to the ongoing journey of co-production.

Notes

1. The insights referenced here draw on collective research and internal dialogues within the research team: Brenda Pérez-Castro, Barbara Lipietz, Marina Kolovou Kouri, Tran Kieu Trang Phan and Supreeya Wungpatcharapon.
2. This housing practice emerged at a time when social organisation could be easily criminalised and targeted. Moreover, the then land legislation did not recognise collective land use rights for this type of residential development, and the land purchased by the communities was not typically recognised as official.
3. For a comprehensive contextualisation of this government-supported collective housing, see Kolovou Kouri and Sakuma (2021).
4. The interviews with the residents were conducted during the periods September–December 2019 and August–September 2020.
5. The photographs are available in a photo essay in the DPU Blogs (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/dpu-blogs>).
6. A width of 20 feet is the minimum size for a plot to be converted into grant land that would allow for residential use and enable the formalisation of tenure. Before the Mae Myit Thar initiative, the housing projects were built on agricultural land in the hope of retroactive recognition of collective land use rights.

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Co-producing knowledge: methods, moments and experiences from the Main Bhi Dilli campaign, India

Malavika Narayan, Rashee Mehra and Ruchika Lall

Introduction

On 20 August 2021, a single window at the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) headquarters, allocated for citizens' objections and suggestions to Delhi's draft Master Plan 2041, was extended into multiple desks outside the building. Spilling out onto the steps leading up from the pavement where people had gathered, officials scrambled to accommodate sheaves of handwritten objections brought in for submission in person. These were written in response to the release of Delhi's draft Master Plan (see the box below) for public comment in early June 2021. This was initially for a period of 45 days and was later extended by a month. The official channel was an 'invited' space of participation (Miraftab 2004) for citizen responses to the draft plan through a portal on the DDA's website. In contrast to very few suggestions being filed through the online portal, which was inaccessible to most, a citizens' campaign named Main Bhi Dilli (MBD) mobilised the submission of physical letters of objections and suggestions. An unprecedented volume of over 20,000 objections was submitted in person on this day itself in an offline mode. While the outcomes of these are yet to be determined, the filing of objections in such a volume is arguably unprecedented in the planning process in Delhi, and a pertinent moment for the collective efforts of co-production of knowledge discussed in this chapter.

MBD is a citizen's campaign consisting of over 40 civil society organisations, community resident activists, informal workers, architects, urban planners and researchers, who have come together since 2018 with the aim of influencing equitable urban development in the city. The

goal of the campaign is to develop a vision for the Master Plan that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of informal workers and residents whose concerns have traditionally not been considered in conventional planning paradigms.

The Master Plan of Delhi is a statutory instrument and primarily a tool for spatial governance that guides the planned development of the city in relation to other processes of urban governance. It allocates land use and prescribes norms and regulations for urban growth. While these are often in tension with the reality of informality in Indian cities on the ground, the Master Plan does affect the lives of people in exclusionary ways, given that it is a legally enforceable document. In the past, it has influenced large-scale evictions of people from self-built housing, sealing of factories and prohibitions on kinds of work that are permissible in residential zones. Revised every 20 years by the DDA, the process of drafting allocates a time period for citizens to file objections. In June 2021, when the DDA released the draft Master Plan 2041, this space to participate was initially announced as a window of 45 days during the raging COVID-19 pandemic. This window was extended by another 30 days, after much advocacy by citizens and activists, including members of the MBD.

In this chapter, we situate ourselves at the moment of mass filing of comments on the draft plan in August 2021. We reflect back on the journey that led to this moment. Paralleling the official master planning exercise, MBD has built and sustained a momentum of co-production of knowledge for over three years prior to the publishing of Delhi's revised draft Master Plan in the public domain. While 'co-production' is not academically or conceptually articulated as a focus within the campaign, it can be seen as core to the campaign. The name of the campaign literally translates as 'I too am Delhi – Now let's make the city together' and draws attention to the recognition of tacit and locally held knowledges of informal workers and residents who are traditionally excluded from top-down planning, and their role in co-producing the city. The form of a campaign is an intentional choice for co-production of knowledge in two ways. First, its aim is to propositionally dialogue with state authorities on the draft plan, demonstrating how technocratic ways of planning are insufficient in terms of advocating for the need to use locally held knowledge. Second, it is to build a shared vocabulary and vision within members of the campaign so that they can engage with the draft plan,

across sectoral, thematic and organisational affiliations, towards a comprehensive urban agenda.

Through the experience of working together, MBD has co-produced a body of knowledge on urban planning in Delhi that is publicly held and accessible to many, as distinct from conventional ways in which knowledge is valorised by institutions and gatekeepers. The campaign has created factsheets and technical reports, toolkits and advocacy materials that help community mobilisers to explain and engage residents in the city on how the Master Plan shapes their lives and provides a language in which to make demands of planning. In particular, the campaign's methods of co-production are deeply rooted in the geographical, sociological and historical context of Delhi, and the trajectories and spheres of influence of members of the campaign. While it is too soon to see the extent of co-production in the Master Plan as a document, as the final plan is yet to be notified, this is an opportune time to reflect on the processes and methods of knowledge co-production within MBD and how it relates to other actors with which it has tried to engage over the past four years.

The literature on co-production highlights the recognition of multiple actors in city-making processes to influence outcomes in service delivery (Mitlin 2008) as well as in the co-production of knowledge (Osutseye et al. 2019). The authors highlight the significance of co-production as a tactic to address inequality, where marginalised communities are able to strategically expand their room for manoeuvre and claim a seat at the table. Yet, the authors also caution how co-production is situated within a neoliberal paradigm (Mitlin and Bartlett 2018). They draw attention to the outsourcing of the role of the state, a depoliticisation of social movements and projectisation of the development sector, and question the scalar outcomes of co-production. While arguing for the opportunity within co-production, they also highlight inequalities within this – how actors are situated in power dynamics and how different stakeholders bring with them different theories of change (Mitlin et al. 2020). We situate our reflections in these debates to understand co-production as a process of working together. There are several ways in which the term has been used and critiqued: the process of co-producing knowledge is situated amidst power dynamics, differing/layered intentions and is navigated by actors with diverse positionalities. The question of co-production to what end and what that enables is key. If the end is to address urban inequality, then attention to power and differential dynamics, choices and intentions and strategies are key. It is from this perspective that we reflect on processes of co-production through the MBD campaign in Delhi.

In the following sections, we focus on the strategic intent behind the co-production of knowledge in MBD at different moments during

the campaign. We discuss the methods of co-production within the campaign as sectoral or thematic meetings, cross-sectoral meetings, community meetings and the production of knowledge products from these that enabled outward engagement with institutions of the state, media, communities and citizens in Delhi. We build a timeline, referring back to internal documentation of discussions within the campaign, internal minutes of meetings and online communications through email and WhatsApp, also referring to our own personal memory and experience of the campaign. We highlight the relation of the moment, intention and tactics within the campaign and how it influenced the methods of co-production developed or adopted by the campaign, reading these alongside the timeline of the campaign (see [Figure 6.1](#)) in strategic response to the official planning processes and its challenges.

As we (the authors of this chapter) have been a part of the campaign since 2018 with two authors as co-coordinators of the campaign, we draw from provocations found in the literature on co-production to reflect on the methods, moments and experiences in MBD. It is important to state here that these reflections are from three members of a campaign comprising several organisations and individuals. While the views expressed here may not be representative of the experience of all members of the campaign, the efforts of co-production of knowledge discussed here reflect the collective contribution of several people and groups, all of whom are not named individually in this chapter, but whose efforts must be acknowledged. This chapter allows us to step back and reflect on co-production within the campaign – conceptually and methodologically, with attention to the debates in which it is situated. While this is valuable to us as authors and members of the campaign as a reflexive practice, it is also useful to share these methodological reflections for the theory and practice of co-production to challenge urban inequalities in the Global South. We hope to contribute to conversations with other urban movements and people's groups engaging with city planning exercises in other cities.

The intention of co-production of knowledge in the campaign

The campaign developed from a meeting of activists and researchers working on a range of livelihood and urban issues in Delhi that was held in April 2018 (Sinha, Narayan and Majithia [2022](#)). At the time, the official process for the drafting of the Master Plan of Delhi 2041 was also beginning. Allies working on a range of issues in Delhi like housing,

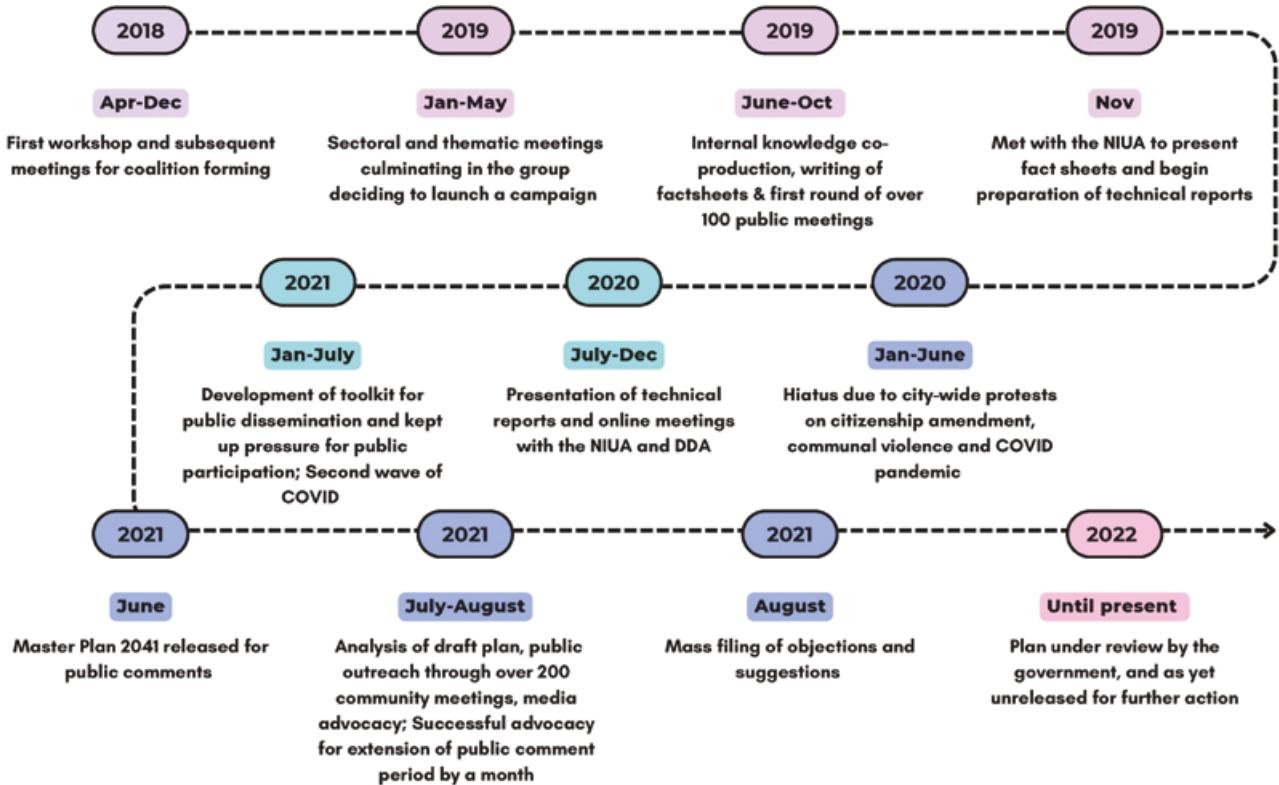


Figure 6.1 A timeline of the Main Bhi Dilli campaign activities from 2018 to 2022

Source: Authors

livelihood and gender held a workshop on the topic of the upcoming revisioning of the Master Plan, laying the foundations for the campaign. Together, they discussed the significance of the plan for their work. Activists shared that even as the ‘master plan’ often impacted their work, there was a gap in understanding due to the perceived ‘technicality’ of the plan. Together, the group also reflected on the need for a sustained effort to form a unified platform at the city level in order to engage with the planning process. The objective was to propositionally engage with the drafting process, even before the official window for citizen participation. Thus, with a general sense of two broad aims – capacity building and campaign building – the group decided to continue meeting for the next few months and explore the possibility of a campaign. During this time, more civil society organisations, individual grassroots activists and urban professionals were progressively added to an expanding email list.

From the very beginning, thinking about ‘knowledge’ was central to campaign meetings. A point that was often talked about was the fact that previous master plans in Delhi had been made without conducting an existing land use survey. This was seen to be indicative of the gap between what is in the plan and what exists on the ground. As each plan began from this inadequate information base, it tended to perpetuate the same ‘invisibilities’ as the previous one. Housing rights activists, for instance, highlighted that many decades-old residential settlements still continued to be illegal and informal because each progressive plan did not map them under the residential category, and thereby left them vulnerable to evictions. Similarly, informal workers who constitute nearly 90 per cent of Delhi’s workforce were notoriously absent, lacking any spatial provisions required for their work. Hence, the first point of critique of master planning emerging from the group regarded the inadequacy of knowledge which formed the basis of it. This was seen as a product of both a lack of official data sources and a wilful intent to marginalise through exclusion.

It was essentially to address this knowledge gap that members of the campaign envisioned their role. There was a sense that the activists and allied academics in the group had pertinent data and information in their hands, which the planners did not. This data would not be gathered or considered to be pertinent to planning unless it was presented to them as such. For example, within planning paradigms, street vending is often framed as ‘encroachment’ of public space and understood as an issue of law and order. However, if, as the campaign advocates, it is recognised as a legitimate form of livelihood, then the plan must engage with it differently. The issue of knowledge here is not one of a data gap itself, but

rather that the numbers or requirements of vendors are not considered to be a metric to be considered for spatial planning at all. As noted in the minutes of the second meeting of the group, the campaign:

would present data on the existing state of what, where and how things are in the city ... there is already a body of work which exists among us about different sectors and groups, and the role of the coalition is to enable bringing these together ... Moreover, since planning is often regarded to be an expert terrain, even member organisations and individuals would benefit from capacity-building to translate the plan into more understandable terms, and this is a key role of the coalition. (MBD internal minutes, 2018)

Thus, the twin aims of platform building and capacity building were both being conceived in terms of what knowledge must go into planning and how this could be consolidated and put out for use by different audiences, including urban planners, and by activists themselves.

The way in which the campaign's overall approach to master planning came to be pitched was also reflected in how knowledge building was approached and designed from the very beginning. As many members of the group were senior activists who had been part of similar democratic efforts to influence the revisioning process of the last Master Plan of Delhi 2021, nearly two decades ago, they were able to raise critical questions on how to engage with such a top-down mechanism which is not participatory. Over several discussions, what emerged was that even as the group agreed conceptually that a centralised static Master Plan was no way to plan a just city, the strategy would not be to oppose and stay out of the official process altogether, but rather to carve out, demand and 'invent' (Mirafat 2004) spaces of participation within it. In this endeavour, the combination of lived, activist, academic and practice-based insights and training within the group was seen to be a clear asset in order to tackle and counter the so-called 'technical expertise' of urban planners. In this vein, the campaign has over time co-produced knowledge which is deeply engaged with existing plan provisions and advancing newer proposals using the language of the plan. In terms of process, it has engaged at every stage in the official planning exercise, while also adopting an oppositional stance at strategic moments to push for more substantive and meaningful participation.

What this meant in terms of knowledge has been a three-pronged approach to 'Add, Challenge and Reframe' the assumptions and provisions of previous plans to arrive at concrete recommendations

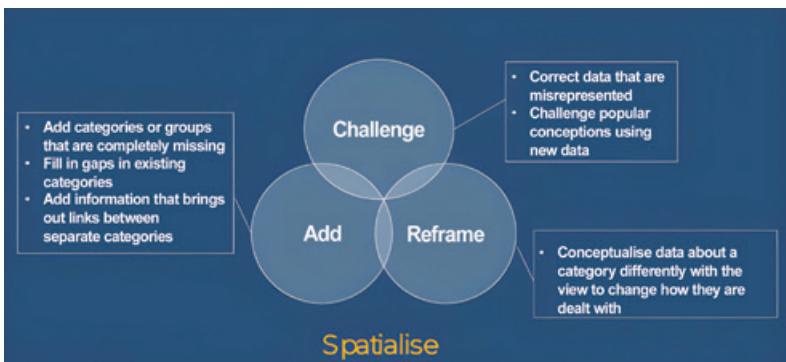


Figure 6.2 Image sourced from a PowerPoint presentation by the campaign coordinators to summarise the strategy for upcoming sector meetings in the first year of the campaign.

Source: Internal documentation maintained by the campaign

(see [Figure 6.2](#)). The campaign understood ‘Add’ as adding categories or groups that are completely missing, filling in gaps in existing categories and adding information that brings out links between separate categories. To ‘Challenge’ meant correcting data that is misrepresented and challenging popular conceptions using new data. ‘Reframe’ requires conceptualising data about a category differently with a view to changing how it is dealt with. To give an example, when it came to the issue of affordable housing in the city, the group identified that it would need to present information that does all three functions of adding, challenging and reframing. First, it would need to add the information that self-built informal housing was in fact the predominant mode by which housing has been produced and exists in the city. Second, it would need to challenge the plan’s modality of resettlement as an acceptable process by highlighting the data on older flats in peripheral resettlement colonies lying empty after years with no uptake due to its unviability. Third, it would need to provide evidence for the fact that housing is not just shelter provision, but rather is linked to work/livelihood, which requires reframing solutions to homelessness beyond night shelters, for instance. All of this would also need to be brought forward from merely data points or principles-level arguments to being located in space, as the Master Plan is primarily a document concerned with the organisation of land. Hence, wherever possible, indicators would be mapped and the campaign would need to attempt to formulate the specific spatial allocations required.

Methods of co-production within the campaign

The forms in which knowledge was produced and consolidated over time in the campaign occurred primarily through the mode of meetings in which data and propositions were collectively deliberated. Over the first year, the primary activity was to organise a series of conversations around the ‘themes’ and ‘sectors’ with which members identified, which were broadly housing, livelihood and gender. Starting with an introductory session on ‘planning’ anchored by member individuals who were trained urban planners, these meetings were consciously curated as a means to build collective understanding on what the instrument of the Master Plan is, to evaluate the state of existing data about a particular area of concern and to begin formulating what the campaign’s ‘demands’ regarding it would be. The meetings usually began with a short presentation or overview about what the current Master Plan of Delhi 2021 contained with regard to the theme/sector under consideration – which chapter of the plan was relevant, what datasets had been referred to in it and what were the provisions or broad approach that were recommended. A lead was taken in this by people who could be categorised as ‘researchers’, either in their individual capacity or belonging to organisations that had undertaken such studies and documentation in the relevant area. This research group also had community mobilisers and members of civil society organisations, so that on-the-ground realities could be firmly represented in these deliberations. Furthermore, free-wheeling conversations ensued in which grassroots activists played the most active role by bringing to light the gaps and problems in what had just been presented and the host of issues that they were observing as a result of these plan provisions. They also took care to bring in representatives from the communities where they worked or worker constituencies which they represented. In this way, the manner in which collective understanding was built into the campaign from the beginning was through the combining of different streams of knowledge such as those from research, activism and lived experience.

Conversations then spanned the whole spectrum of issues faced by these groups and were not limited to those which were directly relevant to the Master Plan, a flexibility made possible because the draft plan for 2041 had still not yet been made public. This allowed many issues which are conventionally not considered in spatial planning exercises to also be accounted for, challenging dominant planning frameworks that often did not contain such intersectional perspectives. For instance, in

the articulation of the campaign, it became apparent that the issue of access to basic services could not be divorced from that of gender equity, as it was poor women who bore the brunt of the irregular provision of piped water and unsafe sanitation. However, one yardstick that was used to somewhat orient discussions was to encourage people to think about how one could spatialise what they were saying. If the demand was couched as recognition for an informal work sector, for instance, the effort was to articulate what this meant in terms of spatial allocations. Alternatively, if the issue raised was the constant threat of evictions faced by informal settlements, the group thought about how Master Plan provisions were often cited in court cases, and precisely which of these needed to be removed or rephrased in order to protect residents.

Following these sectoral meetings, the campaign came up with its first document, which was loosely termed ‘emerging action points’. A day-long workshop was also held which helped integrate issues cross-sectorally and formulate some common minimum principles. The next step was for activists to take these out to the communities where they worked and present them to the residents or workers they were representing. Nearly a hundred such community meetings took place in 2019, which brought newer and smaller organisations into the campaign and further spread the word about the initiative. While some were organised in terms of livelihood sectors such as waste picking, street vending and home-based work, others were more broad-based and organised around the key issues that were specific to the particular settlements. These meetings also served the function of clarifying the priority issues from the universe of all that had been discussed before, due to which the decision was taken to launch as a ‘campaign’ and begin to start producing material and doing advocacy around the Master Plan.

Over the next two years, the focus of the campaign shifted to communicating these ideas to an external audience. This included the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), the DDA, the media and the citizens of Delhi. We will now move on to discuss the key forms in which the co-production of knowledge was expressed in a variety of different formats depending on the particular needs of the campaign at given moments in the planning process. This includes factsheets, technical reports, toolkits, suggestions and objections, press releases and social media engagement.

Factsheets

The campaign used the factsheets in its first meeting with the NIUA in November 2019, which were well received.¹

The simple yet powerful four-page and visual format of the factsheets highlighted the challenges that various housing and livelihood sectors faced due to faulty planning and their significance to the city, and also offered solutions on how the NIUA could include these demands in the drafting of the Master Plan. Through this, the campaign was able to position its role as an ally rather than an adversary by presenting the ability and willingness to share in-depth co-produced research and concrete suggestions on how changes could be incorporated.

Here it is important to highlight that the NIUA is a government think tank and therefore is different in character from the DDA, both in terms of its official mandate and its internal capacities. In our experience, the representatives of the NIUA engaged more with the factsheets, leading to fruitful discussions as a result of which further areas for deeper introspection for the campaign emerged. In these identified areas, the NIUA then asked the campaign to formulate more detailed ‘technical notes’.

Technical reports

The technical reports were detailed propositions for the draft Master Plan 2041, which were issue-specific and written in the language of the Master Plan of Delhi and meant to be used as direct insertions into the plan. Seven of these were submitted to NIUA on 11 August 2020 after being presented at an online meeting. The work on the technical reports allowed the campaign to conduct in-depth research on topics which otherwise would have been left out of the master planning process. Through this, the campaign was able to demonstrate specific ways in which the plan could tackle some key issues by moving from the language of demands to specific and feasible propositions. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic also shaped the reports with suggestions such as the need for migrant hostels, which Delhi did not have. The campaign took the opportunity to highlight these issues when they were being talked about in the mainstream media in 2020.

Media engagement

In the campaign’s engagement with the mainstream media, it was found that there was no sustained coverage on the Master Plan, particularly in relation to the issues of informal livelihoods and housing. The need was felt to alleviate this and create an online repository where the collective research could be made publicly available and shared with a wider audience. After the campaign’s initial engagement with the NIUA

and development of the factsheets, the campaign internally mobilised the required financial resources and built skills to create and maintain a website (www.mainbhidilli.com), which would be updated with such key tools being co-produced in the campaign. The reach of the website was further augmented through social media accounts. The campaign's Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts have a following of researchers and activists from around the world. After the release of the draft Master Plan in 2021, campaign members have also written multiple op-eds on leading web-based portals.² These editorials allowed the campaign to create public awareness on the issues that the campaign had championed over the years and their relationship with the ongoing planning process and window for citizen participation through suggestions and objections.

Analysis of the draft plan and filing suggestions and objections

The next key phase in which co-production of knowledge was significant followed the release of the draft Master Plan for 2041 in June 2021. The group met soon after the publication of the draft and proceeded to undertake a quick but thorough analysis of the 450-page document. For this, it was decided that breaking it up into sectoral and thematic groups, as had been done previously, would be best so as to tap into the existing expertise of individuals and groups in a timely manner. However, what was interesting to note was that unlike in the first year of the campaign, when sectoral groups were more closed and fixed, through working together in the campaign, there was now much more openness and interest in engaging in the issues raised by different groups. To give an example, the theme of public space, which was initially low on the priority of many groups, was now understood to be integral by street vendor groups, gender groups and housing rights groups, which all raised the critical concerns of equity and access in them. Thus, an important effect of working together in the campaign was observed to have been the building of awareness and capacity of researchers and activists working on particular issues to understand other areas as well and to formulate principles that were more intersectional in their approach.

The strength of this collective understanding was also reflected in the community meetings which happened following the publication of the draft plan in 2021. While two years earlier, grassroots activists often requested that researchers or urban planners from the group were needed to conduct these meetings so as to be able to explain the technical details of the Master Plan, they were now confident that they could handle this on their own. Additionally, an architectural and design

collective who was a member of the campaign also put together a ‘toolkit’ which could be used to have this conversation in a ‘non-technical’ and accessible manner, designed with inputs from multiple members of MBD (Janu and Shahdadpuri 2021). When the campaign was able to successfully advocate for an additional month to submit citizens’ objections to the draft plan, activists and community representatives actively used this toolkit to conduct over 200 meetings across the city to disseminate awareness about the Master Plan provisions and support communities in terms of filing their responses.

Following the co-production of this thorough analysis of the draft Master Plan, the campaign also shared these publicly through a press conference, an online public meeting and social media accounts so that citizens could also use these to shape and file their grievances with the DDA. At the campaign’s end, organisations used the material to file over 25,000 (online and in person) objections to the plan by the campaign.

Thus, efforts to both mobilise stakeholders and articulate knowledge through research or practice reports were considered to be practices of equal rigour and value to the campaign, and were strategically and collectively prioritised to respond in parallel to different moments during the drafting of the Master Plan. As discussed in the preceding sections, the approach and methods of co-production of knowledge included workshops and meetings, collective writing of factsheets and technical reports, drafting of objections and suggestions, and engagement with different forms of media and the wider public. It can also be seen through key organisational decisions on a horizontal structuring of the campaign in a few ways. Keeping in mind a collective and longitudinal endeavour of the campaign, MBD named four young practitioners as co-ordinators affiliated to three organisations. The funding of the campaign has also been done in a way to ensure that it is not a short-term project, but as a collective movement – with longitudinal learning throughout the planning process and even afterwards. Resources in terms of funds, people’s time, venues to meet, printing and communication costs are raised collectively within the campaign through a mix of contributions by organisations and individuals.

Within MBD, as different organisations and individuals come together within the campaign, each occupies and works across different modes of practice and spheres of influence, with particular institutional affiliations and theories of change, holding different positionalities in tandem. Grassroots federations, design labs, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics and policy think tanks within MBD bring with them different approaches to social movements,

practice and research. MBD recognises and works across these in various ways, as reflected in organisational decisions and strategies to build and sustain momentum over time.

Discussion

Over the past four years, MBD has experimentally engaged with and pushed against the technocratic process and vocabulary of urban planning. The co-production of knowledge, through collective and sustained efforts of a diverse group of actors such as activists, researchers, urban planners and architects, shows us that the formal logics of the plan can be questioned. The campaign's processes have allowed for ways to clearly add to, challenge and reframe pre-existing urban planning norms and provisions which are currently insufficient and detrimental to accommodating the realities of large-scale urban inequality. The efforts signal that locally held knowledge and an acknowledgement of lived realities of citizens whose housing, livelihoods, gender, caste and class identities marginalise them is the first step towards inclusive city making.

As a campaign of city-wide actors – researchers, planners, community activists, individuals and organisations – the campaign brings together different types of knowledge and forms of practice. As several authors have discussed, these positionalities, practices and identities are also situated in power dynamics. These power dynamics are not explicitly discussed in the everyday interactions in the campaign, but while every member does not have the same perspective and lived experience, through dialogue the aim in the campaign is to further a common vision to dialogue with state authorities. In hindsight, we can see a few approaches within the campaign that have been useful in terms of navigating some of the power dynamics in the co-production of knowledge. This includes the campaign's attention to intersectionality across thematic sectors, co-learning within the campaign and sharing a common vision to offer clear alternate propositions which have the potential for uptake by the state.

In particular, care has been taken to cross over siloes in the methods of co-production within the campaign. While different actors brought with them knowledge, insight and methods, we also had moments of crossing over with care so as not to limit member's roles to what was considered to be their 'expertise'. For example, while the majority of the community meetings were facilitated by organisations with a strong presence at the grassroots level, in several of these

meetings, researchers, designers, planners and also students from other affiliations participated and co-facilitated. On the other hand, worker leaders and activist leaders also led the charge in consultation meetings with planners, disavowing the perception that they did not have the training or language know-how on planning. This crossing over allowed for a few things – a sense of solidarity within the campaign and also an appreciation for different actors' spheres of influence – so was arguably a tacit way to appreciate power in different contexts. Here, practitioners with more 'technical' backgrounds had to confront the limitations of their language and disciplinary knowledge with the lived experiences and vocabulary on the ground. Meanwhile, community organisations and activists picked up on a range of evidence and tools to strengthen their ongoing struggles, and this led to generative ways for different organisations to co-produce knowledge tools and form other partnerships beyond the campaign.

The intention to cross over conventionally ascribed roles was also significant in terms of the way in which MBD co-produced knowledge to engage outwardly not only with communities, as described above, but also with the state and the media. Master planning in Delhi, as in other cities, has traditionally been undertaken by a non-elected state agency and has been hidden from public view as a project for 'rational' urban planners and sector experts. This does not prevent it from being marked by political contestations as it is the most significant macro-document affecting the critical resource of land and determining future development. However, participation in this public discourse presupposes a 'citizen' who is privileged enough to understand the technicality of the plan and to have an organised lobby representing them, such as Residents' Welfare Associations of planned colonies, market traders' associations, landed farmers or industrialists' confederations.

The effort of MBD has been to pry open this space for the needs of informal workers and residents of informal settlements in the city who make up the vast majority of its residents. In this, the presence of NIUA as the key body drafting the plan was beneficial, as it was a think tank that had individual as well as institutional commitments to and collaborations with civil society groups, and thus was more welcoming of their inputs. The co-produced knowledge products such as factsheets and technical reports were used as a bargaining chip to pitch a 'partnership' with the state, and thereby influence plan making even before the official stage for public participation. Excluded groups such as informal workers and residents of informal settlements were represented as key stakeholders to be consulted during the drafting stage of the plan for the first time.

While it is too soon to discuss clear outcomes, there have been some wins and some losses. Some key changes in approach, inclusive vocabulary and rudimentary acknowledgement of the campaign's propositions are visible in the revised draft plan. At the same time, it was also observed that more significant changes in approach were dismissed, especially when these constituted more fundamental changes, such as an exclusive zoning for affordable housing and the recognition of existing squatter settlements as part of this. Such substantive propositions of the campaign then had to face the heat of opposition from more powerful lobbying groups, and there was also a marked sense of prejudice with which a campaign like MBD and community representatives in particular were viewed by the bureaucracy. This prompted the campaign to adopt an oppositional stance through protests and writing in the media in order to shed light on the exclusionary ways in which the official process was proceeding. However, even in this period, the fact that the group had a body of co-produced knowledge with clear propositions helped it hold up and claim a space in the public discourse around the Master Plan. It was only after several articles written by members of the campaign hit the press that more such critiques and analysis were observed in the mainstream media.

In that sense, how can we reflect and understand some of the outcomes, both short-term and long-term, of this ongoing experience of co-production of knowledge? It is hard to ascertain MBD's explicit impact on the Master Plan as of yet, and MBD's engagement with the planning process is currently ongoing. Yet, as we stated at the onset, the volume of participation is historic. From the campaign itself, there have been a range of objections and submissions through online and offline modes – containing detailed technical inputs, and others with particular objections from communities expressing their presence on land that had otherwise been considered empty or marked for other purposes. What does filing these objections and suggestions mean? While several issues have been captured, the official process does not really hold the state accountable to respond to each response individually. Will these find a way into the draft? Time will only tell. But what we can say is this: first, these are on record, visible to and accepted by the state. This is in itself a significant step and something that can be revisited over time.

Second, the entire body of work collectively assembled by MBD – including factsheets and technical reports, and finally objections and suggestions for the draft plan – holds up a mirror to reflect on the way in which the city is planned for the few and by the few, and the limited space for citizen participation. When the majority of objections are submitted

in handwritten format but the official format is an online system, it also says something about how the city is planned and who the governance structures are listening to, raising questions of ‘epistemic justice’ (Fricker 2007). Even within an invited space of participation, who really is invited and can join the table? Yet, our experience working together in the past three years reinforced a belief in people’s desire to participate, in spite of barriers, during the moment of submission. And while the volume of objections is unprecedented, it is not surprising. If participation is meaningfully enabled and barriers are removed, then the volume of issues from citizens who form the majority and backbone of our cities can and will come through. In terms of short-term outcomes in the process of co-production, this is significant in itself.

Conclusion

The campaign when it began did not view its collective work as ‘co-production’ as the term is commonly understood in academia. It began with the intention of collectivising by bringing together a diverse group of actors to impact and change the process of exclusionary urban planning in Delhi. The aim was to engage and fill existing gaps in the conventional urban planning processes by undertaking community-led research and sharing alternate propositions with government bodies such as the NIUA and the DDA to positively influence the next Master Plan of Delhi. Yet, in terms of long-term outcomes, the experience of knowledge co-production within the campaign, and also outward engagement with the media, the state, citizens and communities, built and sustained over the past three years with recurrent meeting and working together, has built a robust city-scale network.

By intentionally valuing and holding together different kinds of knowledge from the embodied experiences of city residents, insights from collective mobilisation and activist work, and academic sources, the campaign co-produced new ways and modes of urban planning. It activated reflections for individuals and organisations about their understanding of urban issues and expanded avenues to learn about intersecting issues and ways to integrate struggles across various issues. As mentioned earlier, the result was not just in terms of content which led to more concrete and negotiated propositions for planning, but, in addition, the practice of working together for a prolonged period in a diverse collective has led to the co-production of knowledge and means of how to do so. We can see – and hope to continue to see – outcomes of this influence working towards

equitable development beyond the scope of the Master Plan itself. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, different organisations came together for relief and advocacy. Several organisations from the campaign developed projects, studies and partnerships together. The full strength of over 40 civil society organisations in the campaign was often mobilised during the pandemic to write and endorse letters to the government, adding its voice to diverse issues. Significantly, the experience of working with and across a network of practitioners at the city scale has co-produced collective and accessible knowledge and built capacities to co-learn and co-produce, which has the potential to outlive the timeline of the plan.

Similar practices of engagement which challenge the inherent hierarchies of urban planning as a technocratic exercise and bring together a range of city actors have the potential to bring to light the structural inequalities that characterise cities in the Global South. Writing this chapter offered us, as campaign members, an opportunity to trace the procedural steps taken over a three-year period and pointedly reflect on the underlying objectives and conversations that spurred action at particular moments. By highlighting the centrality of intersectional knowledge and practice that is only enabled by the conscious use of methods of co-production, we hope we have demonstrated the potential of a coalition of progressive urban actors to powerfully challenge entrenched planning norms and processes.

In such endeavours, co-production can be a key mechanism to propel movements beyond critique and challenge. While the specific contexts of how data and knowledge hierarchies present themselves may differ, the recognition of multiple registers of knowledge which need to be brought together for inclusive urban action is pertinent. This must be central not just in relation to the production of materials or outputs for an external audience, but also integrated as norms of internal democracy and through the practice of working together to build a shared understanding. Finally, the ethic of co-production of our collective practice, as something which demands each to not just play their role (as academics/activists/stakeholders) alone but be open to cross over into others, is arguably key for practice in dynamic urban settings and for longer-term solidarity building. By engaging in many such sustained efforts, it is hoped that seemingly intractable binaries and power hierarchies that cement urban inequalities may be weakened through our practice.

Notes

1. We reflect in more detail on factsheets as a tool for knowledge in co-production in our article in *Planning Theory* (Lall, Mehra and Narayan 2023).
2. A series on the Delhi Master Plan 2041, written by several members of the campaign, was published in *The Scroll* in 2021: <https://scroll.in/topic/56449/delhi-master-plan-2041>.

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Self-provisioning and reproduction of urban economic spaces through waste micro-small-medium enterprises in Kampala, Uganda

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Introduction

Provisioning and self-provisioning are relevant concepts that help in framing how the deficit in urban utilities like solid waste management in Kampala can be understood. Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, faces significant challenges in managing its solid waste due to rapid urbanisation, population growth and limited infrastructure. In the context of solid waste management, provisioning refers to the process of providing waste management services to the public, usually carried out by municipal or government authorities or contracted private companies. On the other hand, self-provisioning refers to individuals or communities taking responsibility for managing their own waste. Self-provisioning is characterised by Burns et al. (2004) and Fahey and Norris (2011) as the role that individuals and groups or collectives in urban settlements take to reproduce urban spaces and economies. Self-provisioning is distinguished from provisioning by the state, municipality or contracted private actors. This chapter focuses on individual and collective action that has shifted ‘agency’ in the urban spaces of Kampala in relation to urban utilities. Self-provisioning involves initiatives such as home waste composting, recycling programmes or community-based waste recycling management projects. It is seen as a decentralised and democratic

approach to waste management, where actors collectively or individually, through businesses or volunteering participate in reducing, reusing and recycling waste. Many studies have provided the evidence of how waste is recycled, but few describe the innovations as transformative in nature and thus remain as coping methods, which is also underscored by Burns et al. (2004) as a stopgap measure in urban areas. This chapter goes beyond coping to illustrate the transformative nature of self-provisioning, its scalability and relations with the public sector systems of provision (Lawhon et al. 2014, 2018).

Individual and collective approaches to urban service delivery like solid waste management are driving the devolution of power by empowering people to take charge of their own affairs (Golooba-Mutebi 2005) that otherwise are legally supposed to be provided by the state or municipality. It is this individual and collective action that we frame in this chapter as shifting ‘agency’, a process or action where individuals and collectives as groups or at a neighbourhood level influence their surroundings – in this case, services in urban settings. Communities are exercising ‘agency’ to venture into the urban utilities sector that is dominated by municipal and private sector actors. The shifting agency through self-provisioning guarantees the delivery of services where people are keen to participate, promote their preferences and harness their capabilities, given the opportunities. As illustrated in this chapter, the motivating factor is the possibility of developing waste interventions as enterprises. With evidence from several research projects, including the Kampala Knowledge in Action Towards Urban Equality (KNOW) project, this chapter shows that self-provisioning has taken shape in the urban economic spaces through waste micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). In contrast to the provisioning that is largely carried out through the solid waste management (SWM) process, we conceptually distinguish self-provisioning from provisioning by public service providers and private companies, with the former consisting of individuals or small often unregistered ‘firms’ that are active as waste pickers, waste collectors, itinerant buyers and recyclers (Katusiimeh et al. 2013). Yet, as Lawhon and Murphy (2012) and Millington and Lawhon (2019) illustrate, there is always a blurred boundary between self-provisioning and provision regimes. Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) in collaboration with relevant stakeholders has endeavoured to improve waste management in the city with the support of multilateral agencies as well as other partners. For example, in 2012 KCCA took steps to improve the SWM services in the city through the engagement of the private sector and the possible commercial utilisation of waste

(Uganda 2011; Kinobe et al. 2015). But despite all the efforts of KCCA, the amount of waste generated is not matched by the capacity of the formally contracted actors to collect and transfer waste to landfill (Lwasa 2013). The gap in waste management services has triggered a transformational process of self-provisioning spurred by shifting agency through community-based organisations and small enterprises that are uniquely positioned to contribute to reducing waste, alleviating urban poverty and tackling climate change (Oates et al. 2019).

Framing waste economies

Waste has been a topic of debate from multiple perspectives, including urban management, social aspects of waste recovery and, more recently, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction (Aprilia et al. 2011; Kinobe et al. 2015; Lwasa 2017; Edodi 2023). Emerging from the social dimensions of waste recovery and compounded by inadequate waste collection and management systems in many cities, new economic ventures have arisen centred on transforming urban waste into opportunities. Recent literature and municipal urban development programmes have highlighted the economic potential and possibilities of urban waste through recycling, reuse and reduction (3Rs). Beyond the 3Rs, a more in-depth discourse on circular economies is now emerging, and the waste sector is one of those areas that is being looked at as having the potential to create symbiotic relationships by transforming different categories of waste such as organic matter, plastics and metals into valuable resources within the production cycle. In this section of the chapter, we frame waste economies and the potential of urban waste that transcend the notion of established service or product markets, but focusing instead on how low-income communities, driven by necessity, leverage waste as a resource that holds both economic and social value (Korsunova et al. 2022). The framing of waste economies also endeavours to conceptually illustrate how catalytic activities of knowledge co-production can trigger the scaling-up of investments by low-income urban communities that gradually integrate many (particularly women and youths) into the urban economy through what is frequently described as the informal sector (Buyana and Lwasa 2011). As an emerging sector, informality as a concept has also expanded to urban spaces where informal activities can temporarily take place within formal settings through acts of agency. This chapter argues that given the emerging knowledge, practicalities and possibilities concerning urban waste economies, the emerging economic sector

has high potential to augment alternative ways of delivering urban waste infrastructure through MSMEs that are opening new markets which can potentially be connected to higher-value supply chains referred to in this chapter as ‘established markets’.

Waste stream flows, end-pipe disposal and environmental degradation: rethinking the linear model through circular and self-provisioning approaches

Urban waste, whether inorganic or organic, is generated through various urban activities and travels through multiple streams as part of the lifecycle of consumed products. The conventional urban waste management model (UWMM) characterises urban waste streams through a linear process of generate-store-collect-transport-landfill or incinerate. It is this process through which we define a ‘waste stream’, a type of waste and how it enters the analogical ‘waste pipe’. Materials flow continuously from one end of the pipe to the other, but the pipe also serves as a site for the reproduction or generation of new material. Waste types include crop residue, food, biomass, livestock, paper, glass, steel, aluminium, cement, sewerage, industrial liquid waste and medical wastes. Each of these types enters a particular waste stream, but all might reach the same end-pipe of the process. The end-pipe of the waste process can be a landfill, an incinerator, an open dumpsite, an underground dumpsite, surface water systems, open water systems and sometimes remote locations with no or limited habitation. Urban waste in many cities is largely managed through practices that are environmentally unfriendly and climate incompatible. The end-pipe stage of waste can have direct environmental degradation effects, adverse health and GHG emissions associated with landfilling making both city management and liveability challenging. But some inorganic and organic waste can be a resource with a value if utilised and reproduced into manure nutrients, turned into energy briquettes that can create livelihood strategies. To further frame the waste economies, we illustrate how a few of the waste streams create processes of waste economies that complement the centralised waste services and spur an urban economic sector that has multiple benefits of improving neighbourhood environments, harnessing economic value and reducing GHG emissions (Buyana and Lwasa 2011) (see [Figure 7.1](#)). We build on this knowledge about waste generation, management practices, environmental problems, costs incurred by KCCA and costs to communities to argue for the alternative means of managing waste by turning it into valuable products and situate these within the self-provisioning

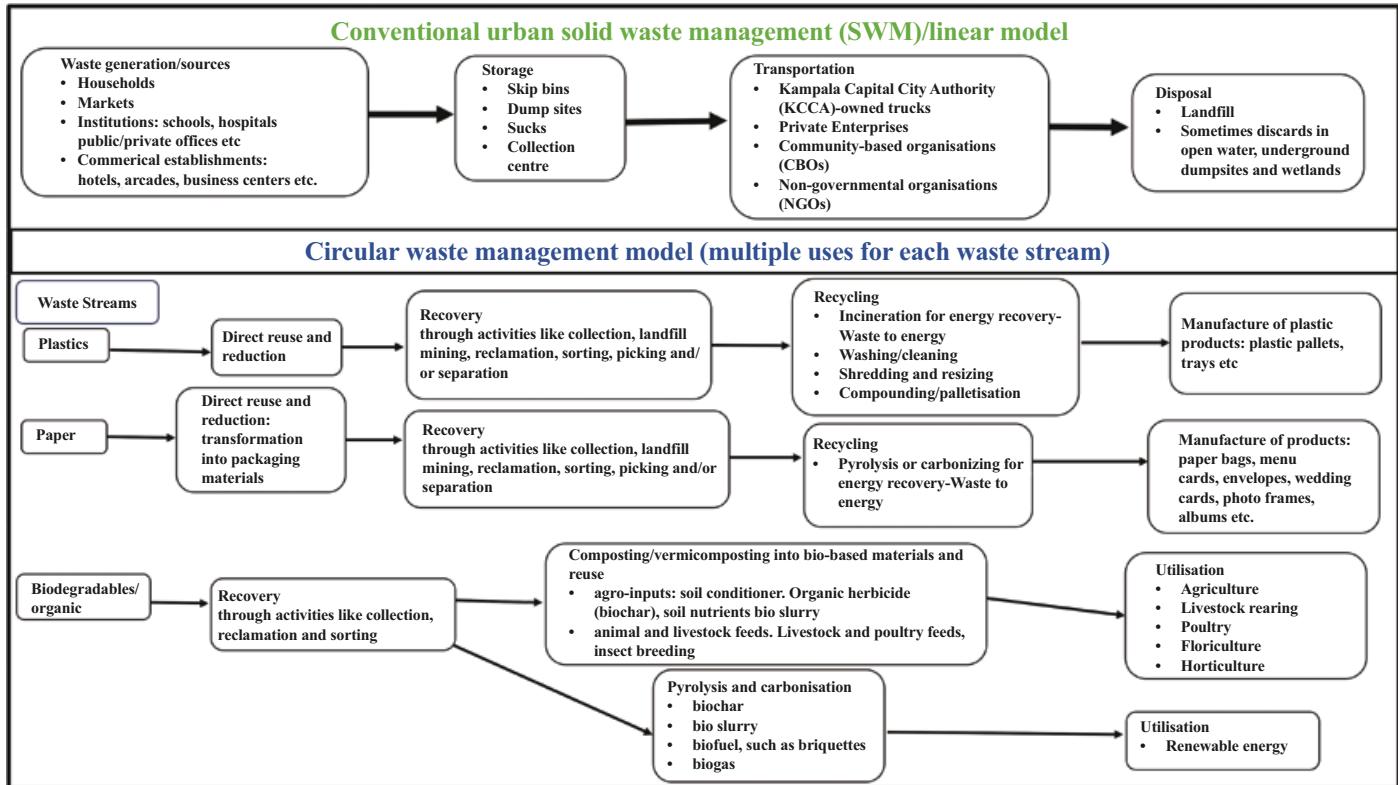


Figure 7.1 Distinguishing linear SWM models and waste recovery for multiple uses

Source: Adapted from Disan Byarugaba's MSc thesis

framework that illustrates shifting agency in the urban space. These products, such as energy briquettes, are produced at a micro-scale and the recovery rate can be increased if the MSMEs are supported in the city (Sseviiri et al. 2020).

Organic waste as a potential resource

In this section, we further frame waste economies by delving into organic waste recovery, its sorting into usable categories and transformation into value-added products such as compost, biogas, briquettes and animal feeds. The discussion here will outline the journey taken by the participating actors at the community level in terms of product ideation, product development, business development, production, marketing and promotion of the products. We will illustrate how organic waste is turned into energy briquettes by MSMEs that are mostly led and managed by women or female youths. In the process of fabricating the briquettes, there are benefits of reduced emissions compared to decomposing waste in neighbourhoods and landfills. The contribution of these MSMEs to reducing the carbon footprint of cities is assessed in this chapter. The economic analysis highlights the economic value, potential value and limitations of energy briquettes. This analysis emphasises the frugality of waste economies to low-income urban neighbourhoods and municipalities grappling with increasing costs of managing waste through the SWM model. Organic waste offers more than just the benefit of being turned into briquettes; it can also be composted to produce a soil-enriching product which has the potential to increase agricultural production, including in urban and peri-urban agriculture, which uses space-confined technology. Organic waste has also been transformed into high-value products like livestock feed. When raw food waste products are recovered, these can be processed to produce feed for livestock, particularly poultry. But the potential of waste as a resource with such value is yet to be tapped into extensively in many cities, including Kampala. The Urban KNOW research aimed at enabling to facilitate the recognition, appreciation and valuation as a means to spur scaling of MSMEs.

The evolution of waste economies

The multiple benefits or uses coupled with the ‘waste pipe’ notion of organic waste underscore the circularity in the waste streams. The notion of circularity compared to recycling extends the cycle with returning

products and/or repair, which implies that there would be zero or very minimal waste from such a system (Trinomics 2020). Waste economies in Kampala have evolved due to factors that are unique to informal and largely low-income settlements such as Bwaise, Kabusi, Kawaala, Namungoona and Masanafu (see Figure 7.2). The deficit in waste collection has triggered the development of alternative waste management activities, first as burning or burying waste, but more recently as recycling for marketable products. Municipal waste collection remains inadequate or non-existent in some locations due to a lack of motorable road network. The inadequacy of waste collection has led to an accumulation of waste within the settlements, leading to the availability of biomass waste that over time began to be recognised as a potential resource, despite the environmental problems caused by inadequate management of such waste. Coupled with the rising costs of cooking fuels, mainly charcoal and wood fuel, community members embarked on

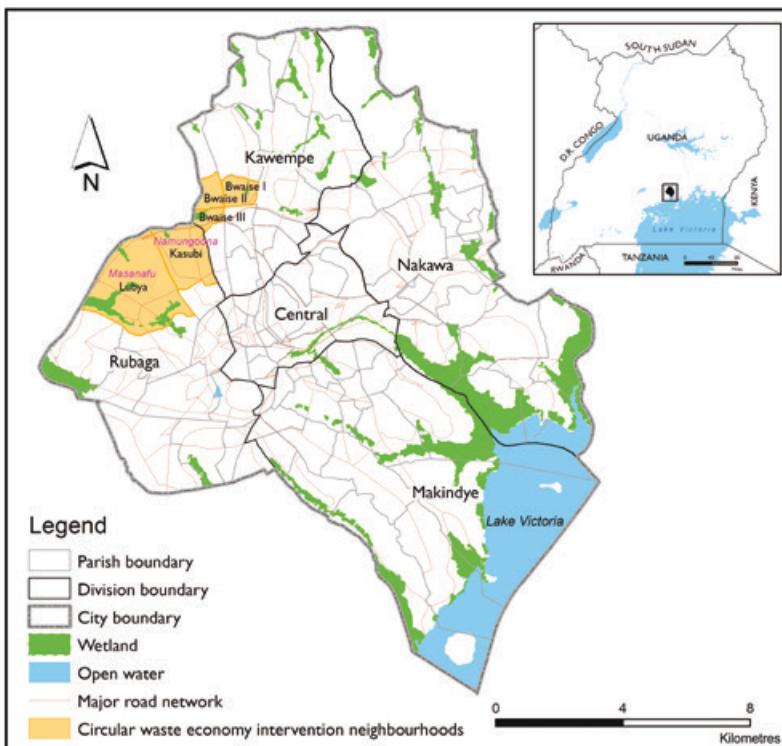


Figure 7.2 Map of Kampala showing circular economy intervention neighbourhoods.

Source: Adapted from Disan Byarugaba's MSc thesis

micro-level experimentations of composting and energy briquettes to supplement charcoal and wood fuel. A few household-based experiments were carried out by progressive individuals who had learned about the briquettes through peer-to-peer exchanges (such as the FOCUS City project) (Geresom Musamali 2006). On a thrift basis, energy briquettes from organic waste offered an alternative energy source produced locally, addressing energy needs and reducing reliance on costly fuel for low-income urban dwellers. As energy briquettes evolved beyond their original role as economical alternatives, an economic perspective developed to create opportunities for community groups engaged in the production of the briquettes. Although uptake and adoption has been gradual, the energy briquettes are increasingly demonstrating that it is a viable income-generating activity, allowing community groups to establish MSMEs within their communities.

Groups started marketing their product to institutions and cooked vendors because these commercial activities require much wood fuel and charcoal. When the community groups partnered with the Urban Action Lab (UAL), more research was undertaken in relation to the ingredients in the briquettes: the ignition, calorific value and burn rate. UAL also conducted GHG tracking in the production process of briquettes. Evidence was then used in marketing where the reduction of emissions associated with the production and use of energy briquettes was significant compared to the use of charcoal, landfilling (methane generation) and wood fuel. The addition of GHG reduction benefits alongside improvements in economic value and neighbourhood environment contributed to the development of a product supported by UAL. The Kasubi Local Development Association (KALOCODE), a community organisation, emerged and developed a product brand of energy briquettes called 'My Cook' (Buyana et al. 2019). A business sector was emerging through entrepreneurship and social innovation leveraging local knowledge, materials, craftsmanship, skills and available resources to set up informal briquette-making enterprises. The enterprise attracted several organisations, both national and international, including but not limited to Amazing Communities Together (ACTogether), community-based organisations which supported the establishment of Lubaga Charcoal Briquettes Cooperative Society Limited (LUCHACOS) and academic institutions like Makerere University. UAL provided training and capacity-building programmes to empower the community groups with the knowledge and skills needed to produce and use briquettes. Thus, the genesis of energy briquette waste economies in informal settlements in Kampala is strongly associated with the energy needs of the communities, the

abundance of biomass waste materials, environmental concerns, livelihood opportunities and supportive initiatives from various stakeholders. As these economies continue to evolve, they contribute to sustainable waste management, reduced environmental impact and socio-economic development in the informal settlements.

Energy and nutrient deposition at landfills

To fully understand the evolution as well as the transformative nature of the emerging waste economies in Kampala, we need to take a step back to briefly describe in detail the SWM that dominates waste management in the city. KCCA currently faces a challenge of accumulating waste that exceeds its technical and financial capacity to collect and dispose of due to the rapidly growing populations, limited infrastructure and resource constraints. Kampala's waste generation rate increased by 48 per cent between 2011 and 2017 from 0.26 to 0.46 kg/capita/day with an annual increase of 0.03 kg/capita/day, based on a 2015 population of 1,507,000, with an annual growth rate of 3.0 per cent (Ugandan Bureau of Statistics 2017; Aryampa et al. 2019). There is a pressing need to find more viable methods to ease the burden of waste in Kampala. KCCA acknowledges that the amount of solid waste generated overwhelms its capacity to collect and dispose, given the enormous collection costs. And efforts have been made to develop a SWM model to address these challenges. In 2012, KCCA took steps to improve the SWM and the possible commercial utilisation for landfill gas through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) project. With its PPP project, KCCA has taken big steps towards city-wide access to improved solid waste sanitation services. Since 2016, solid waste collection rates have improved, rising from 35 per cent to 50 per cent. Despite this progress, half of the daily generated waste remains uncollected and improperly disposed of, leading to indiscriminate disposal by the public.

Thus, potential energy and nutrients are all deposited into landfill that is outdated. The collectors of waste in the city are largely private actors contracted by KCCA; while the landfill is supervised by KCCA, it is also managed by a private company. But gaps exist at all ends of the waste pipe, leading to informal waste collectors and small waste dumping sites across the city. The Kiteezi landfill remains the only landfill that serves the city and other municipalities in the city-region. However, the landfill's capacity is limited, leading to concerns about its sustainability. There are few emerging waste recycling companies for recyclable materials such as plastics, paper and metals. These materials are sorted, processed and

sold to recycling industries or traders for further utilisation. Partnerships between government, non-governmental organisations, private sector entities and community-based organisations are also evolving, all of which signal an undeniable need for coupling SWM with other models of waste management. The Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area's 'Solid Waste Management Strategy' aims to improve the SWM system in the greater Kampala area and has been developed by the Ministry of Kampala Capital City and Metropolitan Affairs, with technical and financial support from the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) and the European Union through the Greening Uganda's Urbanization and Industrialization project. Such partnerships are formed to leverage resources, expertise and knowledge for effective waste management and sustainable solutions. Yet, once again, such initiatives and partnership face the challenge of being conceived, initiated and developed on a large scale that negates the majority of the city, which comprises the informal low-income neighbourhoods.

Recognising the value of urban waste

Through years of collaborative experimentation and co-production of knowledge with multiple actors, UAL has generated evidence demonstrating that urban waste can be transformed into a valuable resource. This is because of the intrinsic value in waste that is two-dimensional: the first being waste transformability to energy briquettes as a value chain and, second, the indirect and significant reduction of GHG emissions when waste is turned into briquettes that otherwise would have decomposed and released methane. The resourcefulness in urban waste has been demonstrated by recycling initiatives that have gained traction in Kampala, involving both formal and informal recycling activities and largely driven by community-level groups. Waste is also a resource when recycled to produce higher-value products or being repurposed for new uses. Some of the recycling activities are illustrated in this section of the chapter.

Socio-technological solutions have experimented with how to recycle waste into energy briquettes that can replace or complement charcoal and wood fuel due to their burning duration. A value chain is emerging around energy briquettes, driven by the significant amount of organic waste that remains uncollected in many neighbourhoods. Waste sorting at a household level is starting to become popular – youth groups collect the sorted waste and charge a fee, then the waste is dried, crushed and carbonised, before being mixed with binder and water, and fabricating briquettes of a suitable size and shape to be easily ignited,

then dried to reduce moisture content. Utilising waste for new products such as energy briquettes promotes a form of circularity in materials use. However, recycling is just one aspect of the broader circular economy. While these are not the focus of this chapter, recycling enterprises have the potential to contribute to a circular economy as they grow from MSMEs. Informal waste pickers and recyclers play a significant role in the closed-loop recycling systems which integrate with centralised systems of provisioning. But there is also an emergence of specialist experts in recycling, product development and business planning, offering training to other actors in similar settlements in cities such as Kampala and integrating these workers into formal waste management systems. This integration involves providing training, improving working conditions and establishing fair market mechanisms for their services.

Despite waste having potential as a resource, there are still many issues that have to be resolved and worked on in order to enable the development and growth of MSME value chains. Urban areas will continue to generate waste due to the highly consumptive nature of the population. In addition, there is a huge youthful population with creativity potential that remains largely unemployed or underemployed. To spur the development of the waste economy, product development knowledge is crucial. Product development would have to be coupled with business knowledge adapted to the level of learning capabilities of the urban population that is largely out of the formal labour market. Knowledge can then be utilised in start-ups. There are several models of enterprise operations such as individual/group production, but also collective marketing. Our Urban KNOW research work has shown that initially this model seems to be useful to nurture growth of the enterprises. Yet, in order to ensure the growth of the MSMEs, support from the public sector is critical – the kind of support that does not aim at formalisation, but creates an environment in which enterprises can thrive and in future may consider formalisation. This gradual and democratisation process has been demonstrated to spur creativity, innovation and flexibility among the waste enterprises.

A problem in one's backyard calls for self-driven solutions

In Kampala's informal settlements, women and youth groups confronted intertwined challenges of household waste management and soaring energy costs. Motivated to address these issues, they pioneered a sustainable solution by transforming organic waste into affordable briquettes, fostering economic resilience, social collaboration and environmental stewardship.

The journey began as individuals observed the health and environmental hazards posed by mounting waste. Recognising the dual potential to mitigate waste and reduce energy expenses, they explored briquette production – compacted blocks made from organic waste and binders as an eco-friendly alternative to charcoal and firewood. Initial experiments were fraught with difficulties, as groups struggled to perfect ingredient ratios and consistency. Yet, through persistence and collective problem solving, they refined their techniques, supported by knowledge exchange platforms and capacity-building initiatives facilitated by the UAL KNOW project, ACTogether Uganda, Living Earth and Lubaga Charcoal Briquettes Cooperative Society Limited (LUCHACOS).

Central to these efforts was the formation of the LUCHACOS cooperative, spearheaded by UAL in collaboration with communities. This cooperative model enabled resource pooling, equipment acquisition and shared marketing strategies, transforming scattered groups into structured enterprises. Training from Makerere University, LUCHACOS and partner organisations equipped members with technical skills and business acumen, fostering sustainable livelihoods while addressing climate change.

The economic and environmental benefits soon became evident. Briquettes burned longer and cleaner than traditional fuels, reducing household costs and indoor air pollution. As demand grew, groups scaled up operations to medium production levels, supplying neighbouring settlements and urban markets. This expansion empowered women, youth and men, generating income and instilling pride and agency. The groups evolved into hubs of innovation, where members freely exchanged ideas, strengthening community bonds.

Their success catalysed a broader movement, inspiring other communities to adopt similar models. By turning waste into wealth, these grassroots initiatives are reshaping Kampala's waste management practices and energy consumption patterns. Through self-determination, collaboration and institutional support, they exemplify how localised action can drive city-wide transformation – creating cleaner, greener, and economically vibrant futures for informal settlements.

The groups started producing briquettes and selling them to local households, businesses and institutions. The success of the group depended largely on the quality of the briquettes, their pricing, and the effectiveness of their marketing and distribution strategies, as well as being influenced by internal group dynamics and management. This included clear decision-making processes, fair distribution of benefits

and effective conflict resolution mechanisms. Group dynamics were influenced by interest, gender and power, coupled with individual personalities and motivations. Some groups chose to expand by including men in their groups and their operations by new types of briquettes like the honeycomb, and branching out into related activities like the collection of plastics. The groups were engaged in monitoring and evaluation activities to assess their performance, identify areas for improvement and plan for the future. This was after the training provided to the groups on book-keeping and monitoring by the KNOW project. This involved tracking sales and profits, conducting customer surveys or seeking feedback from community members. In terms of dynamics, the groups have varying levels of participation and inclusiveness.

As groups formed, the need for capitalisation of businesses became clear. External financial and technical support was sought on behalf of the communities by UAL, since UAL could not capitalise the businesses on its own. With successful grant awards from the FOCUS Cities and Augmenting Innovative Waste Economies for Livelihood Improvement in Kampala City (AWELIS) projects, a revolving fund was established by LUCHACOS that provided resources to expand the thrift to micro-enterprises through product development. The seed grant to LUCHACOS aided the market readiness study, which was also coupled with technical experimentation on briquette ignition tests, calorific value determination, fabrication machines, moulds, motorised, manual and electricity-driven fabricators, and seasoning. Production gradually started to move from a micro-scale to a meso-scale when marketing drives opened up potential markets which had high product requirements. Groups then started to discuss how to produce individually with all associated needs of quality control, size and type in order to collectively market the product.

Self-provisioning through innovation for MSMEs for neighbourhood enhancement

As discussed earlier, the MSMEs dealing with waste are mainly led by women and female youths. As part of their product innovation, the technologies of production and material mobilisation have evolved in tandem with the growth of the enterprise, enhancing both efficiency and output. LUCHACOS, a community cooperative established to drive the waste-to-feed and waste-to-energy industry in one of the neighbourhoods of Kampala, is one of the many community initiatives

at the helm of innovation. The first of the innovations that emerged with the support and encouragement of UAL was the formation of business groups. Many established groups whose members they had previously collaborated with. Some of the groups were a collective of members who were residential neighbours. A total of 11 groups were initiated as part of the FOCUS City research project and by the time we implemented the Urban KNOW research project, seven were functional. Out of the seven, four groups were women-led and the majority of participants were women. Initially the groups worked as partners in the research projects and over time agreed to form a cooperative association, hence the emergence of LUCHACOS. The cooperative was seeded with a revolving fund from one of the research projects that supported product development and investments in the production equipment and infrastructure for the groups. The groups also received trainings on product development, business plan development, basic book-keeping, production of briquettes and marketing skills. To date, the cooperative is still functional and providing low-interest loans to the groups to grow their enterprises.

The second innovation involves how the groups organised raw material sorting, collection and pre-processing. Groups entered into agreements with households close to their operational spaces to sort the organic waste for ease of collection. Groups provided coded bags for this purpose. Peelings from food including bananas, cassava, potatoes and any green waste were sorted from food leftovers. Plastic, metal and paper waste from households as well as businesses were also sorted at the source point as much as possible. Despite efforts to promote waste sorting practices at source, not all businesses and households adopted or engaged with the initiative. Thus, there remained lots of waste that was unsorted in the neighbourhood. The sorting became an innovation and more households started doing it when they learnt that energy briquette enterprises were interested in the material. Alongside the sorting, an innovation emerged of collection where groups invested in push carts and some employed youths to collect the materials from households, especially as more households started sorting and placing the material at places in the neighbourhood that could easily be accessed by the enterprise workers. Food vending markets were also tapped by the groups where even much organised sorting and collection was already happening, but were targeted at medium enterprises that transport the material to farms as direct feed for livestock. Yet within the neighbourhoods, collection points placed strategically along alleys emerged within the settlements.

The production processing ‘plants’ of briquettes are largely the courtyards of one member of the group. None of the groups invested in separate land or space for production. The household courtyards are still the main production spaces for many groups. It is also these courtyards where most of the trainings were conducted, thus working within the neighbourhoods rather than having training activities outside the neighbourhood. This co-production process is explained in detail in [Chapter 2](#) of this book including the methods, dynamics and peer-to-peer learning among the group members. Briquette fabrication machines were purchased by the groups with the loan from LUCHACOS. Initially manual machines were bought, but as some groups grew, they invested in semi-automated machines due to a need to increase the production of briquettes. Seasoning to reduce the moisture content of the fabricated briquettes also created a necessity for innovation with regard to solar powered dryers rather than relying on natural sunlight. This is because during the rainy season, there were fewer hours of sunshine, especially in April–May, yet briquettes were in demand from food vending businesses. UAL linked up with another organisation called LOGEL, which is an engineering membership organisation that had prototypes of solar dryers. Groups were trained by LOGEL and some purchased the solar dryers. LUCHACOS was also invited by the SNV, a Dutch embassy development programme, to one of the annual exhibitions, and after that exhibition, LUCHACOS received solar dryers from the embassy to support production during the rainy season.

LUCHACOS designed a market-readiness study by sampling businesses and households from two neighbourhoods: one from a low-income and another from a high-income neighbourhood. The aim of this study was to establish possible uptake and challenges in using energy briquettes. The study, as will be detailed below, showed that few households used briquettes, despite having knowledge about their existence on the market. Many households were used to the common fuel sources of charcoal and wood fuel. From this study, LUCHACOS developed an innovative strategy for the promotion and marketing of the briquettes. The approach was to mainly target food vending businesses, schools and institutions to enable the growth of the enterprises, while continuing to also sell to households, starting with neighbours. LUCHACOS also collaborated with the Department of Engineering at Makerere University to test the calorific value of the energy briquettes with different ingredients. Meanwhile, UAL monitored the production, burn rate and GHG emissions. As shown in [Figure 7.3](#), the calorific value over a 10-minute interval for briquettes increases, while that of charcoal decreases

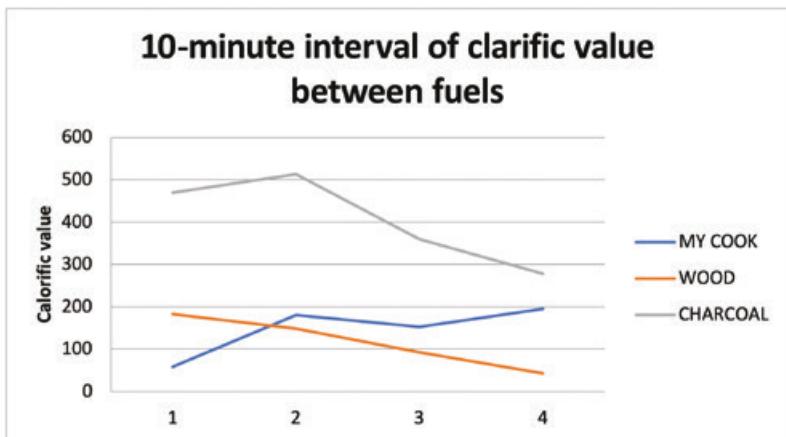


Figure 7.3 Calorific values comparison of briquette, wood and charcoal

Source: Adapted from Disan Byarugaba's MSc thesis

and that of wood fuel is almost constant. An innovative approach to marketing emerged, one of individual group production with collective marketing. This was after large orders started to be placed and no individual group could produce one ton of briquettes a week. Collective marketing also meant that within LUCHACOS, groups had to agree on the types of briquettes, the ingredients (especially the binder) and the carbonisation process if a large market would be sustained given the individual production process. Standards were developed for various briquette types such as honeycomb, single hollow and rounded briquettes. These types differ in terms of ignition time and burn rate, characteristics influenced by their production methods and intended usage. The effort of this marketing collectively highlights the potential of self-provisioning to inspire innovative and sustainable solutions for managing waste utilities in underserved urban areas.

LUCHACOS as a cooperative of waste enterprises is an example of how MSMEs can be vehicles of innovation with multiple benefits: reducing waste, reducing GHG emissions, providing employment and economic opportunities, nurturing community-level coalitions and tapping into knowledge through co-production with partners, including higher education institutions like Makerere University. These socio-technological innovations in solid waste management are improving living conditions, empowering communities and contributing to the democratisation of urban utilities and delivery of services. Where the public and formal provisioning system has gaps, self-provisioning has

demonstrated how the gaps can be filled and at the same time allow value chains to develop, technologies to be tested and coalitions for transformation to emerge.

Shifting agency in urban utilities provision

Briquette making has also emerged as an innovative social solution to address the solid waste management utility gap to close the deficit and due to the high cost of cooking energy. Community groups have embraced briquette making as an alternative and sustainable energy and waste management solution in Kampala's informal settlements to close the solid waste management utility gap and deficit. Beyond the waste business, there is also an important dynamic of 'agency', which in this chapter we demonstrate as shifting in the context of urban waste utilities. Community groups actively collect organic waste materials, such as agricultural residues, paper waste and charcoal dust, from within the informal settlements. These waste materials are often readily available and abundant in these areas. The collected waste materials undergo segregation and preparation processes. They are sorted to remove non-combustible materials and contaminants. Depending on the composition of the waste, additional steps such as drying or shredding may be employed to prepare the waste materials for briquette production. The prepared waste materials are then transformed into briquettes. The waste materials are mixed with a binder, typically a starch-based adhesive, to hold the briquettes together. The mixture is then compacted using manual or mechanised presses to form briquette shapes. The community groups have established small and medium-scale briquette production businesses, providing employment opportunities and a source of income. These businesses contribute to the local economy, while addressing the solid waste management challenges. By utilising the briquettes, community group members reduce their dependence on common fuel sources like firewood and charcoal, which contribute to deforestation and environmental degradation, and save costs on cooking energy. The adoption of briquette making as an innovative social solution in Kampala's informal settlements not only addresses the solid waste management utility gap but also contributes to improved environmental conditions, community empowerment and economic opportunities. Community groups and businesses are promoting sustainable waste management practices and enhancing the overall well-being of the communities, something that the formal processes have

grappled with and failed. However, these groups still require support to scale up the self-provisioning.

Beyond thrift, energy briquettes as a business

Briquette enterprises have enormous potential to respond not only to the SDGs but also the ‘Uganda Vision 2040’, which highlights the need to ‘strengthen the fundamentals of the economy to harness the abundant opportunities around the country’. MSMEs from Kampala’s informal settlements are demonstrating how energy briquettes can be made relatively quickly and cheaply for the manufacturer and the consumer. They can be adapted and applied in various settings, making them an appropriate and sustainable fuel alternative. In the process, the MSMEs are providing business opportunities to increase urban productivity in many ways. For example, in communities where briquette making takes place, these enterprises help to reduce the amount of localised solid waste, reduce the costs of energy for households and provide alternative sources of income, especially for impoverished families. Most people contracted by these organisations are women, who earn nearly three times as much compared to individual waste pickers (Oates et al. 2019). Such community briquette enterprises operate alongside more nimble individual businesses in and around Kampala. Thus, businesses are providing a source of income and employment opportunities for the residents of informal settlements. Energy briquette production transcends being merely a thrifty activity; it serves as a sustainable initiative that enables individuals and groups to generate income by producing and selling briquettes within their communities or to nearby markets. MSMEs have been involved in various capacity-enhancement initiatives targeting production of briquettes for groups and individuals. The groups have received practical training and capacity building in areas such as product development, business planning, general business journaling, accounting, marketing and product promotion. This has been of benefit to individuals and groups that are now marketing their own training services to other interested groups. Sharpening production techniques, entrepreneurship and business management skills, and contributing to their overall personal and professional development are some of the indicators of how the waste economies are transcending thrift in Kampala. Overall, energy briquettes offer a viable and sustainable energy solution for informal settlements in Kampala, addressing multiple challenges such as energy

access, waste management, economic empowerment and environmental conservation.

Biomass material flows into and out of urban systems

Briquette making consists of practices to manage organic waste and turn it into useful products such as energy briquettes. At the current micro-level of operation, these practices recover less than 5 per cent of the organic waste generated in the city (Sseviiri et al., 2020). As Kampala city grows, the flow of biomass materials through it increases through human socio-economic activities of transforming and transferring food, goods, energy and services. In Kampala's informal settlements, the flow of biomass material into and out of urban systems follows a distinct pattern shaped by the area's unique characteristics, including the types of inputs, processes and outputs involved. As illustrated in [Figure 7.4](#), a comprehensive mapping is given of how materials flow in informal settlements and out of the settlements. Collected waste ends up at the landfill for disposal. Despite efforts to divert organic waste from landfills, some biomass material may still end up in landfill sites. Proper landfill management practices are necessary to minimise the environmental impact, such as capturing methane emissions, but upstream waste management alternatives such as recovery for briquettes and/or green waste for compost and transfer back to farming regions will be crucial in changing the material flows in and out of the city. For example, some food waste may be recycled into animal feed or transported back to rural areas. It is important to note that the biomass material flow in informal settlements is often characterised by innovative sorting and collection methods, despite the limited infrastructure and resource constraints. Nevertheless, these communities often display resourcefulness and innovative ways of managing waste within their means. Supporting waste management systems in informal settlements by providing infrastructure and supporting community-led initiatives would help to improve biomass material flow and waste management practices in Kampala's informal settlements, leading to better environmental outcomes and public health.

Economics of energy briquette production

The recycling enterprises have evolved from thrifting by households (mainly by women) into businesses. This evident in the neighbourhoods where the solid waste stream recycled has increased, with more

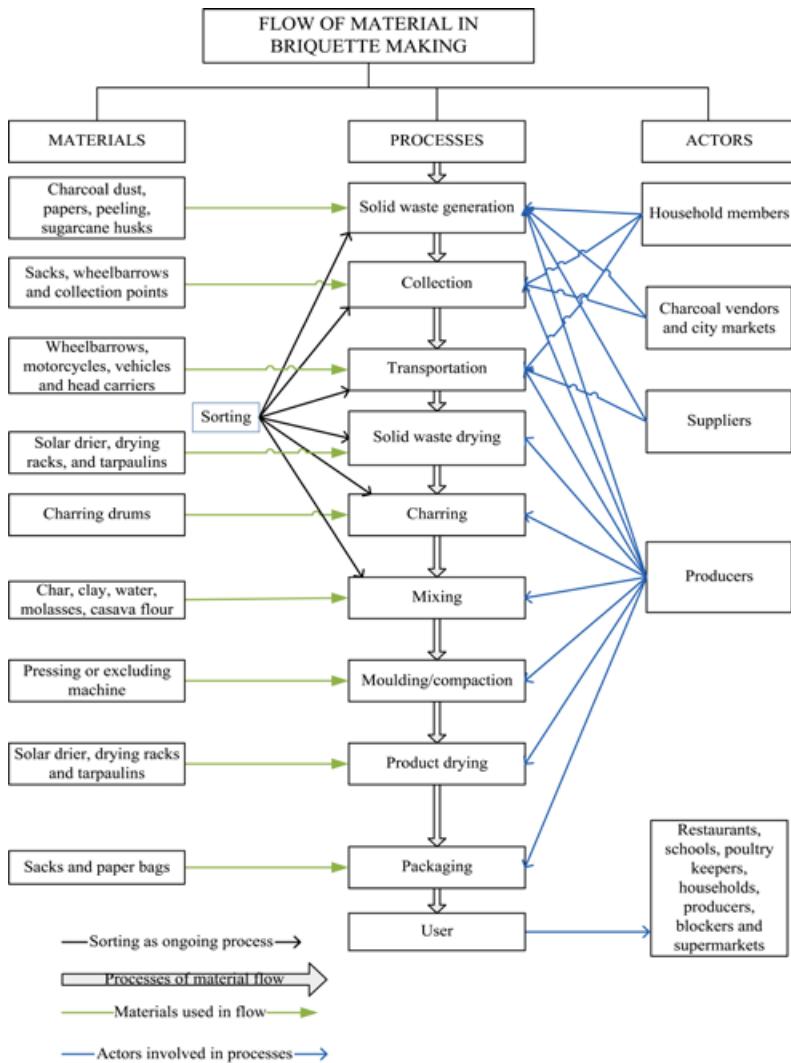


Figure 7.4 How materials flow in and out of informal settlements.

Source: Adapted from Disan Byarugaba's MSc thesis

business groups forming. The number of employees in these groups is also growing, and the concurrent rise in annual turnover is enabling enterprises to scale their operations effectively. The energy briquette-making groups are now developing from micro to small enterprises, but are showing potential to scale up to medium enterprises. This is mainly because of the previously discussed readiness studies that showed the potential for uptake of energy briquettes by many users. The potential for

widespread adoption of briquettes is driven by their economic value and the environmental benefits of mitigating GHG emissions. By converting organic waste which would otherwise decompose and release methane into a usable fuel source, this innovation addresses both sustainable energy needs and climate action goals. GHG emission potential is one of the marketing tools used by the businesses and this comes after co-evaluating the GHG emissions reduction potential with production businesses. The enterprises have a median number of five employees and an average income turnover of UGX 10,000,000 (US\$2,778), despite the majority operating at a small scale.

A further economic evaluation of the waste economy shows that the benefit-cost ratio is high for most of the micro-enterprises, which implies that they can break even and be sustained as businesses, but there is also still room to grow because the source materials for briquettes are still plentiful at the neighbourhood level. As shown in [Table 7.1](#), eight out of the nine energy briquette groups assessed have a benefit-cost ratio that is higher than 1. One of the groups has a benefit-cost ratio of 2.92, which indicates that the business is profitable, but that the sector is still young and growing. The benefit-cost ratio and NVP values are also calculated in UGX currency and two groups are more profitable than the others. Profit margins are mainly affected by two factors. The first is that some groups might have high levels of investment in capital assets that are not backed up by massive production. On the other hand, profit margins are also affected by the type of energy briquettes produced, which sell for different prices. Yet, overall, what this economic analysis shows is that the potential to grow is rooted in the increasing uptake by users of briquettes. Marketing in educational institutions, cooked food vendors and markets is steadily increasing. All this illustrates a waste economy in transition – an economy that is also recentring individual and group agency that is filling the gap created by inadequate municipal waste collection and management services, thus driving the self-provisioning in the waste sector in many neighbourhoods.

Waste MSMEs and self-provisioning: a pathway for urban transformation

In the last ten years, the trials and experiments of the energy briquettes sector have started a process of economic integration of the low-income dwellers into the urban economy. There is evidence of an emerging waste commercial sector, but to augment this sector, an evolution of MSMEs

Table 7.1 Economic benefits to assessed production groups

Name of enterprise	Total cost (UGX)	Total benefit (UGX)	B-C (UGX)	BCR (UGX)	TPVB (UGX)	TPVC (UGX)	PVBCR (UGX)	NPV (UGX)
Bow	44,855,004	50,750,000	5,894,996	1.13	28,633,162.4	33,610,082.5	0.85	4,976,920
Yeso	29,689,264	43,740,000	14,050,736	1.47	24,835,906.7	21,979,269.4	1.13	2,856,637.3
Kalocode	30,588,604	22,230,000	-8,358,604	0.72	12,254,856.4	26,480,012	0.46	14,225,155.7
Masupa	35,652,100	58,020,000	22,367,900	1.62	33,028,221.1	28,111,956.7	1.17	4,916,264.5
Living Fire	47,563,017	88,320,000	40,756,983	1.86	50,148,771.9	30,538,971	1.64	19,609,800.8
Seaco	36,471,796	37,920,000	1,448,204	1.04	21,531,266.2	27,631,389.5	0.78	6,100,123.3
Nbmt	10,122,956	29,520,000	19,397,044	2.92	16,761,681.9	6,619,274.2	2.53	10,142,407.7
Jude Kabanda	44,065,000	78,360,000	34,295,000	1.78	44,493,407.6	33,484,952.1	1.33	11,008,455.5
Average	34,875,967	51,107,500	16,231,532	1.57	28,960,909.3	26,056,988.4	1.24	9,229,470.6

Note: B-C: benefit-cost; BCR: benefit-cost ratio; TPVB: total present value benefit; TPVC: total present value cost; PVBCR: present value of benefit-cost ratio; NPV: net present value; UGX: Uganda shillings

has become necessary. As has been illustrated in this chapter, the operational scale of the enterprises varies from micro, small and medium levels of production. This pathway has two direct urban transformational outcomes. The first is the shift in agency around urban utilities. Although this chapter has mainly focused on solid waste, other examples in sanitation and water urban sectors have also demonstrated a shift in agency. The lessons from this shift in agency speak to the broader discussions on the democratisation of urban spaces and urban markets to strengthen the plurality of actors and systems in the cities of the Global South. The second direct outcome of the MSMEs that is transformational is the increasing appreciation, valuation or recognition of the multiple socio-technological solutions to urban utilities and services. Micro- to meso-scale urban infrastructure for solid waste is being driven by these MSMEs, and these complement the large-scale system of waste management. The lesson from this outcome is that once again, cities of the Global South are not just displaying uniquely multiple systems of technologies, but the innovations are also demonstrating a different trajectory of urban development that is potentially inclusive, sustainable and resilient. This is because the MSMEs are expanding the coverage of utilities, accessibility where the utilities are most needed and affordability to many who would otherwise have left the waste in the open, causing more problems such as flooding and health challenges.

Thus, the potential of MSMEs in terms of the integration of low-income dwellers into the urban economy can also be linked to the potential of integrating urban sector systems of waste management and other forms of production such as urban and peri-urban agriculture and forestry. Waste enterprises have created hybrid systems that work alongside the municipal waste management systems with a complementary dimension. The hybrid waste systems are transformational in various ways. First, municipal budgets for waste management can be reduced. Second, the use of waste for production (for example, energy briquettes, livestock feed and compost) has considerable potential to reduce GHG emissions because an estimated three-quarters of the waste would never make it to landfill if uptake for production is at full scale, thereby reducing methane emissions. Third, the enterprises are growing both in number and size of operation, thus providing opportunities of employability for many, including women and youths. The transformational nature of the hybrid waste system is also a demonstration of how agency is shifting, increasing the number of actors involved in urban services, but also kickstarting a democratisation process of the largely controlled urban sectors due the economic value involved.

In conclusion, we observe that the notion of agency in practical terms is extending the frontiers by blurring the agent–principal relationships. Whereas many studies and advocacy campaigns in urban space have focused on what government and municipalities should do, a quiet transformation is happening through MSMEs where the individuals and communities are exercising their agency in the urban utilities area that is dominated by municipal authorities and private contractors. This is transformative in nature, in that it provides alternative pathways through which urban development can be pursued. Thus, it is also important to note that this sector will benefit from targeted support in terms of recognition, valuation and protection from direct formalisation to allow the economy to grow and to integrate as many low-income people as possible into the urban economy. We postulate that whether alternative waste economies are supported or not by the state, the role of MSMEs will continue to be evident and will perhaps grow due to the sheer magnitude of the need coupled with the availability of materials and resources.

This chapter has highlighted the potential of self-provisioning and waste economies in Kampala, as well as their impact on urban development, environmental sustainability and economic empowerment. It has emphasised that communities are actively involved in driving change in their communities. The topics of self-provisioning, innovative waste economies and community-based organisation demonstrate the significance of local knowledge and innovations in addressing urban challenges at the grassroots level. Self-provision aligns with the book's themes of co-production and community-led initiatives, and the importance of local knowledge and community-led approaches in terms of building resilience and increasing inclusion in urban economies. The key lessons from this chapter are leveraging community knowledge and community involvement for inclusion, waste is a resource, and local contexts are key in identifying community needs.

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Co-creation of the Nakhon Sawan Community Development Network in Thailand

Supreeya Wungpatcharapon and members of the Community Architects Network, Nakhon Sawan Community Development Network, Thanatip Dumrongpiriyakul and Khakhanang Jonganurak

Introduction

Nakhon Sawan, located in central Thailand, was once an important transportation node and commercial hub that attracted many migrant workers during its urbanisation. However, the city shares similarities with other Thai cities in that there has been an unequal distribution of resources, particularly land, which has led to a housing shortage and the growth of informal settlements to house low-income residents. In the early 1990s, a grassroots women's organisation expanded its functions and established the Nakhon Sawan Community Development Network (NSCDN), an organisation that has subsequently led the upgrading of many of the city's slums. This community network has completed multiple housing projects as part of the government's Baan Mankong initiative, providing land, homes and services to 60 per cent of the city's impoverished. With the assistance of state and non-state allies, the communities have increased their capability by surveying, mapping and developing settlement plans and designs. Their work has secured them increased recognition from local and national authorities, and inclusion in the city development plans, leading to more equal outcomes for Nakhon Sawan.

The NSCDN is considered one of the best practices in Thailand for successfully negotiating the long-term rental of state-owned land for city-wide Baan Mankong projects. Currently, a total of 30 out of 50

urban neighbourhoods within the Nakhon Sawan municipality have been transformed. The Nakhon Sawan community-led action towards urban equality is thus deserving of a thorough investigation. This chapter presents the development of the NSCDN through three decades of its operation, with an analysis of the collaborative efforts involved in its evolution. The process of this documentation involved a focus group consisting of 26 individuals from the network, the Knowledge in Action Towards Urban Equality (KNOW) research team and Community Organisations Development Institute (CODI) employees. Furthermore, it should be noted that the network's historical mapping was collaboratively developed in conjunction with the Community Act Network (CAN), a network of multi-disciplinary community actors, including community architects, based in Thailand. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides an introductory overview of Nakhon Sawan, focusing on its urban setting and its relationship to the issue of urban inequality. The second section explores the network's evolution, emphasising noteworthy co-production qualities. The final section examines the future prospects of the network while also addressing its potential challenges.

Contextualising urban inequality in Nakhon Sawan

Nakhon Sawan is a province in central Thailand, the name of which means 'heavenly city' in Thai. It is located between the North and the Central Regions, and, as such, it is regarded as the doorway to the North and the main transportation hub in the lower North. Nakhon Sawan, also known as Pak Nam Pho, is where the Rivers Ping, Wang, Yom and Nan from the North converge and form the Chao Phraya River, the most important waterway in central Thailand. Due to its advantageous geographical location, Nakhon Sawan has gained recognition as a prominent hub for commerce throughout Thai history. This distinction is attributed to its convenient accessibility by many transportation modes, encompassing waterways, road networks and railway systems. Nakhon Sawan served as a prominent hub for rice and teak trading in the past. Nonetheless, its significance as a crucial node diminished due to many factors. First, the inauguration of the Northern Railway in 1922 played a pivotal role in this decline. Subsequently, the economic crisis preceding the 1932 revolution further contributed to the diminishing relevance of water transportation. Finally, the construction of the Dechatiwong Bridge and the Phahonyothin Highway in 1950 served as additional catalysts for reducing the significance of Nakhon Sawan.

The area of Nakhon Sawan municipality covers 27.87 square kilometres (10.76 square miles). Its population is approximately 85,931, with a density of 3,083.28 people per km². The urbanisation rate of the Nakhon Sawan municipality is approximately 22.8 per cent, while 49.2 per cent of Thailand's total population lived in urban areas and cities in 2017. It is estimated that the population is increasing by 2.76 per cent per year in the municipality. Much of that growth is attributed to migrants from rural and neighbouring provinces who arrived in Nakhon Sawan in search of jobs. Without adequate measures to absorb these populations, the city has been facing a lack of adequate housing and facilities for those labourers.

Moreover, the patterns of land distribution make up an extreme manifestation of wealth inequality in Thailand. According to extensive research by Duangmanee Laovakul (2016) on the distribution of land across the country, approximately 15.9 million people owned 14.3 million hectares of legally titled land in 2012. The top 10 per cent of land-owners possess more than 60 per cent of all land, while the bottom 10 per cent hold only 0.07 per cent. The Gini index for the distribution of all titled land across the nation in the same year was 0.886 per cent. The poor in Thailand also have restricted access to public healthcare, free education and basic services due to their lack of formal titles and their inability to secure well-paid jobs. In addition, they often lack access to finance and credit to improve their livelihoods and housing. Instead, they depend on informal loans with high interest rates, resulting in higher debts.

In terms of housing supply, a report on 20-year housing strategy and policy for Thailand (2017–36) by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (2016) noted that there exists a substantial need for affordable housing options priced below one million baht, targeting low-income people. This demand covers around 200,000 housing units across the nation. Furthermore, there were an estimated 2.76 million low-income households lacking access to homeownership. The annual housing demand exceeds the housing supply provided by the market. The majority of private companies have constructed residential properties that exceed the price threshold of one million baht. Consequently, it is of crucial significance for Thailand to give priority attention and support to individuals with low incomes who are unable to buy housing within the market.

The National Housing Authority (NHA) and the CODI have been responsible for the supply of housing for low-income households under pro-poor housing programmes in Thailand. However, these institutions operate in a distinct manner. Baan Ur-Arthorn Housing (meaning home

with care) was a housing initiative to build and fund 600,000 units of formal housing for the poor, whereas Baan Mankong has been a nationwide slum improvement programme that finances the poor to upgrade their own home by themselves. The first initiative was inactive because investments in Baan Eua-Arthorn were not profitable. The NHA's approach of providing walk-up apartments for slum dwellers during the past three decades has proven to be unsuccessful, as criticised by Pornchokchai (2012), since many slum dwellers who were allocated an apartment unit sold or rented their right to remain and moved back to the slums. The lower-income groups that were encouraged to purchase a unit in this Baan Eua-Arthorn programme may not have had sufficient income to cover the monthly payments; therefore, they sold or leased the property. Pornchokchai also highlighted the previously anticipated figure of 340,000 unoccupied dwelling units.

On the other hand, Baan Mankong (meaning 'secure housing') is a nationwide slum upgrading programme that has been operated since 2003 by CODI to support a community-driven development process in both urban and rural areas. The programme employs participation as a tool and empowers local people as the leading subjects of change. In this scheme, the government subsidises infrastructure and gives housing loans to community cooperatives, while the people use their savings as collateral to access loans collectively. Flexible finance is provided, allowing community organisations and local partners to plan, implement and determine their priorities according to each community's needs (Boonyabancha 2005).

In the case of the Nakhon Sawan municipality, according to the NHA's survey from 1999, it was estimated that 36.47 per cent of the population was considered poor. In addition, out of the city's total housing stock, 74 per cent was formal and 26 per cent was informal (NHA 1999). These informal settlements were scattered in the municipality, occupying unused public land, the riverfront and the hills without basic facilities. Meanwhile, publicly owned land in the inner city was left empty without a proper development plan. A city-wide slum community survey conducted in 2007–8 identified more than 50 slum communities in the urban area of Nakhon Sawan, as depicted in Figure 8.1. Further, the survey showed that approximately 80 per cent of the land in the municipality is owned by the government or public agencies, such as the Treasury Department, the Forestry Department, the Marine Department or the State Railway of Thailand. A lack of adequate housing and secure land tenure is not the only challenge Nakhon Sawan is facing. Natural disasters are another major threat, as the city is located in a flood-prone

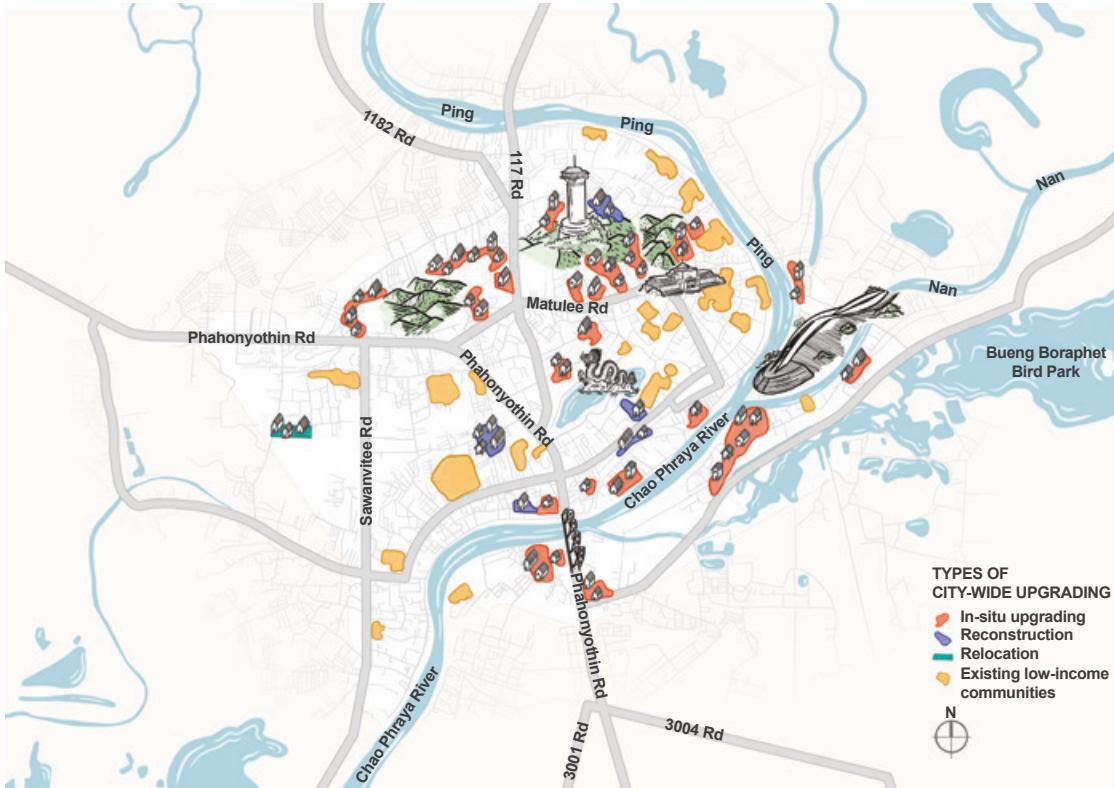


Figure 8.1 A map showing types of city-wide upgrading and existing low-income communities in the Nakhon Sawan municipality area.

Source: Illustrators: Thanatip Dumrongpiriyakul and Khakhanang Jonganurak

area and is surrounded by hills, meaning that floods are an annual occurrence. Therefore, the environmental issue is another concern, as Nakhon Sawan is the origin of the Chao Phraya River, the most important river in central Thailand.

In this very complex and uneven environment, the impoverished residents of Nakhon Sawan have been organising themselves to develop community-led solutions to their problems and counter systemic injustices. As a result, the NSCDN has been in operation since 1995. For nearly three decades, the NSCDN has been self-organised and collectively driven to address inequality. This has involved the redistribution of land and the co-production of affordable housing through the Baan Mankong programme. Community organisations and their networks are the key actors that control funding and management. Upgrading can take many forms, from minor improvements to reconstructing houses or relocation to nearby lands. The solution is based on the mutual agreement of everyone involved. Once the communities successfully negotiate their tenure arrangements, the land and the newly constructed houses are collectively owned and repaid over at least 15 years, according to the terms of the loans granted by CODI. A common rule is that if anyone wants to sell their house, they must sell it to the community cooperative, not to outsiders.

From 2006 to 2018, a total of 30 out of 50 low-income communities within the Nakhon Sawan municipality have been upgraded with secure land tenure, as shown in [Table 8.1](#). There are three main types of Baan Mankong housing programmes carried out on public land and owned mostly by the Treasury Department and local temples: 24 on-site improvement schemes, five reconstruction schemes and one relocation scheme. The decision on how to implement each project depends on the specific context and mutual agreement of each community, with support from the city network. The network further self-organises collective funds and community welfare for the urban poor. The Home & Land Secure Fund is designed to protect households faced with natural disasters or economic crises. The network has continually established partnerships with local and national networks, including the public sector and civil society, such as the NHA and Thai Health Promotion Foundation, to expand development projects into other dimensions and expand the Baan Mankong programme to other cities in the Nakhon Sawan province.

At present, housing insecurity is resolved in six out of 15 districts of the Nakhon Sawan province as a result of the 42 Baan Mankong projects that have been implemented. The case of Nakhon Sawan and

Table 8.1 Upgraded slum communities through Baan Mankong in Nakhon Sawan, 2006–18

No.	Community	Landowner	Total households	Squat	Land lease	House rental	Baan Mankong types of upgrading	Year	Note
1	Khao Rong Krua	Treasury	156	64	-	-	In-situ upgrading	2006	
2	Himmapan	Treasury	122	29	10	-	In-situ upgrading	2006	
3	Wat Khao Jom Kiri	Temple	246	-	48	-	In-situ upgrading	2006	
4	Wat Phrom	Treasury	289	20	114	12	On-site reconstruction	2006	
5	Jam Long Wit	Treasury	81		81		On-site reconstruction	2006	FIRE
6	Nha Rong Kluea	Treasury	236	138	-	-	In-situ upgrading	2006	
7	Nawamin	Treasury	244	96	11	-	In-situ upgrading	2006	
8	Koh Yom	Claim certification	189	-	-	-	In-situ upgrading	2007	
9	Koh Yuan	Claim certification	124	-	-	-	In-situ upgrading	2007	
10	Bang Prong	Claim certification	197	-	-	-	In-situ upgrading	2007	
11	Krog Phama	Treasury	186	34	86	-	In-situ upgrading	2007	
12	Wiman Loi	Treasury	157	59	80	20	In-situ upgrading	2014	
13	Khao Kob	Treasury	194	42	150	-	In-situ upgrading	2014	
14	Kang Rongrean Panitchayakarn Wiritalai Nakhon Sawan	Treasury	168	4	103	4	In-situ upgrading	2015	

(continued)

Table 8.1 (Cont.)

No.	Community	Landowner	Total households	Squat	Land lease	House rental	Baan Mankong types of upgrading	Year	Note
15	Pa Mai	Treasury	210	19	80	4	In-situ upgrading	2015	
16	Sa Watdee Pattana	Temple	290	3	125	7	In-situ upgrading	2015	
17	Decha Pattana	Claim certification	128	0	95	4	In-situ upgrading	2015	
18	Wat Poot	Treasury	233	12	169	8	In-situ upgrading	2015	
19	Khao Nok Kra-Ten	Treasury	420	6	127	10	In-situ upgrading	2015	
20	Ronnachai	Treasury	56	56	-	-	On-site reconstruction	2016	
21	Sawan Meung Mai	Treasury	419				Relocation	2016	Phase 1 = 102
22	Sathani Rotfai	Railway	215	-	145	-	In-situ upgrading	2017	
23	Pra Bang Mongkon	Temple	324	126	-	4	In-situ upgrading	2017	
24	Pracha Noo Kro	Treasury	232	11	92	-	In-situ upgrading	2017	
25	Luang Phoo Taw	Temple	278	-	169	12	In-situ upgrading	2017	
26	Chao Mae Sri Chan	Treasury	392	85	201	-	In-situ upgrading	2018	
27	Lang Au Tan Jit	Public	137	123	-	-	In-situ upgrading	2018	
28	Tewada Srang	Temple	190	-	133	-	In-situ upgrading	2018	
29	Bank Rak Gan Jing	Treasury	284	72	54	-	On-site reconstruction	2018	
30	Nha Wat Nakhon Sawan	Treasury	42	-	43	-	Reconstruction	2018	

Source: NSCDN

the demonstrable capacity of the network to manage their financial resources collectively set an example for other poor communities. As a result, residents have a greater sense of agency in negotiating with land-owners and the city government on crucial urban planning issues such as land acquisition, infrastructure, employment and regulations. The NSCDN is considered a showcase of a successful approach to negotiating the long-term rental of state-owned lands for the Baan Mankong projects city-wide, developing different forms of housing (in-situ upgrading, reconstruction and relocation), and self-organising collective funds and community welfare. The wealth of knowledge derived from this community-driven initiative, together with the network's collective experiences in tackling inequality and fostering an inclusive city, is therefore a very promising topic for investigation and documentation.

The network of community-led development in Nakhon Sawan

Reflections on the development of the community network and the progress of Baan Mankong were thus facilitated through focus group discussions with 26 network members and CODI staff. Members from different generations narrated the story of the NSCDN with old images, and the recording was transcribed. Furthermore, a collaborative workshop was organised with the Community Architects Network Thailand to conduct a comprehensive historical mapping of the network. The result of this process is the creation of the timeline displayed in [Figure 8.2](#), which clearly emphasises the narrative and achievements of the NSCDN. The network's evolution can be separated into three distinct phases: its creation between 1992 and 2000; its revitalisation between 2001 and 2008; and its expansion beginning in 2009. Each phase has emphasised three crucial co-production characteristics that have strengthened this network.

Phase 1: Beginning of the network: co-production on trust

Since its establishment in 1992, a women's group in Nakhon Sawan has received support from the municipality. This group is part of a nationwide programme initiated by the Community Development Department, Ministry of Interior, which aims to enhance women's participation in village development and planning. Initially, the group focused on connecting and organising informal settlements within Nakhon Sawan

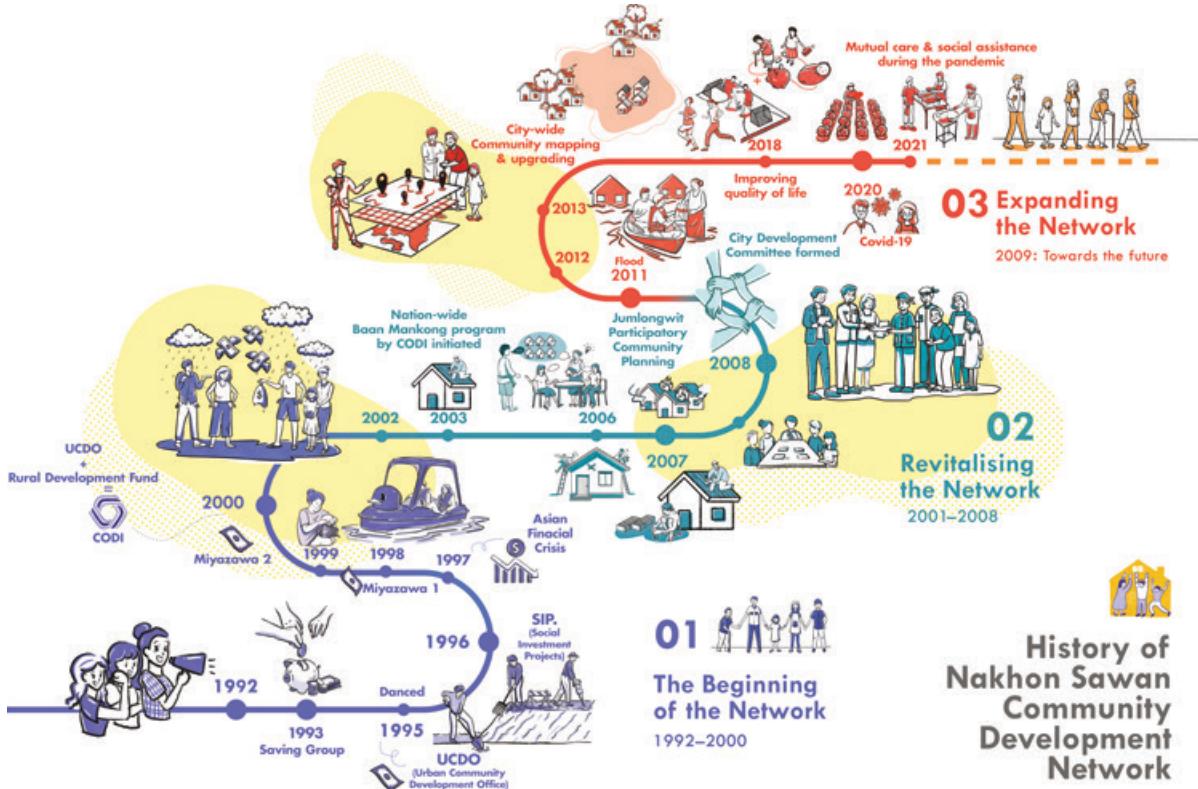


Figure 8.2 The development of the NSCDN divided into three main stages from 1992 to the present.

Source: Illustrators: Thanatip Dumrongpiriyakul and Khakanan Jonganurak

city through various livelihood activities. In 1995, the group collaborated with the Urban Community Development Office to establish savings groups. Additionally, it successfully secured a grant from the DANCED Fund under the Liveable Cities programme, administered by the NHA, to fund several small infrastructure upgrading projects. The Social Investment Project (SIP) allocated funding from 1995 to 1996 to provide help for marginalised individuals in nine localities. As a result of engaging in these activities, individuals from low-income backgrounds in Nakhon Sawan have established horizontal connections and developed mutual recognition. The network has experienced growth in its number of communities, increasing from 19 to 38.

Following the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, the Japanese government implemented the Miyazawa Initiative, which aimed to extend low-interest loans to individuals across the nation between 1998 and 2000. The community network in Nakhon Sawan undertook ten initiatives with the aim of generating income. The aforementioned projects encompassed various initiatives such as the barter of recyclable rubbish for eggs, the provision of rental pedal boats, the production of bird nests, processed foods and fermented fish, the manufacturing of cement blocks, and the operation of a career management centre focused on the sale of local products and the coordination of events. Several initiatives were jointly handled by multiple communities.

At first, these efforts were successful at getting the network going. However, the local government office in charge of overseeing the loan process spread false information, and it was unclear to community members as to why the loans were not repayable. This led to disagreements and tensions between network members and the municipal office. As a result, the members of the group encountered difficulties in managing the loan. A significant number of individuals within the network chose to discontinue their participation and thereby cease their contribution towards the collective debt, leaving only a small minority who still possess outstanding loan obligations.

The members reflected during the focus group that, at that time, the network itself was not well organised in terms of financial management and received misleading information from the local municipality that monitored this loan. Consequently, the NSCDN has remained inactive for a period of nearly five years, which has weakened the city's community-led process development. The primary insight derived from this situation demonstrates that the absence of trust between key stakeholders could undermine the efficacy of the community co-production process.

Phase 2: Revitalising the network: co-production of information

In 2003, when CODI launched the Baan Mankong housing programme, only a handful of the network's remaining members visited other CODI projects in the region during the years 2002–3, and meetings to exchange ideas were held. People were able to gather knowledge from different communities and intended to work again. Members of the network learned how to re-establish collaboration, and with financial assistance from CODI, they attempted to restore network connections. When CODI launched the Baan Mankong programme in 2003 with ten pilot projects across the country, it also started a policy dialogue with the Nakhon Sawan municipality and the Treasury Department. The objective of this dialogue was to explore the prospects of implementing the Baan Mankong programme in the Taklee community in 2005. Later in 2006, the pilot project of the Khao Rong Krua community in Nakhon Sawan province was successfully granted a land lease from the Treasury Department.

In 2007–8, the Baan Mankong community network initiated a city-wide survey of slum communities in the Nakhon Sawan municipality and formed a committee to approve Baan Mankong projects and plan for city-wide development. The community-based survey also assessed tenure circumstances for each community and inventoried unoccupied land in the city that could serve as future housing sites. According to members of the network, this approach is essential for fostering mutual recognition and concern for the urban poor by visiting informal communities, conducting interviews and networking among groups. Simultaneously, the city-wide survey provides the opportunity for disseminating the saving activity's technique, sharing information and practices, and developing the network of urban poor in the city. It also promotes the recognition of urban poor neighbourhoods by the state and its many agencies by 'placing them on the map' and revealing the actual housing demand in the city.

The Jumlong Wit, the city's first reconstruction project, was completed in 2010 with 81 households. When a fire occurred in 2007, more than 100 houses were destroyed, mainly on the public land portion of the community. Under Thai law, land leases and occupation rights on public land cease to be valid after a fire, which is every informal community's greatest fear. Indeed, after the fire in Jumlong Wit, the land was declared a fire zone and notices were posted forbidding the community from reoccupying the land. Besides losing everything they owned, the residents found themselves homeless and camping in temporary shelters around the nearby lake. With support from the community network, CODI and the municipal government, they immediately set out to

hold meetings, survey the affected families and develop plans to reconstruct their settlement on the same land. With their survey data as evidence, they were able to petition the central government for permission to stay in the same area on condition that they submitted a reconstruction plan following all the planning codes within 15 days. With the support of a team of young community architects from CODI, the dwellers were able to develop and submit a complete housing redevelopment plan for Jumlong Wit on time. This incident had a great impact on the network. Not only were land discussions with government officials fruitful, but the network also regained confidence and recognised its mutual capacity to complete other housing projects throughout the city.

In 2007–8, the city-wide survey of informal settlements commenced, and cooperation between the community network and the municipality strengthened as a result. From participatory mapping by hand to global positioning system (GPS), geographic information system (GIS)-digitised versions of maps, community planning and community-led construction, as shown in [Figure 8.3](#), these processes of co-production of information and houses were essential to the community-led development process because they enabled low-income individuals and government agencies to think, act and plan collaboratively. In addition, local authorities acknowledged the map and employed it as a negotiating tool with government agencies and landowners in order to tackle the issue of low-income inhabitants' access to urban land and resources, as a member of a community network noted:

The existing community map we co-created is very useful. We can show it to the governmental authorities and use it to negotiate or discuss, especially with the landowner, as we labelled every house number. The Treasury Department or the Provincial Electric Authority do not have a detailed map of informal communities like ours,' said one community network member during the focus group.

Throughout the community planning and housing design process, which involved mapping, sketching and cardboard models, people made important collective layout decisions. The residents' consensus on the community planning, housing typologies and location of their plots led to the equitable redistribution of resources at the community level. But also at the city level, the projects could be illustrative of the redistribution of public resources to those who have been voiceless, especially in terms of allocating land to address the transformation of urban low-income groups on a city-wide scale.

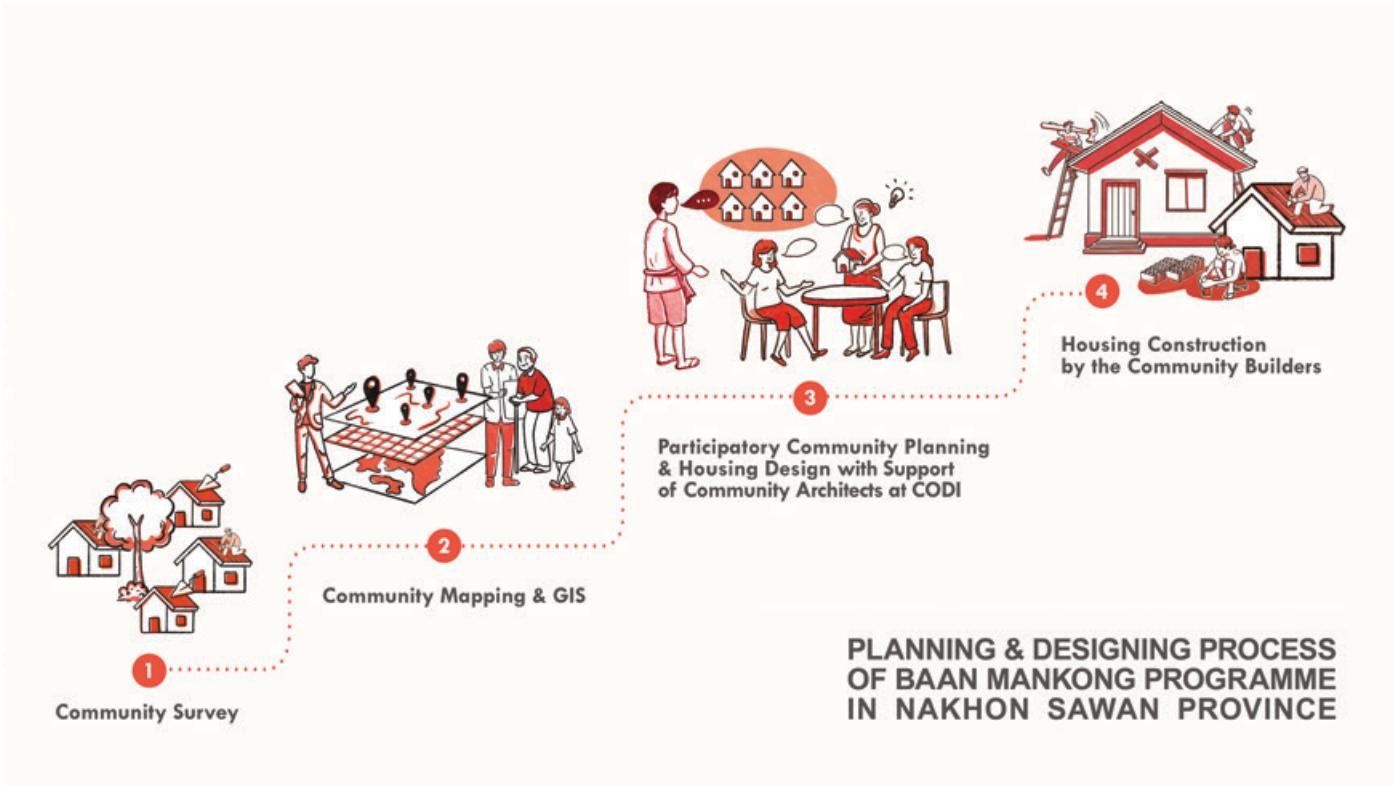


Figure 8.3 Participatory planning and design processes of the Baan Mankong projects in Nakhon Sawan

Source: Illustrators: Thanatip Dumrongpiriyakul and Khakhanang Jonganurak

Phase 3: Expanding the network: co-production of structural changes

Since 2009, horizontal mobilisation through collective saving, forming a cooperative, participatory city-wide survey and mapping, securing land, dealing with community planning, and building new houses, social cohesion and wealth have been accumulated locally because of people's participation in the co-production process. Additionally, many community housing projects have been conducted in the city, most notably the 102-household Sawan Muang Mai relocation project on public land, which was a success.

The NSCDN has earned the faith and trust of its members by implementing tangible changes. Importantly, having been reciprocally recognised by the mayor, the municipality and other authorities, the network can make changes towards the co-production of urban equality. The Nakhon Sawan municipality has supported these communities at every stage of housing planning and construction, including the survey process, partially subsidising the public infrastructure within the project, providing access to off-site public utilities such as water and incorporating the network's city-wide housing proposal into its annual administrative and fiscal plan. It has also supported in negotiations with the Treasury Department, one of the city's largest public landowners, paving the way for communities to build houses on public land and acquire 30-year collective leases.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the City Development Committee (CDC), a platform for the city that unites all of the major stakeholders under the direction of the mayor. It was established to facilitate the implementation of the Baan Mankong housing programme in the city and other community works by bringing together all the relevant stakeholders, such as public landowners, those involved with the electricity and water supply, officials from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, academics and representatives from the community network. This informal platform is transforming the practice of governance in Thailand, transitioning it away from a centralised bureaucratic structure that has traditionally maintained inequality towards a more participatory and inclusive approach to decision making. The CDC's co-production at the city level has enabled the creation of a new local governance culture. The issue going forward is to expand the role of this platform while simultaneously ensuring the network's continued autonomy and improving its relationship with the official power structure.

In addition to housing, the network is also interested in other development projects, such as establishing community welfare and collective funds. At the city level, the Community Development Fund (CDF) was established, which connects communities' savings groups into a broader collective and provides a horizontal support system and cross-checking mechanism to both strengthen communities' savings groups and secure their members. With 1,188 members, the network has jointly expanded its Welfare Fund to £12,924.73, and the Housing and Land Insurance Fund totals £8,538.65. The benefits of these funds generated by a network of communities provide vital social welfare and post-disaster relief while boosting awareness of saving behaviour and delivering social support. A portion of these funds were used to assist community members during the COVID-19 pandemic by distributing rice and food to 3,748 families and compensating each cooperative member with £21.86 at the onset of the pandemic. CDF adds a crucial dimension to people's collective finance systems, enabling them to pool their funds into a larger financial pool and mobilise additional funds from outside sources, according to an Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) study ([2017](#)) on community finance in Asia. The vast amount of capital in this reservoir can motivate community savings groups to increase their level of engagement and broaden their scope of action to tackle development issues.

The network's diverse encounters in managing crises, along with their collaborative efforts in various developmental aspects, have equipped them with the necessary skills to effectively address the pandemic shock, surpassing the capabilities of the authorities. In each of these instances, in addition to attending to their own immediate needs, these individuals enhance their influence and standing within the urban setting by showcasing the capabilities and resourcefulness of low-income and impoverished groups, who are frequently disregarded in urban development endeavours. The claims and arguments presented by individuals gain greater credibility when they can demonstrate that their community-led development model is effective and inclusive.

Future prospects of and potential challenges facing the network

The NSCDN has also identified a significant obstacle to maintaining community-led initiatives, as the initial generation that pioneered the struggle for land and housing rights has now reached an advanced age. Addressing this issue poses a significant challenge for communities

across the nation. It is also recognised that social engagement may become inactive once the houses are completed.

The network has attempted to transfer its collective practice to the younger generation and employed new members to work on various tasks. For instance, CODI and GPS/GIS experts trained a youth group with information technology (IT) skills to serve as the data collection team and support the community planning process. In addition, 100 volunteers were trained as a survey team to visit and interview other low-income communities that are not yet part of the Baan Mankong programme. The network acknowledged building leadership skills among younger members as essential.

One essential resource required to upskill the network is increasing its access to information to influence decision making at the city level. People can then predict where and how many households or communities may be affected by natural disasters or any urban development initiatives implemented by governing bodies. According to the perspectives of network members, a contributing factor to urban inequality is the differential access to knowledge and influence between private investors and the impoverished population. The former group possesses greater insights and holds significant influence over urban development, while the latter group, lacking power and agency, finds itself marginalised and voiceless. Hence, community-led practice requires open and fairer access to updated and integrated information on urban resources. This open-access tool has the potential to serve as a catalyst for fostering more inclusive discussions within the city. As a result, it can have an impact on democratic decision making by empowering various citizens' groups.

In conclusion, an act of reflection through the focus group and historical mapping session between a team of researchers as the facilitator and the people network as the primary author has captured the tacit knowledge that has been accumulated via collective experiences over the past few decades. This co-production of knowledge is a valuable act of reciprocal learning and knowledge transmission between generations of this low-income community network and others, given that the path to urban equality is an ongoing process due to economic and political uncertainty. To improve the quality of life in their own city, it is hoped that this network will continue to demand, engage and co-create in the equitable redistribution of urban resources, particularly regarding access to land and affordable housing. Learnings from the NSCDN demonstrate that the ongoing process of co-production with multiple stakeholders at various scales could be a key to the long-term and structural transformation of the city. Furthermore, it could be said that the collective

practice of community-led development in Nakhon Sawan has fostered trust, information dissemination, knowledge acquisition and structural modifications. These lessons learned from the evolution of the NSCDN based in Thailand are also essential for other co-production practitioners aiming to achieve urban equality by and for the low-income people in the city.

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Co-production processes for advancing urban equality in Freetown, Sierra Leone: insights from learning platforms

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Introduction

Freetown, like many other cities in the Global South, faces significant urban challenges that contribute to inequalities. Limited access to basic services such as water, sanitation and healthcare disproportionately affects the city's poor population. The rapid and unplanned growth of the city has led to poor housing conditions and the expansion of slum-like informal settlements (Frediani 2021). These challenges are further exacerbated by low political participation and weak planning systems, which often exclude marginalised communities from decision-making processes (Allen et al. 2020). Additionally, public health challenges and disasters pose extra burdens on the city's residents, particularly those living in informal settlements (Macarthy et al. 2018). These pressing challenges highlight the urgent need to address urban inequalities in Freetown.

While various actors, both state and non-state, are already taking action to address these problems, there is a lack of deliberate effort to bring them together in an equitable partnership to engage and co-produce knowledge that is relevant and suitable for addressing the numerous challenges faced by the city. The current culture of centralised planning, deeply ingrained in institutional practices, creates limited space for engagement between politicians, service providers, civil society and local residents. As a result, there is a disconnect between community

residents and city authorities, indicating flaws in the outdated processes of centralised planning.

In Freetown, the institutional arrangement for dealing with development challenges remains complex and poorly coordinated. The lack of defined structures supported by government policies or legislation makes it difficult to coordinate actions effectively. While a diverse group of actors, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government entities (local and national), research organisations, community-based organisations (CBOs) and community residents, are involved, many urban concerns are dealt with in isolation. This fragmented approach runs the risk of generating artificial conceptual understandings of the issues rather than recognising their interconnectedness. There is a need for deliberate efforts to engage non-state actors in dialogue, co-production and the production of relevant knowledge for effective delivery through inclusive governance approaches. This requires moving away from the long-standing tradition of centralised planning in Sierra Leone, which limits interactions between politicians, policy makers, researchers, civil society and community residents, especially in terms of co-producing a shared vision for the city with valid inputs from all stakeholders.

The establishment of Community Learning Platforms (CoLPs) in Freetown responds to the need for inclusive and participatory approaches to address urban challenges. It recognises the importance of involving diverse stakeholders, including community residents, in decision-making processes and knowledge production. This approach aligns with the principles of social learning and adaptive governance, which emphasise collective action and learning to tackle complex social and environmental issues. By formalising informal practices through the establishment of City Learning Platforms (CiLPs), and CoLPs, Freetown aims to bridge the gap between top-down decision making and the needs and aspirations of local communities. This collaborative approach helps to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of urban governance processes.

The platforms ensure that co-production processes offer a promising approach to address urban inequalities in Freetown. Traditional top-down approaches to urban development have often failed to adequately address the needs and aspirations of marginalised communities. Co-production processes, on the other hand, emphasise collaboration and active engagement of different stakeholders, including community members, city authorities, researchers and experts. By involving all relevant actors in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and interventions, co-production processes can ensure that solutions

are context-specific, inclusive and sustainable. This chapter explores the role of co-production processes in advancing urban equality in Freetown, with a specific focus on the insights gained from learning platforms.

Co-production as an alternative to 'expert-led' planning

Co-production approaches recognise the limitations of traditional top-down practices in adequately addressing the needs and aspirations of poor and marginalised urban communities, and bring to bear the practical strategies initiated by community-based organisations or grassroots groups to access public services (Castán Broto and Neves Alves 2018). These approaches emphasise collaboration and active engagement of community members and other urban stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and interventions. By involving all relevant actors, co-production processes ensure that solutions are context-specific, inclusive and sustainable. Co-production challenges the prevailing 'expert-led' approaches to planning and offers an alternative that prioritises the participation of marginalised communities and their voices (Fischer 2000).

According to Healey (2013), co-production processes involve actively engaging stakeholders in knowledge creation, policy formulation and action implementation. This approach recognises that complex challenges are best addressed through joint efforts and the inclusion of diverse perspectives and expertise. Co-production goes beyond traditional top-down approaches by integrating different forms of knowledge, including scientific research, local knowledge and experiential knowledge. This inclusive approach aims to effectively address urban challenges and consider the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders. Healey points out that co-production processes challenge prevailing power dynamics and hierarchies by emphasising collaborative decision making and the inclusion of diverse perspectives and expertise. He argues that solutions to complex challenges are best achieved through joint efforts and the involvement of stakeholders from various sectors. This emphasises the need to create democratic spaces for engagement in decision-making processes and the integration of knowledge from different sources. Healey (2013) proposes that successful co-production processes should involve problem-structuring, solution-building and decision-making stages, each characterised by iterative and cooperative relations between actors.

Co-production spaces provide platforms for genuine policy dialogue, stakeholder debates, knowledge exchange, collaborative learning

and new ways of working together which are essential for building pathways towards urban equality (Bretzer 2016). In some countries, co-production has been used as an approach to public service delivery and decision making that emphasises the value of collaboration and active engagement of multiple stakeholders (Castán Broto et al. 2022). Through co-production approaches, local residents are given a voice, providing an evidence-based approach to planning. It allows for the recognition and participation of diverse social identities while creating democratic spaces for engagement and consensus building. In Freetown, co-production has been instrumental in synergising and mobilising collective intent and resources to address issues affecting informal settlement dwellers (Watson 2014; Galuszka 2018).

Sørensen and Torfing (2011) propose four stages of co-production processes: problem structuring, knowledge exploration, solution building and decision making. Each stage involves an iterative and cooperative relationship between different actors to foster shared understanding and joint problem-solving. Regarding urban equality and development, Sørensen and Torfing highlight several features that co-production processes should entail. These include fostering inclusive governance to actively involve diverse stakeholders and ensure that all voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes. Integrating different forms of knowledge is crucial for developing context-specific solutions and promoting collaborative decision making through dialogue, negotiation, and joint problem-solving. Empowering marginalised groups and communities is essential for ensuring their voice and influence in shaping urban development decisions that affect their lives. Additionally, providing training and resources to build stakeholders' capacity for knowledge production and decision making, promoting continuous learning and reflection, and creating structures for collaboration and knowledge exchange are important aspects of co-production.

Collectively, these features provide a framework for promoting inclusive and equitable urban development by engaging diverse stakeholders and integrating their knowledge and perspectives. Co-production approaches offer an alternative to traditional top-down planning, allowing for more inclusive and participatory processes that address the needs and aspirations of marginalised communities (Castán Broto et al. 2022). By embracing co-production approaches, cities can foster more equitable and sustainable development outcomes.

One of the key advantages of co-production planning approaches is their ability to address the limitations of expert-led planning. Traditional top-down approaches often fail to adequately consider the unique needs

and perspectives of marginalised communities. They tend to rely heavily on technical expertise and overlook the valuable knowledge and experiences of local residents. In contrast, co-production processes actively involve community members and other stakeholders in decision making, ensuring that their voices are heard and their contributions are valued. This inclusive approach helps to create a more comprehensive understanding of urban challenges and leads to more context-specific and effective solutions (Perry et al. 2018).

Furthermore, co-production processes recognise the importance of integrating different forms of knowledge (Osutseye et al. 2019; Castán Broto et al. 2022). They acknowledge that expertise is not limited to formal academic research, but also includes the experiential knowledge of community members and the local knowledge that is deeply rooted in the specific context of the city. By bringing together these different forms of knowledge, co-production planning approaches enable a more holistic understanding of urban challenges and facilitate the development of appropriate and sustainable solutions.

Another strength of the co-production approach is its emphasis on collaboration and collective action (Collodi 2018). Rather than relying solely on government agencies or external experts, co-production processes actively involve a range of stakeholders, including civil society organisations, community groups, researchers and policy makers. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of shared responsibility and ownership among stakeholders, leading to a more effective implementation and sustained impact (Amoako and Boamah 2017). It also helps to build trust and strengthen relationships between different actors, creating a foundation for ongoing collaboration and partnership.

Moreover, co-production processes contribute to the democratisation of urban planning and decision making. By actively involving marginalised communities, these approaches challenge power dynamics and promote more inclusive governance. They provide opportunities for marginalised groups to have a say in decisions that affect their lives and to actively participate in shaping the future of their cities. This empowerment of marginalised communities not only leads to more equitable outcomes, but also strengthens social cohesion and fosters a sense of belonging and ownership among residents.

However, it is important to recognise that co-production planning approaches also face challenges and limitations. They require significant time, resources and capacity-building efforts to ensure meaningful participation and collaboration. There may be power imbalances and conflicts of interest among stakeholders, which need to be carefully

navigated and addressed. Additionally, co-production processes may encounter resistance from entrenched systems and structures that are resistant to change. Overcoming these challenges requires ongoing commitment, strong leadership and the creation of enabling environments that support and promote co-production approaches.

Co-production processes in Freetown: the creation of learning platforms

Co-production processes have played a significant role in advancing urban equality in Freetown. The establishment of CiLPs and CoLPs has provided valuable spaces for dialogue, collaboration and knowledge exchange among diverse stakeholders, including community residents, policy makers, researchers, civil society organisations and local authorities. These platforms have contributed to shaping a more inclusive and participatory approach to urban development in the city ([Figure 9.1](#)).

The CiLP in Freetown brings together a wide range of stakeholders to address urban development challenges and promote sustainable and equitable urban transformation, and was a necessary response to identified gaps and fragilities of the formal planning and decision-making processes that ignored the needs and agencies of informal settlements in particular. Led by the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) and the Freetown City Council (FCC), the CiLP comprises representatives from local municipal authorities, government ministries, community groups (including faith-based organisations), academia, NGOs and the media (Osuteye et al. [2020](#); Koroma et al. [2022](#)). The platform serves as an important space for stakeholders to come together, share experiences, exchange knowledge and collaboratively work towards finding solutions to urban challenges.

The CiLP meetings, organised on a quarterly basis, provide a platform for stakeholders to discuss pertinent urban issues and prioritise themes for discussion. These meetings are structured to encourage active participation and engagement, allowing interested organisations to make presentations and share insights on specific topics relating to urban development ([Figure 9.1](#)). Plenary and group discussions follow these presentations, facilitating an exchange of ideas and perspectives among participants. Importantly, the CiLP meetings result in the identification of actionable knowledge emerging from the discussions. This knowledge encompasses practical insights, strategies and recommendations that can be implemented to address urban challenges in Freetown.

A key outcome of the CiLP meetings is the recognition of the importance of inclusive governance and the active involvement and participation of diverse stakeholders in decision-making processes. The inclusive nature of the CiLP creates a democratic space for dialogue, enabling stakeholders to collaboratively shape urban development agendas and policies that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the community residents. Through collective decision making, these platforms aim to foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among stakeholders, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of urban governance processes. Informal settlement dwellers are represented on the CiLP by members of the CoLP. The CiLPs have been structured according to different thematic focuses, with meetings entailing presentations from key stakeholders and experts, discussions of the main challenges and propositions for future collaborations. The production of ‘practitioner briefs’ linked to each meeting supports the consolidation and dissemination of knowledge produced in these spaces ([Table 9.1](#)).

The participation of community residents in the CiLP is further facilitated through the CoLPs, which have a more grassroots, community-embedded structure. The CoLPs ensure that the voices and perspectives of marginalised communities, including women’s groups, youths, persons with disabilities, religious groups and traditional leaders, are represented and passed on to the CiLP. The CoLPs are centred around collaborative and participatory processes, providing forums for community members to openly share their experiences, challenges and aspirations relating to urban development. The Federation of Urban and Rural Poor plays a crucial role in coordinating and facilitating the CoLPs, organising periodic meetings at the community level and ensuring representation from different community groups. These meetings create spaces for community residents to engage in open dialogue and mutual respect, fostering an environment where their voices are heard and their perspectives are

Table 9.1 CiLP practitioners’ briefs

	Practitioners’ brief topics/themes
City learning platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Principles of engagement for the city learning platform 2) Community livelihoods opportunities 3) Urban health: from local community action to a healthy Freetown 4) Participatory slum upgrading in Freetown 5) Charting a pathway to inclusive urban sanitation



Figure 9.1 Structure of the learning platforms in Freetown.

Source: City Learning Platform (2019), Practitioner Brief #1, Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre

valued. Through these participatory processes, the CoLPs empower community members to actively participate in decision making and influence urban development policies and programmes.

The CoLPs also serve as platforms for knowledge exchange, learning and capacity building. Through collaborative learning processes, community members gain a collective understanding of urban challenges and potential solutions. This collective learning process fosters a sense

of ownership and shared responsibility among community residents and other stakeholders, promoting sustainable and inclusive urban development (Osuteye et al. 2020). The CoLPs also play a crucial role in sharing knowledge generated from data collected in the communities, thereby contributing to evidence-based decision making and policy formulation at the CiLP level.

The activities of the CoLPs have had transformative impacts on urban equality, co-production processes and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Freetown. These platforms have strengthened accountability and transparency in urban governance processes by providing spaces for open dialogue, collaboration and informed decision making. By placing community residents at the forefront of their own development, the CoLPs have empowered marginalised groups and communities to effect changes in their communities (Figure 9.2).

The periodic meetings of the CoLP provide a platform for community members to come together and discuss urban issues specific to their community. These meetings foster open dialogue, allowing participants to share their experiences, challenges and aspirations relating to urban development. Through these discussions, a collective understanding of the community's needs and priorities is formed. One of the key functions of the CoLP is to prioritise themes and topics for discussion at the CiLP.



Figure 9.2 Map of Freetown showing the location of informal settlement (CoLP initiatives).

Source: Conteh, 2021

This ensures that the community's concerns and aspirations are given due consideration in the broader urban development agenda. By actively engaging in the identification of priority themes, the CoLP ensures that the CiLP discussions are relevant and responsive to the specific needs of the community.

The CoLP also plays a crucial role in data collection and sharing reflections. Community members actively contribute their insights and perspectives, providing valuable information that informs evidence-based decision making at the CiLP. By sharing their reflections on urban issues, the CoLP helps to shape the discourse and influence urban development policies and programmes. Furthermore, the CoLP sends representatives to the CiLP to articulate the aspirations and concerns of the community. These representatives act as advocates, ensuring that the voices of the community are heard and considered in the decision-making processes at the city-wide level. By actively participating in the CiLP, the CoLP strengthens the link between the community and the broader urban development initiatives.

Relevance of learning platforms in the context of Transform Freetown

Through the CiLP, SLURC has established itself as a credible and independent voice on urban development in Freetown. The platform serves as a democratic space for discussing current themes and priorities of informal settlement communities, raising awareness, sharing experiences, and coordinating plans and actions. It also aims to influence policy and decision-making processes and guide interventions.

The CiLP, in collaboration with various stakeholders, provides a space for learning, discussion and action that addresses the specific challenges faced by the community. It emphasises participatory and inclusive practices, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and considered. The discussions held at the CiLP create a feedback loop between different learning spaces, which inform and disseminate outcomes related to the Transform Freetown Initiatives and other policy developments.

The platforms facilitate the generation and sharing of information about the settlements, thanks to community-led data collection. This knowledge supports urban equality policies and planning practices. Through the CoLP, capacity-building initiatives are undertaken, collaboration among stakeholders is fostered, critical learning takes place, and

the diverse needs and aspirations of vulnerable groups are recognised within the wider policy and planning environment.

The CoLP enables community residents and their representatives to raise their voices and share their experiences, contributing to catalysing change through plans like Transform Freetown. It integrates the best available knowledge about the city to support interventions by the FCC and other local actors working towards improving the well-being of residents.

The CoLP has led to a shift in mindset among different actors, promoting community-driven initiatives and moving away from siloed approaches to shared engagements in finding solutions to urban development challenges. SLURC has worked with the FCC to utilise research evidence on informal settlements for the development of the Transform Freetown plan.

The CiLP and the CoLP have played a significant role in changing the government's approach towards informal settlements, shifting from mass evictions to upgrading and relocation. They have also contributed to advancing pathways towards urban transformation by linking up with the Transform Freetown Initiatives and the Medium-Term National Development Plan, serving as a model for other cities.

The platforms have created a space for joint thinking, allowing the aspirations of informal settlement dwellers to be identified and considered in urban development plans. They enable dialogue between the FCC and various stakeholders, facilitating the sharing of plans and critical engagement with available data to make evidence-based decisions.

The activities of the platforms have empowered community residents to take ownership of the Transform Freetown Initiative and actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. They have also facilitated partnerships between the FCC, relevant NGOs and the Federation of Urban and Rural Poor to address the diverse needs and concerns of the communities.

The platforms have broken the silo approach of working and have provided opportunities for co-producing and sharing knowledge. They have fostered inclusive decision-making processes, empowered communities and promoted sustainable urban priorities for the city's development. Additionally, the impacts of the learning platforms on urban equality, co-production processes and the achievement of the SDGs in Freetown are significant. These effects are particularly notable in the context of the preparation of the Transform Freetown Initiative (2019–22), and the Sierra Leone Medium-Term Development Plan 2019–23 (Government of Sierra Leone 2019). These platforms have fostered inclusive decision making,

collaboration and knowledge exchange among diverse stakeholders. By ensuring the inclusion of marginalised groups, promoting co-production processes and aligning efforts with the SDGs, the platforms have contributed to more equitable and sustainable urban development outcomes. The learning platforms have played a crucial role in promoting social equity, addressing power imbalances and ensuring that the delivery of urban development initiatives (both infrastructure and services) fills critical gaps in Freetown (see [Table 9.2](#) for selected initiatives).

Table 9.2 CoLP and initiatives in informal settlements during and after the COVID-19 pandemic

Informal settlements	Initiatives
Susan's Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution of relief items during emergencies - Distribution of improved cooking stoves - Dissemination of COVID-19 information and running a hygiene awareness promotion campaign among residents during COVID-19 pandemic
Cockle Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting urban farming - Improvement of drainage infrastructure to reduce flooding risk - Hygiene awareness promotion campaign among residents during the COVID-19 pandemic - Running a community loan scheme - Food relief for vulnerable groups during emergencies
CKG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waste management - Distribution of food parcels during the COVID-19 lockdown - Urban agriculture
Dworzark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement of drainage infrastructure to reduce flooding risk - Rehabilitation and construction of public toilets - Slope stabilisation and tree planting to reduce the risk of landslides and rockfalls
Portee-Rokupa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution of food parcels during the COVID-19 lockdown - Construction of footbridge - Disaster response (pooling resources to purchase and fill water tanks and make them accessible to all residents)
Colbot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement of drainage infrastructure to reduce flooding risk

Informal settlements	Initiatives
Thompson Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food relief for vulnerable groups during the COVID-19 lockdown - Supporting urban agriculture
Bottom-Oku	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting urban farming
Kroo Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food relief for vulnerable groups during the COVID-19 lockdown - Running a community loan scheme
Mabella-Margazine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food relief for vulnerable groups during emergencies - Distribution of improved cooking stoves
Moyiba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy for land rights - Improvement of drainage infrastructure to reduce flooding risk
Oloshoro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement of public water points - Running a community loan scheme

Source: Yirah O Conteh, Federation of Urban and Rural Poor Chairman, Freetown; Osuteye et al. 2020; Koroma et al. 2022

Learnings, experiences and challenges for fostering co-production through learning platforms

The implementation of co-production processes through learning platforms in Freetown has provided valuable lessons, experiences and insights for fostering inclusive and participatory approaches to urban development. These lessons highlight the strengths, challenges and opportunities of co-production, and offer guidance for cities seeking to replicate or adapt similar initiatives.

One of the key learnings from the co-production processes in Freetown is the importance of inclusive participation. By actively involving diverse stakeholders, including community residents, local authorities, policy makers, researchers and civil society organisations, the co-production initiatives have ensured that the voices and needs of marginalised communities are central to decision-making processes. This inclusivity has resulted in a more comprehensive understanding of urban challenges and the development of context-specific solutions. The experiences from Freetown demonstrate that co-production thrives when it provides a platform for all stakeholders to actively engage, contribute their perspectives and collaborate towards shared goals.

Another important learning is the role of partnerships and collaboration in fostering effective co-production. The success of the learning platforms in Freetown can be attributed, in part, to the forging and expanding of partnerships involving diverse actors such as academics, professionals, civil society organisations, community groups, and public and private actors. These partnerships have created a community of interest, fostering greater cooperation, knowledge sharing and resource pooling. By working together and bridging the gaps between different sectors and backgrounds, the co-production processes have facilitated a collective and multi-dimensional approach to urban development.

The experiences from Freetown also highlight the significance of building trust and promoting mutual respect among stakeholders. Co-production requires a shift away from traditional power dynamics and hierarchies towards more egalitarian and collaborative relationships. Fostering trust and mutual respect is crucial for creating a safe and open space where stakeholders feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and experiences. The experiences from Freetown show that trust building can take time and requires ongoing communication, transparency and accountability.

Another important learning is the value of integrating different forms of knowledge in co-production processes. Co-production recognises the importance of diverse perspectives, expertise and experiences in addressing urban challenges effectively. This includes integrating scientific research, local knowledge and experiential knowledge to develop a comprehensive understanding of the problems and to generate context-specific solutions. In Freetown, co-production initiatives have fostered a collaborative and interactive process of knowledge production and decision making, involving multiple stakeholders such as researchers, policy makers, civil society organisations and community residents. This approach acknowledges the importance of diverse perspectives and local knowledge in effectively addressing urban challenges.

While the experiences from Freetown demonstrate the potential of co-production, they also highlight the challenges and limitations of implementing such processes. One of the challenges is the need to balance local knowledge and technical expertise. Co-production requires a delicate balance between community insights and local context-specific knowledge, and technical expertise provided by professionals and researchers. Finding the right balance ensures that the solutions developed are both feasible and grounded in the realities of the community.

Another challenge is the need for capacity building and empowering all stakeholders involved in the co-production processes.

Community residents, in particular, need support and resources to actively participate in decision making and contribute their knowledge and experiences. Capacity-building initiatives can include providing training and resources to build the skills and knowledge of community members, ensuring that they can effectively engage in knowledge production and decision-making processes.

Challenges also arise from the need to overcome power imbalances and address systemic inequities. In many urban contexts, there are unequal power dynamics between different stakeholders, with marginalised communities often being excluded from decision-making processes. Co-production initiatives need to actively address these power imbalances and work towards creating more inclusive and participatory spaces. This may involve providing opportunities for marginalised communities to voice their concerns and aspirations, developing mechanisms for meaningful representation and decision making, and ensuring that urban development strategies prioritise the needs and interests of all residents. Moreover, sustaining co-production processes in the long term can be challenging. Co-production requires ongoing commitment, resources and institutional support. Without sustained funding and support, initiatives may struggle to maintain momentum and impact. It is important for cities and institutions to recognise the value of co-production approaches and invest in their continued development and implementation. Furthermore, continuous learning and adaptation are essential in navigating these challenges. It is important to reflect on experiences, share best practices, and foster a culture of collaboration and knowledge exchange among stakeholders. By learning from both successes and failures, CiLPs and community engagement initiatives can evolve and improve their strategies to better serve the needs of the community and contribute to sustainable and equitable urban development in Freetown.

Conclusion: building pathways to urban equality

The implementation of co-production processes through learning platforms in Freetown has demonstrated the transformative potential of inclusive and participatory approaches to urban development. These platforms have brought together diverse stakeholders, including community residents, to create spaces for dialogue, collaboration and knowledge exchange, resulting in more context-specific, sustainable and equitable solutions to urban challenges. The experiences and lessons learned from Freetown's co-production initiatives provide valuable insights for

cities around the world grappling with similar inequalities and urban complexities.

One of the key findings from the co-production processes in Freetown is the importance of inclusive decision making. By actively involving community residents, local authorities, policy makers, researchers and civil society organisations, these platforms have ensured that marginalised communities have a voice in shaping urban development policies and strategies. This inclusive approach challenges the traditional top-down decision making that often excludes the perspectives and needs of marginalised populations. The lessons from Freetown highlight the significance of creating spaces where diverse stakeholders can come together, contribute their expertise and collaborate towards shared goals. Inclusive decision-making processes not only lead to more context-specific and sustainable solutions but also foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among all stakeholders.

Another key aspect of building a pathway to urban equality is the establishment of strong partnerships and collaboration among diverse actors. The co-production processes in Freetown have emphasised the importance of bringing together different sectors and backgrounds, including academia, civil society, government and communities. These partnerships have created spaces for dialogue, knowledge exchange and joint problem solving. By pooling resources, expertise and perspectives, these collaborations have the potential to generate innovative and comprehensive solutions to urban challenges. The experiences from Freetown provide clear evidence that collaboration and partnership building are essential for advancing urban equality and achieving sustainable urban development.

Furthermore, the co-production processes in Freetown have underscored the value of integrating different forms of knowledge. By combining scientific research, local knowledge and experiential knowledge, these initiatives have fostered a comprehensive understanding of urban challenges and their interconnectedness. This integration of knowledge enhances the effectiveness and relevance of solutions, as it incorporates diverse perspectives and helps create a more nuanced understanding of local contexts. The lessons from Freetown highlight the necessity of recognising and valuing different knowledge systems, and actively promoting dialogue and exchange among stakeholders with varied expertise. By prioritising knowledge integration, cities can build pathways to urban equality that are rooted in evidence and are responsive to the needs and aspirations of communities.

Addressing power imbalances and systemic inequities is another critical component of building pathways to urban equality. The co-production processes in Freetown have recognised the importance of empowering marginalised communities and ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making processes. This requires actively addressing underlying power dynamics and creating spaces for marginalised voices to be heard and valued. It also entails addressing systemic inequities that perpetuate urban inequalities, such as limited access to basic services, inadequate housing and exclusion from political processes. The experiences from Freetown highlight the need for intentional efforts to challenge power imbalances and work towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

To build effective pathways to urban equality, it is essential to sustain and institutionalise the co-production processes. This requires a long-term commitment from all stakeholders, including governments, institutions and communities. Adequate funding, institutional support and capacity-building interventions are crucial to ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of co-production initiatives. The experiences from Freetown demonstrate the importance of recognising the value of co-production approaches and investing in their long-term development and implementation. By institutionalising these processes, cities can create a culture of inclusive decision making and collaborative problem solving, ensuring that urban equality remains a central focus in urban development agendas.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided valuable insights for co-production practitioners both now and in the future to learn from. It has emphasised the importance of early collaboration with stakeholders in co-production to establish trust and team spirit, while also addressing resistance and capacity challenges. Involving local knowledge holders helps promote shared responsibility and ownership, integrating diverse perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding of issues.

Moreover, addressing power imbalances and empowering marginalised groups with decision-making abilities enhances the success of co-production. Treating marginalised groups as equal partners, committed to have their rights and viewpoints acknowledged, shifts discussion towards common goals. Creating a safe space and a supportive environment, and fostering trust and mutual respect are essential for ensuring long-term stakeholder commitment to the knowledge co-production process.

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Part III

Expanding the co-production experience

Co-producing an international urban equality agenda through GOLD VI: the transformative potential of global report-making processes

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Introduction

Processes of international agenda-setting are shaped by complex interactions between actors across different scales, which are embedded within long-standing trajectories of differential interests and power. These processes take place within an architecture of global politics with changing and competing narratives about political priorities and values, and positions on causal relationships and knowledge paradigms. Acknowledging that for almost a decade, international actors have recognised the existence of a ‘global urban agenda’ (Parnell 2016), articulated through consensual frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations New Urban Agenda (NUA), this chapter interrogates what are the potentials of co-production as a mechanism to disrupt knowledge hierarchies in international agenda-setting processes. Recognising the lessons from recent experiences such as Habitat III, we look particularly at the challenges of co-production as a strategy to realise the transformative and democratic potential of international report-making processes.

This chapter discusses our experience of co-producing the 6th version of the ‘Global Observatory of Local Democracy and Decentralization’ (GOLD VI) Report, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

flagship publication, published every three years. GOLD aims, on the one hand, to document and share information about local governments in global debates, and, on the other hand, to promote dialogue and partnership between local authorities and other actors in ways that advance certain agendas. GOLD is one of the instruments that UCLG has to produce evidence and shape the conversation with their membership, hoping to influence the way in which local and regional governments approach certain issues, while also strengthening the voice of sub-national authorities in the international debate, demonstrating that local action matters. The 6th edition of GOLD focuses on the theme of equality, under the title *Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality: Addressing inequalities through local transformation strategies*.

By engaging critically with the co-production experience of GOLD VI, this chapter discusses why and how we have sought knowledge co-production as a strategy for disrupting asymmetries of power in processes of global urban agenda-setting and presents the challenges this process faced. In the context of GOLD VI, co-production is understood as a collective mechanism to produce a report through ‘knowledge arising from collective dialogue among actors with different expertise’ (Castán Broto et al. 2022). This is mobilised by drawing on experiences, knowledge and visions from different actors coming from policy and practice, both from local government representatives and civil society groups. We believe that advancing a transformative equality agenda implies putting into place just processes that challenge the uneven ways through which knowledge is produced, mobilised, valued and made visible. This concern has been embraced as a core motivation for the design of this report-making process. Central to this approach is the challenge of facilitating an emancipatory process for diverse actors – including local and regional government representatives, civil society organisations and networks, international agencies, and academics – recognising the power asymmetries and histories that are embedded across different actors, geographies and scales.

The chapter begins with a brief reflection on the processes of international agenda-setting and global reporting, discussing how consensual narratives can be built from diverse knowledge claims, but also the potential silences, blind spots or tensions they can create. It continues by setting the context and describing the GOLD VI report-making process, discussing the centrality and limitations of knowledge co-production as a strategy to enhance its transformative potential at different levels. It then discusses three challenges related to the knowledge co-production process, focusing on: the negotiation and creation of *safe* and *brave spaces*, and their

potentials to facilitate bold action; the management of expectations; and the tensions of balancing and aggregating different organisational drivers and interests, divergent views and common narratives across different actors. It also reflects on the challenges of ensuring the political ownership of a co-produced agenda for international, national and local advocacy processes. It concludes by reflecting on key lessons for the potentials and challenges of co-production processes within global agendas, and their role in building pathways to equality.

Multiple urban knowledges in international agenda-setting processes

Processes of international agenda-setting are shaped by complex and diverse trajectories of advocacy, political will, negotiated interests, shared values, trade-offs and consensus building. During the last decade, the inclusion of SDG-11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities, as well as the NUA launched during the Habitat III conference in 2016, placed ‘the urban’ as a central issue in global frameworks (Parnell 2016; Revi 2016; Satterthwaite 2016; Caprotti et al. 2017). Although the context has changed since 2016, crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate emergency have given a new kind of centrality to urban-related questions. The existence of common frameworks to advance more sustainable and equal cities frames current translocal efforts and alliances working towards more just forms of urban development.

This scenario presents opportunities but also important challenges. Even though global frameworks and commitments are the results of consensus-building efforts (or, rather, precisely *because* of the compromises that such consensus entails), these agreements are governed by internal tensions, trade-offs, silences and blind spots. The narratives they present are the product of negotiated views which inevitably generate internal contradictions and tensions. In this context, some authors have called, for example, for the need for normative entry points – such as urban equality – to navigate potential tensions between different goals and targets, particularly in processes of localisation¹ (Butcher 2021; Butcher et al. 2021). We argue that to capture the challenge of leveraging existing global frameworks, it is important to pay attention to the pathways that have led to the above-mentioned historical juncture for ‘the urban’, which can be as telling as the frameworks themselves. Moreover, looking at these trajectories, it seems crucial to recognise and learn from the assumptions that have shaped what kind of knowledge

has been valued and ‘translated’ during these agenda-setting processes (Cociña et al. 2019). With these questions in mind, attention to knowledge co-production can provide important insights to investigate the transformative potential of agenda-setting processes.

Questions about how knowledge is considered, produced and translated during agenda-setting processes are particularly relevant in the context of growing concerns about the recognition of multiple urban knowledges as a fundamental element for more responsive and just urban practices. These concerns have been mainly voiced within the urban literature by southern, feminist and decolonial thinkers, who have centred epistemic questions regarding the need for recognising and valuing knowledge(s) that capture the specificities of urbanisation and city-making practices in diverse cities, and that acknowledge multiple and situated rationalities, and ways of *doing* and *knowing* the city (see Watson 2002, 2009; Harrison 2006; Yiftachel 2006; Roy 2009; Parnell et al. 2009; Bhan et al. 2018). Likewise, more and more grassroots groups across the world have advocated for the recognition of locally produced data as a valid and necessary source of knowledge for more responsive and just urban practices (Boonyabancha 2005; Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2007).

Within the planning literature, the debate about the multiple sites of knowledge production has been addressed through collaborative notions such as collaborative planning (Healey 2006) or rationalities (Innes and Booher 2010), as well as the discussions about co-production (Ostrom 1996) and, more specifically, about knowledge co-production (Mitlin and Bartlett 2018; Osuteye et al. 2019; Castán Broto et al. 2022). These concerns have also been addressed through more ‘conflictive’ approaches to planning that have centred on the role of knowledge that is produced through agonistic or insurgent practices (Miraftab 2009), and through the expansion of rights through city-making practices taking place outside or beyond formal planning institutions (Thorpe 2017; Frediani and Cociña 2019; Frediani 2021).

In this context, a useful notion to look at knowledge production in processes of international agenda-setting is what Rydin (2007) has referred to as ‘knowledge claims’. Acknowledging that a ‘variety of claims are asserted within planning processes’, she distinguishes specific claims that are knowledge-related, as they are claims ‘to understanding certain causal relationships’ (2007, 56) – namely, claims that make it possible to establish causal lines between existing conditions, interventions and potential transformations. Rydin also invites us to look at ‘the institutional arrangements concerning knowledge within planning processes’ (2007, 53), especially

to untangle the capacity of these arrangements to support deliberative processes that embrace multiple knowledge claims.

So, what does knowledge co-production mean in the context of global reporting, and to what extent can knowledge co-production help recognise multiple knowledge claims within global agenda-setting? Furthermore, what kind of arrangements can support this approach? In the context of international report-making processes, we propose that co-production between different actors can be a means to actively engage with diverse, and sometimes divergent, knowledge claims. These include those claims voiced by the usual international players, but also by organisations and groups that often sit at the margins of the global conversation, and which directly involve community groups in knowledge production. As mentioned earlier, we will explore these questions through the co-production process of the GOLD VI Report, which focuses on pathways to urban and territorial equality. The focus of this report on equality means that questions about how knowledge is produced and recognised are not only procedural but are rather a constituent component of the equality agenda. In other words, knowledge co-production becomes not only a means to capture diverse knowledge claims, but also a strategy for disrupting asymmetries of power in processes of global urban agenda-setting, and therefore a means to advance equality through our own agenda-setting practice.

For us, knowledge co-production was understood as a set of principles mobilised with the intention of making the process of global reporting more democratic. As noted earlier, a key principle of knowledge co-production that resonated particularly with our journey was the ideal to promote dialogue between actors with different expertise and from different interest groups, which hold different forms of knowledge (Rossi et al. 2017; Castán Broto et al. 2022). Our starting point was that global reporting has been predominantly produced by technical consultants and academics, with little opportunity for civil society or local governments to participate in this process meaningfully. Therefore, we embraced the principles of knowledge co-production to shape a methodology that attempts to address the marginalisation of these voices and experiences from global reporting.

Having said that, we found little guidance and reflections in the existing literature to help us navigate the complexities and asymmetries of power embedded in the processes of producing global reports. A key critique to the literature on knowledge co-production is that it is too idealistic, without enough emphasis on the structures, processes and mechanisms able to disrupt inequalities and exclusions reproduced

by current systems of knowledge production. This is particularly complex when looking at co-production taking place within international partnerships (Perry et al. 2023). Given that the current dominant system of knowledge production is highly unequal, knowledge co-production will most likely take place within uneven conditions. As we will reflect in the following sections, creating fully equitable and horizontal conditions for the design of questions, framings, content and dissemination of products was unattainable within the timeframe and resources allocated to the task. Then, even if we could have turned to other notions more sceptical of co-production, associated with the democratisation of knowledge production and focusing explicitly on reflexivity and power imbalances, co-production appeared as a strategic and meaningful approach. Given our intention to influence the ways in which multilateral and global agencies produce reports, the principles of knowledge co-production became critical and instrumental for enabling institutional platforms for engaging with complex issues (Perry et al. 2018), and for building collective commitment and opening opportunities for alternative pathways of global reporting.

GOLD VI: an engaged international process to co-produce pathways to urban and territorial equality

UCLG is the largest global network of cities, local, regional and metropolitan governments and their associations. Giving continuity following more than a century of the international municipal movement, UCLG is a coalition that represents autonomous and democratic sub-national governments at a global level and ‘is committed to representing, defending, and amplifying the voices of local and regional governments to leave no-one and no place behind’ (UCLG n.d.). UCLG is part of a complex ecology of transnational initiatives seeking to mainstream cities and sub-national governments in global debates. Such endeavours have gained relevance over the last decade through spaces such as C40, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) or the Global Parliament of Mayors, which together with UCLG are part of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments. The Global Taskforce has been instrumental in coordinating such initiatives and networks to secure spaces of dialogue with multinational organisations, such as the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and UN-Habitat.

Since 2006, UCLG has published six GOLD reports, which aim to be a major source of information on local self-government, local authorities

and international solidarity. Each edition of the GOLD report has been instrumental in documenting experiences and promoting agendas within the UCLG membership, as well as providing an advocacy instrument for local authorities in the international landscape. This means that the audiences and ambitions of the GOLD report are twofold: on the one hand, informing and influencing policy decisions of UCLG members; and, on the other hand, providing a tool for local and regional governments and their networks to advocate within national and international spaces. It does so by showcasing how sub-national governments are advancing sustainable development in their territories, seeking to reposition how they are perceived in international fora not only as implementers of national decisions, but rather as agents of change.

The sixth version of the GOLD report was produced under the title *Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality: Addressing inequalities through local transformation strategies* (UCLG, 2022). This thematic focus was a response to the increased acknowledgement of inequalities as a global challenge that, although shaped by structural conditions, requires local action to tackle the territorial manifestations and many of the underlying causes of inequities. Global phenomena such as the climate emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic, social unrest, wars, increased housing insecurity, migration and displacement or the precarisation of working conditions have deepened existing inequalities and created new ones, resulting in challenges that are locally experienced. Local knowledge and action are therefore crucial to articulate meaningful and effective responses.

GOLD VI had a series of strategic objectives. Initially, it sought to contribute to the reframing of the notion of equality, recognising the drivers that perpetuate inequalities across different scales, as well as their context-specificity. It did so by distinguishing four key dimensions of urban equality: distribution, reciprocal recognition, parity political participation, and solidarity and mutual care (Yap et al. 2021). The report also aimed to centre equality and justice in the debates on global development agendas, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. And, importantly, it aimed to identify current policy and planning actions and co-produced interventions that advance equality by recognising the agency of local and regional governments and civil society groups.

From the beginning, we as the team behind GOLD VI envisaged a report that could go beyond taking a snapshot of current inequalities to offer a vehicle for transformative action, while avoiding the reproduction of sectoral and siloed approaches to equality. Then, the focus on

‘pathways’ responded to the recognition that addressing structural inequalities and current trends requires building alternative trajectories of action (Cociña et al. 2022). The report proposes six concrete pathways, active verbs that provide orientations for the actions of local and regional governments advancing equality: in the face of the housing crisis and the financialisation of land, housing and services, *Commoning* emerges as a pathway to enhancing collective practices and guaranteeing access to adequate housing and basic services for all. As we witness a generalised crisis in social protection and the persistence of structural disparities in the division of care and domestic work, *Caring* becomes a response to prioritising and redistributing the provision of care for different groups and for those who care for others. Confronting the evident gaps in terms of sustainable mobility, infrastructure and digital access, *Connecting* becomes a pathway to ensure adequate physical and digital connectivity for all. In the face of the undeniable climate emergency and the growing inequalities in the exposure to its consequences, *Renaturing* emerges as an approach for creating a renewed and sustainable relationship between urban and natural systems and resources, with social justice at its core. As urban and territorial economies become more precarious and increasingly unequal between territories, *Prospering* is a response to creating decent and sustainable livelihoods and local economic development that are adequate for the diverse conditions of different social identities, while promoting more balanced territorial and regional development patterns. And as we encounter global and local threats against democracy and growing calls for the improvement of existing mechanisms of representation, *Democratising* is a vehicle that ensures inclusive principles of governance that recognise everyone’s voice, especially those historically marginalised. These verbs (*Commoning*, *Caring*, *Connecting*, *Renaturing*, *Prospering* and *Democratising*) provide the structure of the report’s chapters.

We sought to design a report-making process that was able to capture the diverse knowledge claims that shape each of these multi-sectoral pathways. As discussed above, we decided to use co-production as the main framing for the collaborative methodology of GOLD VI. This methodology aimed not only to produce a rigorous and relevant report, but also to facilitate a meaningful process of co-production among groups that often do not work together, supporting and strengthening multi-stakeholder dialogues, and ensuring the participation and involvement of representatives from local and regional governments, civil society organisations and networks, members of the UCLG network, and researchers and academics from diverse locations and disciplines.

From its conception, we considered this methodology as relevant as the output itself, as it sought to bring an equality lens to a process aimed at strengthening local knowledge sharing and action alliances, facilitating translocal learning and collaborating with international networks.

Early in 2020, we set up a *GOLD VI Steering Committee*, composed of members of UCLG and the Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) team.² Alongside the definition of the report structure around the six pathways, we agreed on a governance structure for GOLD VI co-production that would allow for a meaningful process of engagement in which diverse knowledge claims could participate and be confronted. At the centre of this structure were *chapter curators*, who were in charge of drafting the content of each chapter, coming from different geographies, disciplines and institutions.³ There is a reason why we called them ‘curators’ and not ‘chapter authors’. While each of them brought their own approach and experience, building the central argument and writing up the final chapters, there was a constellation of multiple actors who contributed to each chapter with their experiences, visions and knowledge. These contributions constituted a key element of the report process, as they sought to provide not only information about grounded experiences but also key insights and messages to shape future pathways for equality. Each chapter has contributions from four different kinds of sources (see [Table 10.1](#) for details): (1) the *UCLG Network*, with contributions produced by 17 teams, committees, fora, communities of practice and partner networks. These are well-established teams within and beyond UCLG that prepared contributions with the direct participation of its membership, drawing on grounded experiences from local and regional governments (LRGs) from different geographies and territories; (2) *civil society networks*, which drew from experiences of several members of six international coalitions: the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), the CoHabitat Network, the Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C), the Habitat International Coalition (HIC), Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI), and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO); (3) *KNOW partners* from 12 research and civil society institutions from Africa, Asia and Latin America, who drew from experiences and lessons from their co-produced research on urban equality under a common action research programme; and (4) other *academics* working on issues particularly relevant for the report, from several universities and research institutions from different locations and disciplines.

The actors of this constellation were involved in the process in several ways, using collective workshops as the main shared space for the

collaborative crafting of key messages, topics and cases. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, these events were held fully online, which, although it brought about some limitations, allowed for the extensive participation of hundreds of people. The production of the report was divided into four stages, which are detailed below.

Stage one was about defining the ‘Scope and commissioning’ (September 2020–January 2021), which aimed to generate an open

Table 10.1 Organisations contributing to the GOLD VI process

UCLG network, its membership and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission on Local Economic Development • Committee on Culture • Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights • Global Fund for Cities Development (FMDV) • Global Social Economy Forum • Intermediary Cities • International Association of Educating Cities • International Observatory on Participatory Democracy • Metropolis • UCLG Accessibility • UCLG Digital Cities • UCLG Ecological Transition • UCLG Learning • UCLG Migration • UCLG Peripheral Cities • UCLG Regions • UCLG Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD) • UCLG Women
Civil society networks and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) • CoHabitat Network • Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C) • Habitat International Coalition (HIC) • Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) • Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) • urbaMonde, CoHabitat Network • Cultural Occupation’s Bloc – Culture Movement of the Peripheries • World Enabled • CISCSA Ciudades Feministas • Asiye eTafuleni

KNOW partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACHR, Thailand • Ardhi University, Tanzania • Centre for Community Initiatives, Tanzania • CUJAE, Cuba • Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), India • Institute of Global Prosperity (IGP), UCL • International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) • Makerere University, Uganda • PUCP, Peru • Sierra Leone Urban Research Center (SLURC) • Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU), UCL • University of Melbourne, Australia • University of Sheffield
Other academic and research institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability • Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Spain • Da Nang Architecture University, Vietnam • Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD) • Overseas Development Institute (ODI) • PEAK Urban • Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI) • SUR Profesionales, Chile • Universidad Central de Venezuela • Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain • University of Cape Coast, Ghana • University of Greenwich, UK • University of Manchester, UK • University of Stellenbosch, South Africa

conversation to collectively define the themes, values, experiences and messages that the report should capture. We did this through five independent workshops with different sets of actors: chapter curators; civil society organisations; and LRGs and the UCLG network. These workshops sought to create safe spaces in which diverse stakeholders could share the motivations behind their involvement in the report, exchange views and experiences, and validate key messages. This first stage closed with a collective workshop in January 2021, where more than 100 representatives from LRGs, civil society networks, activists and research institutions met to agree on the content and focus of the contributions that different teams would produce to input the content of GOLD VI across all chapters: 66 case-based contributions (CBCs) documenting

and analysing concrete experiences, and 22 thematic or issue-based contributions (IBCs). Importantly, the definition of the terms of reference for these contributions sought to challenge the idea that civil society organisations and local governments would provide only exemplifying stories, and that academics would provide purely theoretical reflections. Rather, we sought to frame the contributions as hybrid reflections able to shape messages and agendas by presenting grounded experiences.

The second stage focused on ‘Content production, exchange and collection of inputs’ (January–July 2021). During this period, the different teams, involving civil society organisations, local and regional government representatives, and academia, focused on producing the CBCs and IBCs, while the chapter curators drafted the first extended outline of their chapters. To facilitate feedback loops that ensured a reciprocal co-production of key messages, during this stage there were two iterations of the CBCs and IBCs between the contributors, the chapter curators and the steering committee, as well as six chapter-level validation workshops in which all contributors were able to comment and discuss the vision that the chapter curators shared in their initial extended outlines. These workshops provided a space for all actors involved in each pathway to share ideas and discuss differences, propelling them to work these differences as a group. At the end of this stage, most CBCs and IBCs were finalised. Chapters of GOLD VI drew directly on the experiences and visions included in these contributions.

The third stage of ‘Writing up of chapters’ (August 2021–February 2022) was conducted mainly by the chapter curators and the steering committee through bilateral exchanges and feedback. However, recognising the importance of the intersecting messages and visions emerging from the different chapters, we organised a final workshop with all the chapter curators in January 2022 to discuss the composite vision emerging across all pathways and to share the emerging conclusions and recommendations from the steering committee. Likewise, in February 2022, the GOLD VI Steering Committee, accompanied by some chapter curators and contributors, presented the working conclusions in a high-level political debate with the UCLG leadership, in the context of the UCLG [2022](#) Retreat in Barcelona, Spain, receiving a supportive political endorsement from the UCLG movement.

The final stage of the process focused on the ‘Final production’ (March–October 2022), in preparation for the launch of the GOLD VI during the UCLG 7th World Congress and Summit of Local and Regional Leaders in Daejeon, South Korea, in October 2022. This stage mainly involved work relating to the design, dissemination and visual strategy of

GOLD VI in its online and physical versions, in the hope that it will become a collective advocacy, learning and sharing tool. It also included its translation into French and Spanish to expand its potential audience. Finally, aware that some of the details of the rich contributions co-produced by such a large constellation of actors could not be captured in their totality in the final report, UCLG and KNOW published a *GOLD VI Working Paper Series* that enables access to IBCs in their full versions, launched in several batches in November 2021, February and April 2022, and February 2023, and a *Pathways to Equality Cases Repository* containing all 66 CBCs, launched in June 2022 in the context of the World Urban Forum (WUF-11), alongside a dialogue with different contributors during the session ‘Bottom-up alliances for global research agendas: Lessons from a partnership for equality’.⁴ For the launch of the report at the 2022 World Congress, we held a public event with representatives from many of the organisations involved in the co-production process (that is, ACHR, HIC, GPR2C and SDI) alongside chapter curators and authorities from Barcelona, Santiago, Bogotá, Banjul, Chefchaouen, Gwangju and Grigny. During the Congress, UCLG also launched its ‘Pact for the Future’, which was informed by the ‘pathways’ identified by GOLD and the implementation of which over the next four years will certainly rely on its content.

Challenges from a co-produced international process: three reflections

More than three years into the report production, this chapter is an opportunity to reflect on the challenges related to the co-production process, and the potential limitations and lessons related to advancing a transformative equality agenda through a collective process that aimed to recognise multiple knowledge claims. We organise these reflections around three main themes and challenges detailed below, explaining how we addressed each of them in the GOLD VI co-production process.

‘Safe spaces, brave spaces’

In the education literature, Palfrey (2017) has argued for the need to create both *safe* and *brave spaces* as a way to ensure both free expression and diversity in educational environments. While he argues that the former would allow people to share views freely without fear of being marginalised or judged, the latter would facilitate the sharing of diverse views as an essential component of the search for knowledge, even if this

may make some people feel less comfortable. These notions have also been taken to discussions on management (see Djelal 2020), which have seen this distinction as a useful way to understand how organisations can manage and stimulate change. While safe spaces have more clearly defined boundaries that allow them to remain low-risk environments, brave spaces involve a wider social system that invites participants to take higher risks.

Understanding that in the context of an international agenda-setting process, different knowledge claims come from organisations with differential power positions, this distinction offers a useful approach to generating appropriate conditions for a co-production process, allowing diverse knowledge claims to be voiced safely while also generating adequate conditions for bold action. In other words, if knowledge co-production involves actors with different and often divergent visions, crafting both safe and brave spaces seems essential to both respect and protect participants, and to expand the transformative capacity of the co-production process. In the case of the GOLD VI process, this approach translated into the negotiation and creation of safe spaces for sharing with more like-minded actors (for example, meetings to propose key messages and concerns only among civil society groups, only among UCLG membership and only among chapter curators), as well as public-facing moments that invited participants to share more contested views, while looking for moments of overlapping consensus (for example, through workshops open to all participants, or with chapter-level meetings involving different organisations).

This approach was particularly relevant during the first stage of the co-production process focused on ‘Scope and commissioning’. In this stage, we first conducted separate workshops for civil society organisations on one side, and LRGs and their networks on the other. These workshops, which could be labelled as safe spaces, allowed a more open conversation about the ambitions, visions and expectations of the processes, as well as a safe environment to share potential suspicions and scepticism. For instance, some of the civil society groups involved in GOLD VI have often used more confrontational strategies towards local governments, and their involvement in this process required an open discussion about the extent to which these experiences could be captured in the report in a genuine and constructive way. For some civil society groups, the relationship with local authorities in specific countries is far from unproblematic, and it was important to voice concerns about how to capture the nature of such relations in an honest way, but without compromising the collaborative approach of the report.

Likewise, LRG representatives from different geographies and types of territories needed to have their own space to negotiate and prioritise the multiple agendas existing within the UCLG movement: smaller cities and peripheral towns vis-à-vis capital cities, for example, or under-represented regions vis-à-vis more consolidated regional organisations. In this process, the GOLD VI Steering Committee acted as a facilitator and, occasionally, a mediator. These safe spaces were also important for the consolidation of existing bonds and the strengthening of a sense of collective purpose and solidarity.

Beyond these safe spaces, there were moments of exchange across actors, which sought to expand those solidarity bonds and a sense of a common transformative agenda beyond the usual networks of each participant. These more public-facing moments occurred at the end of stage one with a final workshop to collectively negotiate the final list of contributions and themes, during the second stage through individual workshops for each of the report's chapters, and in the final stages during the above-mentioned events in WUF-11, the UCLG Retreat and the launch of the Report during the UCLG World Congress [2022](#). These brave spaces demonstrated that while the drivers for each organisation to get involved in this international report process were diverse, the co-production of an equality agenda requires finding synergies and complementarities. Likewise, brave spaces allowed for finding tensions and differences as a productive means to identify shared agendas – for instance, differences regarding the tactics to pursue change, from more disruptive strategies to those that avoid open conflict; differences around approaches to change from an incremental vis-à-vis a more structural perspective; and tensions approaching rights from a universal human rights perspective versus everyday practices as a form of producing and expanding rights. Rather than resolving or erasing these tensions, brave spaces made it possible to navigate them and build collective principles (such as the five cross-cutting principles that frame the report's recommendations) that were able to embrace difference.

Managing expectations

A second challenge of an international co-production process of this nature, with the involvement of diverse actors in the production of a single report, was to provide a common framing that enabled the management of diverse expectations. From the beginning, the invitation to the GOLD VI co-production process was one that involved more than just inputting information or cases. Aware that many civil society groups,

cities and networks are often subjects of extractive approaches towards their experiences, we envisaged a report-making process in which all participants could be more than ‘good practice providers’, instead being actively involved in the crafting of the report’s themes, vision and key messages. This was in line with our understanding of knowledge co-production as a mechanism to allow a dialogue among diverse ‘knowledge claims’ to inform the causal links between what is sustaining urban inequalities and what needs to be done to address them. From the early stages of the process, we made this explicit, which translated most notably into the terms of references and expectations of CBCs and IBCs. That said, it is obvious that not everything could fit within the final report and that inevitably some of the claims, agendas, links and priorities of the contributors involved would be missed in the process.

To deal with this complexity in ways that did not jeopardise the trust needed for a transformative co-production process, the steering committee adopted at least two strategies. The first was having open and transparent communication regarding the different stages, the scope of each of the activities, the economic compensations for the different inputs, and the level of involvement expected from each participant in each moment. This was based on the idea of ‘Partnerships with equivalence’ mobilised by the KNOW programme under the principles of mutual respect, knowledge co-production, transparency and accountability, and a commitment to learning together (KNOW, 2020). In practice, this required agreeing on clear moments and rationales for decision making. For the scoping stage, this particularly impacted the allocation of CBCs and IBCs across different organisations and targeting different chapters/pathways. In this process, the steering committee discussed and presented a rationale for a balanced representation of different regions, kinds of LRGs, kinds of organisations and contributions, which set the criteria for the selection of a limited number of contributions.

A second key strategy for the management of expectations during the co-production process was the commitment to publish all IBCs and CBCs in their entirety – namely, even if some of the details of the contributions might have been missed in the final drafting of the chapters led by the chapter curators, everyone’s contribution became publicly part of the GOLD VI agenda. The publication of IBCs and CBCs is a recognition of the variety of knowledge claims that shape the current urban equality agenda, demonstrating the impossibility of capturing it through a monolithic narrative (see [Tables 10.2](#) and [10.3](#) for details on the published IBCs and CBCs). Although other international reports also publish the case studies and background papers that inform them, the

Table 10.2 List of GOLD VI issue-based contributions, published as ‘GOLD VI Working Papers Series’

No	Chapter	Title	Authors
1	State of inequalities	The urban dimensions of inequality and equality	Christopher Yap, Camila Cociña and Caren Levy (Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London)
2	Commoning	Enabling access to quality local public services for all: A precondition to beat inequality	Daria Cibrario (PSI) and Vera Wegmann (Greenwich University)
3	Caring	Socio-spatial inequality and local educational action in the construction of caring cities	Xavier Bonal, Yayo Herrero, Marina Canals, María Ángeles Cabeza and Aina Masgoret (AICE)
4	Prospering	Space-blind and place-based policy: Initiatives for fostering innovation and growth	Philip McCann (Sheffield University Management School)
5	Prospering	The urban informal economy: Achieving prospering and territorial equality	Caroline Skinner and Marty Chen (WIEGO)
6	Democratising	The right to participate in urban cultural life: From inequalities to equity	Nicolás Barbieri (Universitat Internacional de Catalunya)
7	State of inequalities	The state of inequalities in Sub-Saharan African and Asian cities	Wilbard J. Kombe (Ardhi), Neethi P., Keerthana Jagadeesh and Athira Raj (IIHS)
8	Caring	Disability, care and the city	Julian Walker (Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London)
9	Connecting	Inequalities in everyday urban mobility	Tim Schwanen (University of Oxford)

(continued)

Table 10.2 (Cont.)

No	Chapter	Title	Authors
10	Renaturing	Sustainable energy access in urban areas	Modesta Tochi Alozie (University of Warwick), Vanesa Castán Broto (University of Sheffield), Patty Romero-Lankao (National Renewable Energy Laboratory), Pedro Henrique Campello Torres (University of São Paulo) and Matteo Muratori (National Renewable Energy Laboratory)
11	Prospering	Conceptualising and measuring prosperity	Henrietta L. Moore and Saffron Woodcraft (IGP, University College London)
12	Democratising	Democratising pathways for equality in Latin America	Catalina Ortiz (Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London)
13	State of inequalities	The differential economic geography of regional and urban growth and prosperity in industrialised countries	Philip McCann (Sheffield University Management School)
14	Commoning	Defining and discussing the notion of commoning	Alessio Kolioulis (Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London)
15	Commoning	Housing systems and urban and territorial inequalities: Bottom-up pathways to more equality-driven housing systems	Eduard Cabré and Sophia Torres (HIC/GPR2C)
16	Caring	Cities can care for people and enable them to care for others, making urban health possible	Francisco Obando and Michael Keith (PEAK Urban Programme, School of Anthropology, University of Oxford)

No	Chapter	Title	Authors
17	Caring	'Sanctuary cities': How do cities care for newcomers: An overview of inclusive local responses to migration	Alia Fakhry (German Council on Foreign Relations)
18	Democratising	Democracy in cities and territories	Laura Roth (Universitat Jaume I)
19	Governance and pathways	Investing at scale: EU regional and urban policy	Philip McCann (Sheffield University Management School)
20	State of inequalities	Urban violence and cities of peace	Antonio Zurita (COOP&CO 2030)
21	Connecting	Redefining connectivity: Implications for local and regional governments	Esteve Almirall (Esade)
22	Commoning	Upgrading basic service provision in informal settlements: City led, community led and commoning	David Satterthwaite and Alexandre Apsan Frediani (IIED)

Note: All contributions are now available on the GOLD VI website: www.goldvi.uclg.org/

Table 10.3 List of GOLD VI case-based contributions, published as 'Pathways to Equality Cases Repository'

Title	Institution	Authors
Chapter 4: Commoning		
Participatory neighbourhood improvement programmes: a way par excellence to promote greater urban and territorial equity from the bottom. Zooming onto Latin-American inspirational experience	Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)	Catherine Paquette Vassalli
Experiences in informal settlement upgrading: Zimbabwe and Namibia	Slum Dwellers International (SDI)	Ariana Karamallis, Anna Muller, Patience Mudimu

(continued)

Table 10.3 (Cont.)

Title	Institution	Authors
Slum upgrading in Latin America	Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C)	Kelly Agopyan and Rodrigo Iacovini
La acción colectiva por la Ley de Acceso Justo al Hábitat N°14.449 de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina	Madre Tierra y FOTIVBA (Foro de Organizaciones de Tierra, Infraestructura y Vivienda de la Provincia de Buenos Aires) – Habitat International Coalition	Eduardo Reese and Ana Pastor
Low-income housing finance from commercial banks in Nepal	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)	Lajana Manandhar and Thomas Kerr
Developing pathways to urban sanitation equality: A case study of the simplified sewerage solution in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	Centre for Community Initiatives (CCI)	Tim Ndezi
Cities for the right to housing: The role of rights-inspired local action in addressing the housing crisis in the COVID-19 era	UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights	Jaume Puigpinós and Amanda Fléty
The Community Land Trusts movement in Europe: Implementing public-civic partnerships in the production of affordable housing	Global Fund for Cities Development (FMDV)	Juliana Devis, Emilie Maehara, Diane Pialucha
Formalising land tenure without displacement: The Community Land Trust in informal urban contexts	urbaMonde, CoHabitat Network	Pierre Arnold and Bea Varnai
The right to remain in place	Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C)	Rodrigo Iacovini and Bethânia Boaventura
Commoning for land and housing in Yangon	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)	Marina Kolovou Kouri and Brenda Perez-Castro

Title	Institution	Authors
Urban commons and urban commoning: Political-legal practices from Naples, Bologna and Torino	University of Salerno, commissioned by UCLG-CISDP	Giuseppe Micciarelli
Cultural occupations: Common spaces A report on the Occupation Bloc's construction within the Municipal Secretariat of Culture in São Paulo	São Paulo's Cultural Movement of the Peripheries – Occupations' Bloc	Vanessa Mendes, Occupations' Bloc
Chapter 5: Caring		
Reinventing and expanding social assistance to vulnerable groups in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis	UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights	Amanda Fléty, Jaume Puigpinós
Local governments' caring for the youth: Protecting the rights of the child in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic	UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights	Amanda Flety, Jaume Puigpinós
Missing pieces: Three metropolis break down barriers for everyone	World Enabled, commissioned by UCLG Accessibility	John Paul P. Cruz and Federico Batista
Construyendo ciudades feministas: experiencias y acciones por el Derecho de las mujeres a la Ciudad y a territorios libres de violencias	CISCSA Ciudades Feministas, Habitat International Coalition	Ana Falú
Community-led housing: A driver of social inclusion for vulnerable urban populations	CoHabitat Network	Nina Quintas, urbaMonde and Mariangela Veronesi, World Habitat
Los retos del envejecimiento y la configuración de ciudades inclusivas: El caso habanero	CUJAE	Jorge Peña Díaz and Joiselen Cazanave Macías
Local governments' shifting approaches to urban security: The role of care in advancing peace culture and social justice	UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights	Amanda Flety, Jaume Puigpinós

(continued)

Table 10.3 (Cont.)

Title	Institution	Authors
Thailand Homeless Network	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)	Ruengyuth Teeravanich and Thomas Kerr
Ollas comunes en Lima, Perú: Combatiendo el hambre	Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú and CENCA	Belen Desmaison
Access to Technology and Services across the EU Regional Divide	University of Sheffield	Philip McCann
Migration experiences in China and other Asian countries	Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C)	Rodrigo Iacovini and Bethânia Boaventura
Public space trading innovations in Delhi, India and Durban, South Africa	Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and Asiyé eTafuleni	Avi Majithia, Shalini Sinha and Caroline Skinner (WIEGO), and Richard Dobson, Sarah Heneck and Toni Ottanelli-Gale (Asiyé eTafuleni)
Chapter 6: Connecting		
Social and territorial connectivity: Towards a paradigm shift in mobility and accessibility for gender equality	Commissioned by UCLG Metropolis and UCLG CSIPDH	Zaida Muxí y Daniela Arias
‘Smart cities’ for whom? Addressing digital connectivity in India	Housing and Land Rights Network – Habitat International Coalition	Heather Elaydi
Transport as a means of inclusion	UCLG Research	Claudia García Zaragoza
Active mobility and public spaces	Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C)	Kelly Agopyan and Rodrigo Iacovini
Transport and equality in Freetown, Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC)	Joseph Mustapha MacCarthy and Braima Koroma

Title	Institution	Authors
Digital villages: Guaranteeing digital connectivity in peripheral areas	UCLG Digital Cities Community of Practice	UCLG Digital Cities
Civic urban media: Creating and sharing bottom-up knowledge on cities to shape urban policies	CoHabitat Network, Slum Dwellers International (SDI)	James Tayler and Ariana Karamallis (SDI), Pierre Arnold and Bea Varnai (urbaMonde), and Mariangela Veronesi (World Habitat)
Digital connectivity and the COVID-19 ‘forced experiment’	Connected Cities Lab, University of Melbourne	Michele Acuto
Challenges and opportunities of regional connectivity and local accessibility in intermediary cities in the Global North and South	UNESCO Chair in Intermediary Cities (UdL)	Borja M. Iglesias
Chapter 7: Renaturing		
Cities and regions race to zero: Local decarbonisation pathways	UCLG ecological transition	Rodrigo Messias
Energy transition of Chefchaouen city	Commissioned by UCLG ecological transition	Hajar Khamlichi and Karim Elgendi
Community based production of waste-based energy, Kampala, Uganda	Urban Action Lab, Makerere University	Teddy Kisembo, Judith Mbabazi and Paul I. Mukwaya
Building resilience in times of crisis: The Waste & Citizenship Forum in Belo Horizonte, Brazil	Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)	Sonia Maria Dias and Ana Carolina Ogando
Fighting climate change in cities: Urban agriculture, green and affordable homes and neighbourhoods	urbaMonde, CoHabitat Network	Pierre Arnold and Nina Quintas

(continued)

Table 10.3 (Cont.)

Title	Institution	Authors
Reviving urban agriculture	Housing and Land Rights Network – Habitat International Coalition	Joseph Schechla
Building resilience with nature: Restoring ecosystems and communities through public policies	UCLG Learning	Valeria Carrion Cruz
Partnership for Resilient Citywide Slum Upgrading, Cape Town, South Africa	Slum Dwellers International (SDI)	Ariana Karamallis and Charlton Ziervogel
Caiçaras, artisanal fishermen, and Guarani M'byá's territories between protected areas and Paranagua's port	Commissioned by UCLG Ecological Transition	Karina Coelho
Chapter 8: Prospering		
The case of female workers in India's construction sector	Indian Institute of Human Settlements (IIHS)	Ruchika Lall and Divya Ravindranath
Agenda to boost local jobs and livelihood opportunities	UCLG, Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization	Cécile Roth
Inclusive local public procurement	UCLG, Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization	Anna Calvete Moreno
Our savings, our strength: The power of women led savings in slum communities	Slum Dwellers International (SDI)	Ariana Karamallis and Sheela Patel
Social, solidarity, and circular economy to build alternative economic paths	UCLG Commission on Local Economic Development	Mercedes Aguilar, Paula Bejarano and Juan Carlos Díaz
Inclusive economy and food security	Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C)	Kelly Agopyan and Rodrigo Iacovini

Title	Institution	Authors
More than housing: Multiple use cooperatives for the transition towards sustainable neighbourhoods and cities	CoHabitat Network	Julie LaPalme (Cooperative Housing International) and Léa Oswald (urbaMonde)
The development of Vienna's approach towards a fair sharing economy	UCLG Digital Cities Community of Practice	Digital Cities
Regional economic development to promote endogenous dynamics and territorial solidarity	UN-Habitat, commissioned by UCLG Regions	Thomas Forster, Florence Egal and Camilo Romero
Linking tourism, livelihood improvement, heritage and conservation through community-based tourism in Da Nang, Vietnam	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) and Da Nang Architecture University	Trang Phan and Brenda Pérez-Castro
The role of creative and tourism economies in tackling/reproducing urban and regional inequalities	UCLG Committee on Culture	UCLG Committee on Culture, with the collaboration of Alexandra Sabino
Chapter 9: Democratising		
Local institutions for civic participation, participatory budgeting and planning, inclusion of youth and migrants	UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights and International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD)	Amanda Flety, Jaume Puigpinós and Adrià Duarte
Citizen led slum upgrading: The Mukuru special planning area	Slum Dwellers International (SDI)	Ariana Karamallis, Joseph Kimani and Kilion Nyambuga
Participatory planning: The role of community and city learning platforms in Freetown	Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC)	Braima Koroma and Joseph Macarthy

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Table 10.3 (Cont.)

Title	Institution	Authors
Citywide and community-driven housing supported by the Baan Mankong programme in Nakhon Sawan, Thailand	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)	Supreeya Wungpatcharapon and Brenda Pérez-Castro
From user knowledges to citizen expertise: Democratising urban renewal and new construction of social housing projects	urbaMonde, CoHabitat Network	Pierre Arnold and Lea Teillet
Transparency and human rights: Cooperation, partnerships and human rights	Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, commissioned by the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights and IOPD	Helena Olsson, Bahar Özden Cosgun and Windi Arini
Democratic planning and urban governance, Brazil and Indonesia	Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C)	Rodrigo Iacovini and Bethânia Boaventura
Open governance for a more consensual and inclusive policy making	UCLG Digital Cities – Bilbao	-
Urban development and participatory governance: learnings from the co-creation of street vending ordinance 1787 in Lima	Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)	Olga Abizaid and Ana Carolina Ogando
Localising participatory democracy and human rights in the Middle East	Habitat International Coalition – Housing and Land Rights Network	Ahmed Mansour
Governance and democratisation of urban-rural linkages	University of Sheffield, commissioned by UCLG Regions	Philip McCann

Title	Institution	Authors
Democratisation of metropolitan governance, participation, training, efficiency and transparency to promote social and territorial equity	Universidad Central de Venezuela and Metropolis	Zulma Bolívar and Oscar Chamat

Note: All contributions are now available on the GOLD VI website: www.goldvi.uclg.org/

way in which these contributions were embedded from the beginning in the construction of the arguments and vision of GOLD VI makes their publication particularly meaningful, as they are not just ‘inputs’ for the final report, but a crucial constitutive element of its framing. Some of the authors and organisations have used this publication to mobilise their agendas. They showcase analysis and interpretations of experiences developed by diverse voices coming from the governments of small and large cities, grassroots groups with more collaborative and confrontational approaches, solidarity and rights-based international networks, advocacy groups and committed researchers, among others. Also, by formatting and making them formally available to the extended UCLG network, GOLD VI also offered a platform for institutional validation of these diverse and sometimes excluded knowledge claims.

Institutional drivers and collective ownership

This co-production process involved a complex exchange and consolidation of knowledge claims that proposed different links between what sustains and what could challenge urban inequalities at the local level. In addition to those multiple claims, the process also included the collaboration between organisations that might have seen the report as a means for different ends. Depending on who is asked, the drivers to engage in GOLD VI might have been more than one, sometimes overlapping or even divergent. For example, within the UCLG movement, a driver might be to promote the equality agenda in traditionally less progressive LRGs or strengthen the voice of LRGs in international spaces usually dominated by national governments; for research actors, it might be about mainstreaming particular agendas within the equality discussion or among local governments; for certain rights-based civil society networks or sections within UCLG, a key driver might be advocating for a human rights approach to equality in global discourses, or about shifting

perceptions and narratives about the role of grassroots actions in the production of more equal cities, or about opening up institutional spaces for more marginalised actors, or a combination of some of these and other motivations. Building a co-produced report therefore implied balancing different organisational drivers and sometimes divergent views, and addressing the tensions that might emerge between different actors and within groups when their interests are aggregated into a single process and report.

Understanding that the impacts of a report like GOLD VI travel in different directions, the co-production process faced the challenge of recognising multiple perspectives while also creating a common framework that would allow these different drivers to ensure collective political ownership of the result. This is one of the core challenges of conducting a co-production process that provides space for multiple knowledge claims (and the multiple causal links they propose), while at the same time produces a single report that belongs to a single organisation. Addressing this challenge implies giving space to strengthening common complex narratives that capture divergent views, while also acknowledging the need for compromises. Throughout the process, the steering committee developed a few strategies that responded directly to this challenge.

The first of these related to reinforcing the sense of collective ownership. Recognising that we were inviting diverse organisations to participate in a process that involved a complex architecture of stages, actors, conceptual framings, activities and outputs, we developed and tested several mechanisms for framing the design of the co-production process in ways that generated a collective narrative without flattening diverse visions, addressing expectations and potential misunderstandings. The challenge included generating a sense of ownership of both the conceptual approach of the report (that is, the notion of pathways), but also the process itself as a meaningful site for voicing divergent views and advancing the equality agenda. The verbs that name each of the pathways, for example, were defined by the steering committee at an early stage and did not always work for the partners' usual language and conceptual approaches, sometimes even struggling to translate them from the English language. Even if some of these differences were not fully addressed, we developed several mechanisms to consolidate collective ownership. These mechanisms involved written documents in English and Spanish, individual meetings with particular organisations to clarify doubts, visual representations of the different stages used repeatedly in the GOLD VI workshops and events, as well as interim public-facing events to generate political endorsement for the report's approach.

Building, reiterating, reshaping and adopting a common language were key to allowing each participant to find a meaningful place within the collective framing GOLD VI was proposing, even when sometimes differences and difficulties persevere.

The second strategy emerged from recognising that while providing a clear structure for the co-production process was important, it was also key to ensuring some openness and flexibility to respond to changing organisational needs during this long process. In other words, the process had to generate the conditions to respond to the changing ways in which each of the participants works for the equality agenda, guaranteeing that the work done together could adapt and be ‘useful’ for the particular contexts in which different actors operate. This openness and flexibility within a clearly defined process translated, for example, into the inclusion of new CBCs and IBCs after the end of stage one in order to recognise agendas and themes that were not necessarily captured by the initial list. It also implied an open door for the participants to use, present, share and reproduce the material created for GOLD VI for other advocacy ends, recognised both in the formally signed initial agreements (which ensured shared intellectual property of all work produced) and in more contingent conversations throughout the process.

Final comments

As the notion of knowledge co-production becomes more widely accepted as a crucial approach for action-oriented research, we believe that it is more important than ever to document, discuss and reflect upon the challenges and difficulties it can bring about. The potential of knowledge co-production, both as a practical strategy and a normative vision, should not obscure our critical approach to its limitations and risks. As the process of GOLD VI draws to its conclusion, we think that it is key to look at the lessons of this process of involving different actors for the production of a single report, seeking to recognise diverse knowledge claims for an international agenda-setting process. This implies acknowledging the power asymmetries that underline any international process of this nature. We have sought to capture these lessons in this reflection, bringing to the forefront the challenges related to securing both *safe* and *brave* spaces for negotiating visions and mobilising bold actions, to the difficulties of managing expectations, and to the ways in which divergent institutional drivers can be worked out to ensure collective ownership of the co-production process.

Difficult as these challenges are, we believe that it is also important to acknowledge the value of actively choosing a co-production approach for a global report-making process. In the context of GOLD VI, knowledge co-production meant developing a methodology of global reporting that approached civil society and local government actors not only as sources but also as producers of knowledge. We advanced principles of knowledge co-production by brainstorming together, by negotiating ideas to reframe the global conversation about urban equality and by shaping a collective agenda for advocacy and action. Importantly, by adopting a co-production approach, the questions about the ‘impact’ of the global reporting process expanded beyond the audience of the final output, focusing instead on the transformational effects of the entire process and for all its participants. As noted in this chapter, the practice of co-producing a global report is challenging and full of tensions and limitations. Beyond the tensions reflected here, other limitations included the close nature of the final product, which translated into a report that tends to use technical and policy language that is likely to reach a relatively narrow audience, hindering the possibility of having more equitable communication outcomes. Another key limitation is the reliance on particular ‘trusted’ voices that would be able to navigate this complex and time-bounded project, therefore making the involvement of less visible academic, civil society and local government actors more difficult.

Nevertheless, and recognising its limitations, it is worth highlighting that this co-production effort is not happening in isolation, but within a wider constellation of activities and spaces pointing towards more open forms of knowledge production. These spaces include instances within UCLG, where civil society and academics have joined agenda-setting processes, for instance, around the UCLG Town Halls and its Pact for the Future of Humanity.⁵ In a way, the GOLD VI process added to the growing recognition at UCLG of the role of civil society networks as partners for generating knowledge and research, beyond the usual work for joint advocacy campaigns (Frediani and Cociña 2022). Addressing inequalities is also about tackling the extremely unequal structures that shape processes of knowledge production at the local and global levels. Reflecting upon the efforts of GOLD VI to recognise diverse knowledge claims has offered us a unique opportunity to critically engage with the potentials of an equality-framed, co-produced global agenda. However, we understand that changing the systemic conditions that shape such disparities requires structural transformations.

This chapter has highlighted that co-production processes require active and permanent attention to the ways in which different institutional

actors involved in knowledge co-production negotiate their positions of power, and their sometimes-divergent agendas, drivers and motivations. In the context of global agenda-setting processes, these underlying disparities become even more acute due to long-standing inequalities informed by colonial and domination trajectories. This calls practitioners and researchers engaged in international co-production processes to acknowledge such differences and identify concrete tactics to address them through reparatory strategies that enable more caring spaces of negotiation and agenda-setting. Creating safe and brave spaces to facilitate bold action, ensuring transparent communication and commitments to manage expectations, and allowing dedicated and flexible mechanisms for reinforcing collective ownership are some of the strategies that the GOLD VI experience mobilised, which might shed some light on key considerations for future co-production engagements.

Notes

1. Localisation is understood as ‘the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level in order to achieve global, national and subnational sustainable development goals and targets’ (UCLG 2021: 19).
2. Members of the Steering Committee: Edgardo Bilsky, Caren Levy, Anna Calvete Moreno, Camila Cociña, Ainara Fernández Tortosa, Alexandre Apsan Frediani, Cécile Roth and Amanda Fléty Martínez. Additionally, support was provided by Camille Tallon, Nicola Sorsby and Jaume Puigpinós. During 2020, Adriana Allen was also a member of the steering committee.
3. The full list of chapter curators is as follows: José Manuel Roche ('State of inequalities'); Barbara Lipietz and Gautam Bhan ('Commoning'); Olga Segovia and María Angeles Durán ('Caring'); Regina Amoako-Sakyi and Julio Dávila ('Connecting'); Adriana Allen, Mark Swilling and Isabelle Anguelovski ('Renaturating'); Edmundo Werna and Stephen Gelb ('Prospering'); and Alice Sverdlik and Diana Mitlin ('Democratising').
4. All contributions, IBCs and CBCs are now available on the GOLD VI website: <https://www.goldvi.uclg.org/>.
5. See https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclgpactforthe_future.pdf.

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Engaging with knowledge co-production: critical reflections from global doctoral researchers

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Introduction: co-producing doctoral research?

It is precisely the particularly ‘wicked’ nature of the problem – urban equality – that demands an emphasis on recognising the lived experience and knowledges of a variety of actors, especially those that are often unheard, as key to uncovering structural obstacles to urban equality ... Co-production offers an approach to shifting asymmetries of power through collaborative processes. This does not suggest or underestimate the complexities associated with coordination of processes and actors necessary for meaningful co-engagement. (Osuteye et al. 2019, 6)

There has been a recent shift across social science disciplines to engaging with co-production as a practical strategy for urban equality and as a guiding principle in research design (Osuteye et al. 2019), and many doctoral researchers are keen to engage with co-production in their research projects. Conventionally, doctoral programmes are designed to be time-bound, pre-defined, rigidly structured and independent, and to result in an individual piece of work. Therefore, critical aspects of co-production do not easily align with traditional doctoral programmes and there is a gap in the current literature and methodological precedents regarding the feasibility of co-production within a doctoral environment.

In this chapter, we – a group of ten doctoral students – reflect on our experiences of engaging with co-production as a research practice within UK doctoral programmes. In January 2021, we participated in the first Knowledge in Action Towards Urban Equality (KNOW) Doctoral Training Course (also known as KNOW DTC), entitled ‘Co-producing Doctoral Urban Research in the Global South’, and have continued to work together to critically examine and document our experiences, which form the basis of this chapter.¹ The chapter’s structure is as follows: first, a review of the literature that relates co-production to doctoral research; second, our methodological process for writing the chapter; and, third, a discussion of our critical reflections of knowledge co-production in doctoral research. Through our discussions, we draw on literature from the KNOW programme and key researchers in the fields of epistemic justice, co-production and participatory research (Arnstein 1969; Chambers 1997; Fricker 2007; Osuteye et al. 2019) to examine how their work can be applied to co-production in the context of doctoral research. Using these theoretical foundations and our considerations from the KNOW DTC, we developed a framing to organise our reflections, which comprises three overarching themes: ethical research and power; knowledges and responsibilities; and partnerships and flexibility. Our collective reflections lead us to the conclusion that while co-produced doctoral research has the potential to help tackle epistemic injustices, it is not always emancipatory, possible or sufficiently supported by current university structures.

We hope that this chapter provides a useful and thought-provoking springboard for continued discussions between doctoral students, supervisors, research partners and other players in relation to how we can adapt university structures to support more epistemically just research practices, including co-production.

The relationship between participatory research, co-production and doctoral research: a literature review

During the KNOW DTC, our discussions revolved around how we understood and grappled with co-production and related concepts, including participatory and emancipatory research methods. In this literature review, we introduce the concept of co-production and position it within broader discourses of epistemic (in)justice and decolonising knowledge, we explore the similarities and differences with participatory methods and we clarify our own definition of co-production. We believe that co-production has the potential to challenge power relations in academia

and in this literature review we will explore the theoretical foundations for this through three key sections: first, we explore the similarities and challenges of engaging with co-production and participatory methods; second, we consider the literature around co-production and epistemic justice; and, finally, we examine the literature around co-production specifically within doctoral research and present our shared understanding of knowledge co-production.

As many of our cohort members had experience of participatory research methods as a means to disrupt power relations within traditional, or extractive, research paradigms (Chambers 1997; Lobo et al. 2020), we started our literature review by exploring the similarities between the two concepts. Co-production of knowledge started trending in the last two decades in urban studies as a part of participatory research methods (Mitlin and Bartlett 2018). Though there is an emancipatory and disruptive element to co-production, which is similar to the aims of participatory research, the focus in co-production is on how different types of knowledges are brought together and the value placed on different types of knowledges (Osuteye et al. 2019; Farr et al. 2021). With co-production and participatory research designs, there is also an ethical layer to the debate, with questions arising as to our responsibility, as researchers, to engage with these research designs, especially given their potential to challenge traditional power structures and support efforts to decolonise academia (Mignolo 2007; Smith 2012).

There are numerous definitions of co-production and, much like participatory research, there is an ongoing debate on how co-production should be defined, theorised and evaluated (Fry et al. 2005; Carpentier 2016; Norström 2020). Enengel et al. (2012, 106) defined the co-production of knowledge as ‘the integration of scientific and non-academic knowledge for complex problem solving’, while Reed et al. (2020, 223) perceived the co-production of knowledge as a form of ‘reflective practice ... to relate with the different epistemic communities (e.g. academics, policymakers, the public sphere) with whom we share the space in co-producing new knowledge, social relations, and even identities’.² We noted that the phrase ‘co-production’ is used interchangeably with terms such as interdisciplinary (Tress et al. 2009; Dooling et al. 2012; Klaedtke et al. 2014), transdisciplinary (Tress et al. 2009; Enengel et al. 2012), involved research (Klaedtke et al. 2014), reflective practices, and integrative research (Tress et al. 2009).

Inspired by Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation that introduced the idea of levels of participation, we consider co-production not as a linear process, but rather a spectrum where reflexivity,

positionality and ongoing, shifting power relations between co-producers are central to the construction of knowledge. A high value is placed on the process rather than on measurements of power and participation. We note that shifting power dynamics and epistemic justice are unequivocally intertwined (Fricker 2007) and their relationship warrants a much more in-depth discussion than we are able to engage with here.

In this chapter, we focus on the role of co-production as a way of engaging with epistemic justice. Fricker (2007, 1, 43) defines ‘epistemic injustice’ as a ‘distinctly epistemic type of injustice’ in which someone is ‘wronged in their role as a knower’ and accordingly ‘to be wronged in a capacity essential to human value’ and suffer from injustice. The core concern of epistemic injustice is disadvantaging a speaker epistemically and/or practically (Fricker 2007), which determines ‘who gets a say in how to address what socio-economic concerns’ (Byskov 2020, 119). The debate on epistemic justice and knowledge co-production cannot be separated from the (de)colonial discourse and the role played by public institutions, particularly universities.

Controlling how knowledge is valued and defined is a central part of the colonial project that persists today within academic spaces (wa Thiong'o 1986; Kuokkonen 2000; Mignolo 2007; Chalmers 2017). Smith (2012) explains that in a colonial setting, the mechanisms for organising, classifying and storing new knowledge, as well as understanding the implications of findings, are unmistakably about power, domination and the hegemony of universal knowledge. University spaces and processes maintain the supposed neutrality of researchers and legitimise positivist knowledge formation through various structures, such as funding mechanisms, methodologies and internal ethics committees (Ball and Janyst 2008). This leads to a perpetuation of epistemic and hermeneutical injustices that drive many of the challenges we faced when engaging with knowledge co-production in our doctoral research (Fricker 2006).

The body of evidence on co-production in social science research is growing; however, the literature on co-production in doctoral research is still limited to a small number of publications based on surveys of small groups of researchers in specific fields (Tress et al. 2009; Dooling et al. 2012; Enengel et al. 2012; Klaedtke et al. 2014). In Fry et al.’s (2005) book, they analysed a workshop that doctoral students attended and a survey they completed, drawing on students’ experiences of co-production (or interdisciplinary research). They found several challenges and make a number of recommendations. Challenges at the student level include those relating to epistemology, with the authors noting that ‘the theoretical and methodological toolkit to tackle the epistemological

challenge is still very limited' (Fry et al. 2005, 8). They also noted challenges regarding organisational infrastructure and communicating and disseminating findings. Whilst the book is specific to landscape research and planning, there are many parallels to the challenges we noted in our experiences.

Klaedtke et al. (2014, 459) explored the possible contribution of research partners in specific phases of doctoral research and argued that the contribution of 'extra-academic research partners' is crucial in shaping the research topic and questions. They advocated that doctoral research should initially emerge from a 'hot debate' (Klaedtke et al. 2014, 459), where research questions are an outcome of interdisciplinary discussions. In this way, diverse voices are heard and integrated from the beginning of the research, which provides a more holistic view of the discussed topics. Enengel et al. (2012) also supported the early involvement of partners and produced a framework for a more systematic and generalisable research process by asking what type of actors contributed to what kind of knowledge in which research phase within a doctoral landscape. The authors encourage a level of flexibility and uncertainty in interdisciplinary work and to collectively define the rules of collaboration from the beginning to guide the research (Enengel et al. 2012). Even with this guidance, other factors may hinder the process. Klaedtke et al. (2014) commented that doctoral research projects are usually conducted over a (relatively) short period of time, which can be a challenge when trying to develop longer-term relationships with partners.

The limited literature around knowledge co-production within doctoral research pushed us to consider our own definition. We understand co-production in doctoral research as an iterative accountability-centred process for conceiving, conducting and disseminating research, in which various forms of knowledges are valued and centred throughout the research process. Co-produced doctoral research goes beyond the imperative of 'do no harm' regarding communities of practice to equitably engaging with communities throughout the design and execution of research. The needs, knowledges and practices of research communities are valued as more than empirical context and are involved as active forces in shaping and executing research designs. Additionally, we recognise that co-production within doctoral programmes holds researchers accountable to advocating for their community partners within institutional contexts and (when called for) pushing back against structures of epistemic injustice and oppression. Therefore, our understanding of knowledge co-production aligns with the arguments of Klaedtke et al. (2014) and Enengel et al. (2012), in which they frame extra-academic

partners as critical to and equal partners throughout the entirety of a research programme. We believe in the potential of knowledge co-production to challenge power relations within academic spaces. However, we align ourselves with the discussion above that in order for this potential to be realised, research communities and partners must be an integral part of the entire doctoral research process, moving beyond limited involvement during only certain phases of research, such as using participatory methods primarily as a form of data collection.

In the methodology section below, we explain the background of the authors and the process for co-producing this chapter. Following this, we return to a discussion of our reflections on engaging with co-production as it relates to ethical research and power relations, the incorporation of various knowledges and responsibilities to the research process, and building meaningful, flexible partnerships with research communities.

Methodology

This diverse group of authors came together after attending the KNOW DTC, which was conducted virtually in January 2021 under the facilitation of the Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality research programme and was attended by over 20 doctoral researchers based in Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia. Following the training, ten participants decided to co-produce a piece of writing and create a space to share our reflections on knowledge co-production specifically from our position as doctoral researchers. Methodologically, there are two perspectives we have balanced through this process: first, our collective experience of co-producing this chapter, which is the focus of this section; and, second, our individual experiences of our own doctoral research, which are the drivers of the reflections we explore in the subsequent discussion.

As a group of ten authors co-producing a chapter together, we were aware of our respective identities and how they could influence our relationships with each other, as well as to our research and our perspectives on co-production. We took intentional time to consider and map our identities so as to demonstrate that despite our diversities, we found common ground in unpacking what knowledge co-production means to us (see [Figure 11.1](#)).

We also asked ourselves the following question: is there an overarching research field or topic that we collectively identify with and that might influence our perspectives on co-production? We landed on

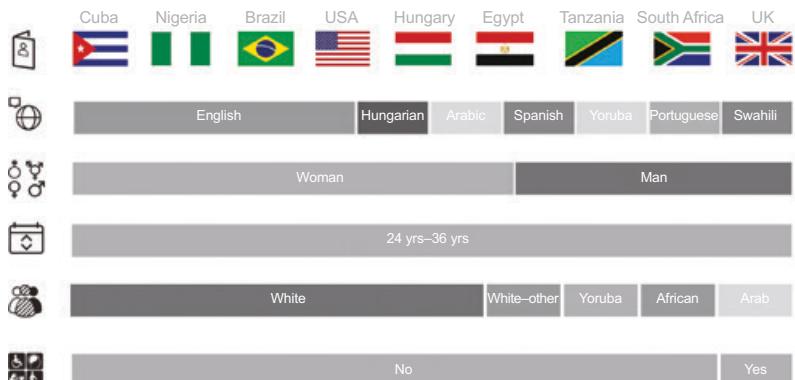
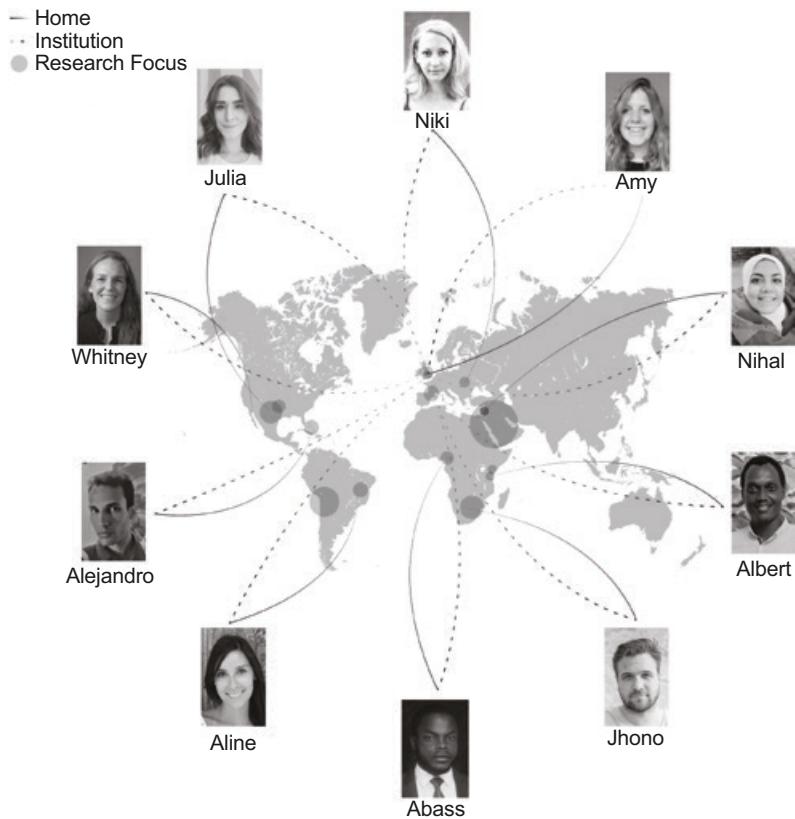


Figure 11.1 Identity mapping: An illustration of the chapter co-authors' identities and relevant information that we considered to interact with our research processes.

Source: Created with the use of information from the Authors' Internal Survey 2021 by Jhono Bennett and Albert Nyiti in March 2022

our shared interest in transformative research paradigms, which we see as tools for disruption and democratisation. However, in spite of this shared interest, our research projects span the globe, employ various research methods, partner with a diversity of actors and focus on a wide-range of research topics, which we found interesting. We created word clouds³ to showcase both the breadth of and the cross-cohort similarities of our doctoral research (see [Figure 11.2](#)). This speaks to the range of doctoral research agendas that are intrigued by and interested in developing co-produced knowledge.

Logistically, from June 2021 to March 2022, we held multiple meetings and relied on Zoom, Google Docs, Google Forms and Miro board (<https://miro.com>) to work together. Miro board allowed us to collectively map our initial plans, whereas Google Docs enabled our planning, drafting and editing process. We created and used a Google Form to collate various pieces of information about our identities, research projects and critical reflections, which we refer to as the ‘Authors’ Internal Survey, 2021’. These reflections form the basis of the discussion section below.

Discussion

In this section, we discuss the opportunities and challenges of knowledge co-production through three analytical themes: ethical research and power; knowledges and responsibilities; and partnerships and flexibility. Our reflections were grouped into themes that we felt emerged from the KNOW DTC. Each theme represents an opportunity to problematise and reflect on some fundamental considerations for engaging with knowledge co-production in doctoral research.

Reflections on ethical research and power

To effectively explore co-produced doctoral research, we ground our work in an understanding of ethical research that recognises how our multiple identities result in heterogeneous experiences of power relations within the context of our universities and our research sites. While principles underpinning institutional and procedural ethics documents were important, they were not sufficient to engage with some ‘ethically important moments’ (Guillemin and Gillam [2004](#), 262) of power relations during our research. Power, in this instance, comes not only from our relationships to identities including race and ethnicity, class,

Internal Survey infographic summary from Question:
How would you describe your research methods?



Internal Survey infographic summary from Question:
Who are the actors you are working with?



Internal Survey infographic summary from Question: *What is your research topic?*



Figure 11.2 Word clouds: A collection of three word clouds that reflect the chapter co-authors' research methods, research actors and research topics.

Source: Created with the use of information from the Authors' Internal Survey 2021 by Jhono Bennett and Albert Nyiti in March 2022

gender, sexuality or ability as articulated by Patricia Hill Collins (1991), but is also constitutive of each individual contributor's relationship with knowledge – that is, how knowledge is defined, valued, collected and shared within our research processes.

In the following three sections, we outline how we understand power to manifest within our doctoral research. The three sub-categories are: power, identities and positionalities; power positions; and power as a contextual and situational process (Vallejo and Ortiz 2021).

Power, identities and positionalities

There exists an important distinction regarding our dichotomic positions as outsider-insiders which is marked by how we identify and position ourselves with respect to research subjects. This position, which is often seen on the sole basis of nationality or current residency, has detached our and others' intersecting identities in the process. The following reflections are some of the ways in which our positionalities and identities have conditioned our capacity to co-produce knowledge:

A huge part of my research so far has been to position to what extent urban equality is included in policy and planning instruments in (country of study). So, I have constantly questioned how a regime that has oppressed citizens' liberties and considered human rights as illegal and an abomination could be portrayed as equal. Here, my identity has politicised my work, but, if I made public what I thought, I will be fired, constantly persecuted and eventually imprisoned as a political prisoner because I am questioning the power of those who have stolen that power from the people. Otherwise if I say that policies and planning have some degree of equality, won't I be endorsing and perpetuating the current inequalities? It is a question I have been asking and it hasn't come with an easy answer. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

We may identify ourselves with our subjects and partners on the basis of our identities, but also related to subjective factors such as our lived experiences and feelings, as reflected here:

The nature of being socialised and brought up in a post-racial segregation context plays a large factor in the positional aspects of my research production, the value it has in terms of the discourse of my

subjects as well as important de-colonial questions on voice, role and output. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

I have unexpectedly ended up positioning myself as a friend really, because as I've gotten to know people through my research that is the relationship that resonates most genuinely with me. This developed naturally, but of course, there is always that uncomfortable dynamic where at some point the relationship feels extractive on my part. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

We note here that even if we share the same nationality, language or customs as our partners, this is no guarantee of a straightforward or routine path to establishing partnership. Our own reactions and emotions can also be relevant and there is interesting research about engaging with the research on an emotional level and garnering this emotion as part of the data itself (Markowitz 2019).

Power positions

Power positions in doctoral research go beyond the traditional supervisor-supervisee relationship. Power positions can include researcher-subject, researcher-gatekeeper, interviewer-interviewee, funding body-researcher and institution-researcher. Specifically, the power relation between supervisor and supervisee is critical in determining the room for manoeuvre to co-produce knowledge. But the room for manoeuvre also depends on the abilities that doctoral researchers develop to cope with an ambitious project such as co-production, which include perseverance, inventiveness, multi-tasking and entrepreneurial capacity in order to manage, for example, further applications for funding and multiple complex relationships.

A relationship, which is often forgotten, is the funding body-researcher relationship. Sometimes this relationship presents ethical considerations, especially if the political context in which the funding body operates is authoritarian. In order to preserve the funding granted, we must be careful of any criticisms made and the ways in which work is presented. Often it is required that the researcher be accompanied by a state representative, which can act as a gatekeeper. A reflection of how the power works in these political contexts is shared by one of our colleagues:

In my research ... I believe there are different scales of power: 1) The power relation between the state and local communities: the

power of the state to use urban revitalization and its power to control the society's behaviour. I am trying to explore the dynamics of this power as an insider/outsider researcher. 2) The power relation between researchers and gatekeepers: the power – or maybe support – I need from state bodies to pursue my research. Because of the political situation in my case study, I cannot proceed without having a kind of support from an 'actor with power'. 3) The power relation between the funder and the student: I hold a scholarship from the local government and this somehow limits or directs my research and makes me always think how to present my work to the different involved bodies. For instance, I consider to what extent I can criticise the practices of the local government if it is the entity that is funding my research. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

A path to disentangle the power dynamics in the communities we are researching is to first understand how these dynamics work within the communities and to consider how to respectfully give a voice in our research to those who are marginalised. Geographer Stephanie Butcher reminds us of the complexity of such a task when considering how to research and write in solidarity with our research communities. Butcher (2020, 514, emphasis in original) reflects on how writing in solidarity can be nuanced and full of tension, highlighting that 'questions such as *solidarity with whom* and *how* are fundamental' in such a process.

Power as a contextual and situational process

Power dynamics are also rather contextual and situational. They differ from one project to another and are marked by social, economic, political, environmental, geographical and spatial dimensions. Researching during the COVID-19 pandemic required us to reinvent ourselves in new ways of living and certainly conducting research, as summarised in the following reflection of one of our colleagues:

Due to COVID-19 and subsequent quarantines, I have become more reliant on the field team for observations and for them to manage the relationships with the participants and myself. It has been a big shift for the team and me. Originally I wanted to focus on using participatory methods to explore (and hopefully shift) the power ... the method had to change and the relationships between myself and the field team have become much more central to my PhD. The power

relations are interesting as there has been a palpable shift in power relations with the field team driving the research more than before and slowly becoming more comfortable sharing opinions or pushing back if they disagree. This is what I hoped for, and it has had a positive effect on the research ... though I am aware that despite these shifts, power relations still exist and merit continued exploration. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

The pandemic and subsequent quarantines have pushed many of us to recalibrate our research methods to mitigate schedules and restrictions, and to become more reliant on our field teams and partners. Here we highlight how our partners have become even more essential and how a shift to online research may have also impacted the traditional discourse on North–South power dynamics. We emphasise that the emancipatory potential of co-production requires conscious, ongoing shifts in power and decision making, as we strive to engage in ethical and epistemically just research processes.

Reflections on knowledges and responsibilities

As Bleiklie and Powell (2005) note, contemporary systems of higher education are undergoing major transformations as universities are no longer seen solely as producers of knowledge, but are also expected to play a variety of new local and global functions. The authors suggest that in order to understand contemporary universities ‘as knowledge producers’, it is imperative to evaluate ‘how they are situated in a wider social and political context of changing power relationships, changing ideas about knowledge and its uses, and changing links between universities and society’ (Bleiklie and Powell 2005, 2). Understanding what type of knowledge is valued within contemporary universities requires interrogating how university systems engage, perpetuate or resist broader socio-political and cultural movements. One such movement in the UK and abroad has been the call to decolonise the curriculum and policy within UK universities, as seen in campaigns such as ‘Rhodes Must Fall’, ‘Why Is My Curriculum White?’ and #LiberateMyDegree. These projects seek to unsettle Eurocentrism and the lack of diversity within the curriculum and faculty of UK universities (Abou El Magd 2016).

Unlike positivist or post-modernist approaches that consider knowledge as universal or indeterminate, we have observed that within our

doctoral programmes, the production of knowledge is structured as an individually produced piece of scholarship created from an individual research process. Miller et al. (2014) remind us that UK universities are, fundamentally, businesses with non-academic goals that influence every aspect of university life. This is reflected in the structures of our doctoral programmes: an individual researcher is tasked with producing a single-authored work with limited time and funding, but with the expectation that their work will elevate their respective discipline and the university as a whole. We instead seek to bring to the fore plural epistemologies and ways of knowing (Yiftachel 2006), throughout our doctoral journeys. By condemning epistemic injustices and extractive approaches, co-productive doctoral research acknowledges our responsibilities for societies, partners, knowledges and research contexts that go beyond fieldwork stages (Osuteye 2020).

However, some practical questions emerge: what does the co-production of knowledge look like in doctoral research? What are our responsibilities as researchers in relation to different ways of knowing? Using our internal survey, we began to discuss these questions by sharing our understandings of: knowledges and different ways of knowing in our disciplines, the boundaries of academic spaces and doctoral research, and responsibilities.

Knowledges and ways of knowing

We understand knowledges and different ways of knowing as the multiplicity of knowledge sources, of which many forms have long been relegated to the margins within academic spaces (Brown and Strega 2005). As highlighted by colleagues in our internal survey:

[K]nowledge is happening constantly. It's academic, embodied, spoken and unspoken, felt, dreamed, cosmological, ancestral, etc and I think our job is to help push our programs to continue to make more space for those knowledges. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

For me, this means opening up ways of understanding the power of knowledge production outside of the academy and thinking about tactical means of co-producing data to serve both scholarly outcomes as well as grass-roots and societal initiatives and efforts. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

In our doctoral research, we found that the ambition of co-produced knowledge is translated into efforts to challenge underlying assumptions about who is considered capable of producing academic knowledge. This means understanding various sources of knowledge and having a continuous ‘commitment to uncertainty, humility and unlearning in the research process’ (Jazeel and McFarlane 2010, 115). Instead of perpetuating a potential dichotomy between so-called experts and non-experts, we believe that there is a need to challenge this distinction and recognise the fluidity of identities and contributions that can exist between researchers and research partners, and the ability to occupy multiple positionalities simultaneously.

Considering the ongoing structural inequalities perpetuated within and by universities, it is essential not only to recognise previously discounted knowledge but also to allow room for manoeuvre so that different voices can emerge and influence a research project. While we work to challenge our various departmental structures to be more inclusive in terms of ways of producing doctoral research, we are cautious to not perpetuate long-standing assumptions that participating in knowledge production equates to empowerment for individuals and groups that have been marginalised. To the extent that we are able to produce co-productive doctoral research, we cannot assume that partners or research communities would become empowered as a direct result of this approach. However, using a co-productive lens means that there is potential to challenge traditional considerations of expert knowledge and the role of the researcher, as well as the doctoral research process itself and the curriculum in academia.

The boundaries of academic spaces

We believe that co-production can be integrated at all stages of a research project; nonetheless, we recognise the practical challenges for achieving this in our doctoral research experiences, as shared by one colleague: ‘Ideally throughout. However, given my program constraints, I think realistically it would be during data collection primarily’ (Anonymous, Authors’ Internal Survey, 2021).

Institutional, timetable and funding constraints play an important role in framing our doctoral research and also restricting processes of co-production. More concrete forms of co-production are often limited to data collection stages which are made possible by some participatory methods, such as Participatory Action Research (Lykes et al. 2018). While we recognise that there are ways of increasing co-production within

doctoral research and expanding the types of knowledge valued within university settings, we recognise the continued structural and procedural issues that complicate efforts towards co-produced doctoral research. As illustrated by a colleague:

I felt discouraged from engaging with knowledge co-production from the start of my doctoral journey due to the overwhelming rigidity and impracticality of PhD timelines, review deadlines, funding constraints and ethical review boards. It wasn't as though a particular person or function discouraged me, but rather the overarching expectations of when, how and under what conditions doctoral research could (or could not) take place within my university structure. Knowing what I know now (3 years in), I could probably push those boundaries more seriously and intentionally if I were to start over. But as a new doctoral researcher coming into an unknown system, the type of collaborative, long-term, inherently flexible and ever-changing research dynamic that co-production demands felt simply out of the question.
(Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

University requirements and structures, internal review boards, funding mechanisms and external actors constrain and shape the possibility of co-produced doctoral research. We believe that opportunities for co-production in doctoral research could be nourished by having long-term investments from universities and funding institutions as well as support from doctoral programmes and supervisory teams.

Responsibilities

Our responsibility, as doctoral researchers and individuals, is not only to ensure that the knowledge we are trusted with is acknowledged, ethically represented and respected during data collection or when sharing the research outcomes; we believe that we are also responsible for contributing to and positively impacting the lives of those who are co-producers in our doctoral research, even after the publication of the thesis. As stated by one colleague, our responsibilities include: 'Safeguarding, being caretakers and advocates for them most probably. Also ensuring that people we work with, learn from, also have access to at least some of our research outcomes, so it is not solely for an academic audience'. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

Also, it involves reflecting on our positionality as researchers and recognising our own biases and limitations: 'I think personally it's really

important for me to recognize the limits of what I know personally in a sort of embodied, ancestral, personal knowledge and what I have learned and cannot really claim as my own but understand theoretically' (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021).

The establishment of partnerships and long-term relationships and collaboration with research partners is a crucial part of the knowledge co-production process and a potential means for giving voice to other ways of knowing as well as generating research impact. Therefore, the next section focuses on sharing our views on partnerships and flexibility based on our doctoral research experiences.

Reflections on partnerships and flexibility

As global inhabitants, residents of our own communities, and as doctoral researchers with a myriad of experiences, social positions, privileges and disadvantages; it is safe to state that we are *all* very different. We think in different ways, we have different lived experiences, and our knowledge(s) – as well as ideas around what knowledge itself is – are shaped and actioned in as many different ways. We all carry a small universe inside us that is incomprehensibly complex, so when we join paths with others to co-produce, we are required to enter this relationship with an openness to allow for the equally diverse and complex universes of those involved to shine through. Within the small universe of this group of co-authors, we asked ourselves what it means to join such paths in our doctoral work. Such approaches to research require particular skills, approaches and rationales that we hope to further interrogate in this section, particularly with regard to actioning such concepts.

The concept of working *with* rather than working *for* people in research project partnerships emerged as a core idea in the group discussions. These principles align with contemporary values of enacting knowledge co-production with diverse groups of people (Watson 2014) and provide an excellent opportunity for all involved to both learn and unlearn. With this aim in mind, the group deliberated in detail how empirical aspects of knowledge co-production require a certain degree of flexibility when engaging with a multitude of actors and partners to co-build project frameworks. While we acknowledge that there are challenges to maintaining co-productive relationships,⁴ we believe the principle of flexibility highlights an important aspect towards actioning knowledge co-production partnerships. Two colleagues shared their reflections on flexibility:

Flexibility for me is not having a priori assumptions on how the research will develop and what I can exactly get from research partners, but, to be open to absorb, adopt and develop the research throughout the process. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

It means an empathetic understanding and manoeuvring of one's positionality in regards to outcomes, methods and aims of research production. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

While concerns around co-production are often discussed in extremely negative or overly optimistic tones, the messy intersectional and systemic dynamics of these challenges are extremely difficult to navigate, with the situated nature of this work remaining largely under-represented across the discourse. In relation to these polar perspectives – like a coin, having two sides – we adopted a format for this section to unpack the pluralistic nature of such approaches to knowledge co-production that carries two sides: opportunities and challenges. Accordingly, we framed this section through a series of reflective questions⁵ that we see as important prompts when considering a responsible, meaningful and flexible approach to co-producing knowledge in doctoral research.

What does sharing power and control in our research engagements mean?

Opportunities: By critically sharing power and control, we have the potential to open up the outcomes to more genuine results for others involved in our work. It might allow us to find new and meaningful ways to share power and offer pathways towards potentially decolonial epistemological narratives.

Challenges: It could allow for a lack of ability to guarantee outcomes to your institutional position. The outcomes face the risk of not aligning with promised research plans and funding deliverables.

These are quite fundamental aspects in establishing and maintaining project partnerships, with this question lying at the heart of our group's deliberation. Rather than attempting any definite answer from our shared doctoral experiences, we offer an acknowledgement of the question's underlying complexity.⁶ We feel that such deliberations offer a means of thinking through which parts of a research project can be challenged, revised or adapted to allow for the redistribution of power. A colleague reflects on this relationship between flexibility and its limitations as a means to sharing power and control:

We should be able to be flexible with our partners, being aware of their current situation which could be difficult, could rather reinforce our partnership. As well as our flexibility with our partners is determined by our room for manoeuvre with regards to our timelines, our goals and the willingness of our partners to work with us knowing the boundaries we have, but finding ways to focus somehow on our partners' needs, not just being extractive, but giving and receiving. (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021)

We offer this question as a prompt for reflection at any point of the project, but acknowledge that adopting such a reflective approach is not an easy option in contemporary research work. It is a layered, vulnerable and often more uncertain route which – without sufficient institutional support – is made even more difficult. However, we feel that as doctoral researchers, we have the opportunity to support pathways to more ethical, just and decolonial approaches to partnership and knowledge co-production.

How can we responsibly unlearn while we learn?

Opportunities: Unlearning allows fundamental growth beyond measurable metrics. It offers opportunities to critically reflect on yourself and your practices, situatedness, institutions, established ways of learning and what is typically considered acceptable knowledge.

Challenges: Unlearning is traditionally not acknowledged as academic knowledge, so value is not assigned to divergent findings (as is seen in the field of urban studies). This notion is currently not widely recognised or typically encouraged and carries little precedent for research approaches.

In meaningful collaborations, we feel that these shared responsibilities of learning and unlearning are imperative in terms of questioning the dynamics of agency regarding knowledge production partnerships, and that the personal, institutional and positional centres we bring into our research work should be challenged through projects. A colleague's reflection on learning and unlearning is shared here: 'Being willing to be questioned, being willing to listen and understand when your way of doing something is wrong/doesn't work, being willing to try again and be patient when demands of day to day life affect the "ideal" research plan we've designed' (Anonymous, Authors' Internal Survey, 2021).

A positionally critical approach combined with responsibly established and maintained partnerships have the potential to support

unlearning from much of the normative positioning of ‘Northern’ scholarship. Moreover, such approaches offer a similar opportunity in terms of learning with local practices, indigenous knowledge systems and alongside tacit-contextual systems that have been historically devalued or not acknowledged outside of current knowledge paradigms.

How can we co-build systems of knowledge making and sharing?

Opportunities: Co-building such systems provides an opportunity to push the barriers, challenge the status quo and initiate change. This approach offers the potential to widen ideas and perspectives on knowledge and theorising about what knowledge is.

Challenges: Embarking on such a daunting task can be scary, intimidating, unusual or uncomfortable. It might place the researcher in a precarious position in order to account for the value of such work in relation to traditional academic expectations.

The group discussed in detail how co-building such approaches are valued, understood and accessed as important variables towards maintaining accountability, shared control and ownership in co-produced knowledge projects. The group recognised that such collaborative journeys are constructed via all involved bringing a different approach, skill-set and modes of operation to the table. Thus, it is crucial to set a common ground at the beginning of any engagement and throughout any project. Co-building approaches are more difficult to adopt and require longer timelines and alternative measures, but have a greater potential in terms of shifting notions of de-centring and addressing power dynamics in contemporary knowledge production practices.

To conclude this section, we offer flexibility through our reflections, the questions posed, and the presentation of opportunities and challenges as a means of conceptually – and practically – approaching a co-productive research project. We call on fellow doctoral researchers to open themselves up to adopting new flexible rhythms of discomfort/comfort, co-developing new approaches and owning the responsibility of cultivating genuine experiences that action the theories and concepts we study and believe in. Moreover, to engage in forms of responsible experimentation that may be new and potentially daunting. We draw inspiration from spatial designer Liz Ogbu (2014, 2018), who reminds us of the importance of staying with such discomfort as a way to ‘make space at the table’ for others who were not invited. We see this as a personable means of addressing larger societal issues through smaller, more manageable actions, but ultimately towards larger systemic change.

In conclusion

We have reflected on our experiences of co-producing knowledge within doctoral research and hope to have contributed to the gap in the academic literature on the subject. We explored the literature, presented our methodology of co-producing this chapter and shared our critical reflections. We would also like to acknowledge the limitations of our process, namely that we are a collective of doctoral researchers with mixed backgrounds, from particular higher education institutes, most of which are situated in the Global North whilst discussing contexts in the Global South.

Through our discussions, we often returned to the point that there is no certainty that knowledge co-production ensures equality, justice or emancipation, as doctoral programmes are typically structured in ways that tend to reproduce the hierarchies and inequalities within academic structures and knowledge production systems. However, we do believe in the potential of knowledge co-production to be a useful and effective tool when grappling with such concepts, especially when doctoral researchers are supported and encouraged to engage with such complexities from within university structures.

Our three identified themes for reflection involve high degrees of uncertainty, but they can be approached constructively. Regarding ethical research and power, we call for continually considering how power, positionalities and identities interact through our research processes. We acknowledge our positionality within existing power relations and our limits, whilst thinking about ways to engage with such power dynamics. When considering knowledges and responsibilities, we question the position of our institutions, our own positions within them and our potential role in democratising knowledge production in higher education spaces. Lastly, we endorse the notion of flexibility as a provider of space for dealing with, co-developing and building on partnerships and the potential to adopt additional lenses through meaningful, long-term partnership in research.

Our examination of epistemic justice and its relationship to co-produced knowledge has caused us to rethink our roles as doctoral researchers, our identities and the type of scholars we wish to become. This has left us disturbed about the claims, positions and assumptions we make about our work, its purpose, and the roles we play in furthering hegemonic or counter-hegemonic epistemologies. There is an inherent contradiction in co-producing doctoral research, which entails resolving

tensions between producing a significant contribution to knowledge as a disciplinary mandate and the many complexities of contributing to and doing transformative research, as we have noted in this chapter. Despite its challenges, the co-production of doctoral research helpfully enables us to assume a position outside the institutionalised structure of knowledge production to view the social and the people who inhabit it as equal partners in the meaning-making process of creating knowledge.

As the introduction to this book claims, co-production occurs in a variety of ways and ultimately depends on the knowledge creators and holders to democratise the process of learning, decision making and meaning making through research. This allows space for alternative perspectives to be incorporated and realised, which is inherently more equal than gatekeeping and excluding during knowledge-creation processes. We hope for a future where doctoral research and researchers can more easily contribute to this radical shift within social sciences.

Current doctoral research methods often struggle with the tyranny of the now, where having the time needed to build relationships and engage deeply with matters of power relations and epistemic justice is a challenge. We believe that co-production empowers researchers and necessitates deep immersion, prolonged engagement and open-minded attentiveness, which fosters a gradual transformation of perspectives that evolves over time and bridges fieldwork locations, individuals and academia. In order for doctoral researchers to engage with knowledge co-production, it will be imperative to push the boundaries from within university structures themselves. Therefore, academics (that is, doctoral supervisors) who practise co-production in their own work should take a particularly engaged and enthusiastic position in supporting their doctoral researchers to embark on and succeed in co-productive doctoral journeys.

Through our individual doctoral experiences, as well as through the process of co-producing this chapter, we learnt that co-production is a long-term process rather than just an end goal. The co-production process requires learning and unlearning, humility, transparency, rigour, meaningful engagement and a coordination of support from academic supervisors, funders and local actors. Therefore, it may be hard, take a little longer and require academic/co-production practitioners and university structures to be flexible and push through difficult moments, but it will be worth it in order to equip the next generation of co-production practitioners with the mindset and skills needed to support democratising knowledge co-production processes more broadly.

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Notes

1. As you read this, you may notice sections have slightly different writing styles or approaches. We discussed how to balance our collectivity and individual contributions, and ultimately agreed to keep some distinctions. We hope this is not distracting and that you will see it as a collectively written piece of work that comes together and flows well, while maintaining the diversity of our individual choices as well.
2. Reflective practice is a methodology for linking theory to practice in urban planning and is based upon Donald Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action* (1983).
3. Word clouds formulaically analyse the amount of words from an input to generate an infographic that depicts both the hierarchy of the words that are commonly used (larger font) as well as the breadth of the input words (smaller font).
4. Such as systemic power dynamics, the discrepancy in expectations between various stakeholders and other complex factors.
5. This chapter does not aim to provide definitive answers to these questions, but rather to offer them as mechanisms for iterative reflection.
6. This question was underpinned by further questions: can we truly share power in an equal or just manner in research engagements? Can we co-develop projects where no one has jeopardised their values and ethics and desired outcomes? Can these projects fulfil the purposes that are different for each participating partner? Can the doctoral student fulfil/stay on topic of their doctoral research, whilst protecting the values and approaches of the collaborating partner(s)?

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Co-producing community-based development in informal settlements in Tanzania: the approach and work of the Centre for Community Initiatives

Tim Ndezi and Emmanuel Osuteye

A brief history of the Centre for Community Initiatives

The Centre for Community Initiatives (CCIs) is a local, non-profit organisation in Tanzania that was established in 2004 with the main purpose of empowering local communities living in urban informal settlements, slums and rural communities, and being the catalyst for change in addressing development issues, such as water, sanitation, climate change and urban poverty.

CCI works in partnership with the Tanzania Federation of the Urban Poor, which is a network of organised saving schemes for people living within the informal settlements, and an affiliate of the Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI). CCI currently operates in eight cities and regions in Tanzania (this includes Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Mwanza, Zanzibar, Arusha and Mara), and has mobilised more than 600 groups of the saving schemes across the country, overseen by a national federation and leadership. Through the work of the federation and local groups, CCI works very closely with community residents and the relevant local government officials.

CCI's primary approach to community-based work is to use the establishment and running of savings groups to mobilise and sensitise community cohesion and action. The second approach is through

empowering communities to conduct profiles, enumeration, community mapping and other forms of baseline data, which is done by the community members themselves, with technical support from CCI. Third, CCI's approach is about initiating and delivering community-driven projects. These projects aim to set examples and demonstrate to the government and other actors how communities can and should be involved in the delivery of development projects. Through these projects, CCI supports the projection of communities as development champions in terms of the project conception, project design, project implementation, operation and maintenance. CCI also places significant emphasis on the empowerment of women, and the creation of spaces and opportunities for women-led initiatives, as well as aiming for gender balance in its broader community-wide activities. The final approach deals with the specific empowerment of communities to engage with local government in terms of advocacy in order to demonstrate their resourcefulness, gain endorsement and support, and a means of potential partnership. Overall, CCI's four-pronged approach to working is very similar to the many other SDI-affiliated organisations.

CCI's understanding of co-production

Co-production has been fundamental to CCI's inception. Its founding director, Tim Ndezi, has a professional background and PhD on the fragilities of water and sanitation service delivery in Tanzania and its impacts on the urban poor. The lack of community involvement in service delivery was very apparent and, as a result, CCI was established with an implicit desire to bridge the gap in recognition and involvement of communities in development initiatives and, more crucially, how communities could work better with local government and other formal institutions involved in the delivery of essential services in Tanzania.

Consequently, co-production for CCI has been conceived and understood as a means and product of building partnerships. It is about how community residents, community organisations, informal structures, local government and other formal institutions could all work together, and also how the government could work together with them in terms of problem identification, project conceptualisation, and the design and implementation of development projects. CCI sees co-production as the fundamental way through which the government can work together with other non-state actors in a more collaborative way. At the heart of this collaboration with diverse actors is the emphasis on the utilisation

of community knowledge, through co-production in the delivery of initiatives and services, and for the benefit of the communities.

The practice of co-production at CCI

CCI's key strategy when it comes to co-production is about facilitating the engagement of community representatives and government officials from the very beginning. The timing of engagement is crucial to the success of co-production – from CCI's experience, involving all the different stakeholders, particularly the formal and informal from the very beginning of the project.

CCI engages extensively with the community, particularly at the stage of project conception, and normally conducts profiling enumeration and mapping, and the generation of baseline data with them. Through these processes, local government officials are invited to join in the data generation processes relevant to the project, allowing the community an opportunity to engage and work together with the government. Through these collective data generation exercises, the government can appreciate the knowledge of the community, gain a deeper understanding of community issues and challenges, and an appreciation of the agency and resourcefulness of communities. The outcome is a fundamental yet important shift that communities are not merely recipients of development initiatives, but can be active change agents themselves: they have knowledge, they have understanding, they have capability and they have resources which can be incorporated into the project.

In essence, co-production comes into play not only in the initial phases of project design and enumerations, but also throughout the implementation, delivery and operation of project outcomes. Co-production is a critical part of the entire project cycle, and CCI endeavours to maintain the collaborative partnership between the different actors throughout the delivery of development initiatives at the community level.

There are several examples of how CCI has applied this approach to co-production in the delivery of community-based projects and services. Two notable cases of projects delivered in informal settlements in Dar es Salaam and Mwanza respectively are described below.

The first project is the simplified sewerage system, which was implemented in the Mji Mpya settlement (sub-ward) in the Vingunguti Ward in Dar es Salaam. Prior to the project, the community was dependent on traditional pit latrines. Some residents had no access to toilets at all and had to resort to open defaecation, which created significant

health risks due to the high-water-table contamination of water sources and difficulties in emptying the pit latrines. As such, CCI partnered with a local university, the local government and the community to conduct surveys in order to understand the scale of the sanitation challenges in that particular area and what solutions could be developed by the community members themselves. One of the solutions which the community proposed was that they could also be connected to the sewerage lines because of their proximity to the main waste stabilisation pond of the utility provider – Dar es Salaam Water and Sanitation Authority (DAWASA). Some houses were less than 100 metres away, yet they had not been serviced.

Through negotiations, CCI was able to convene meetings with the community representatives, the local government representative and the utility provider to argue for the sewerage connections, using a network of pipes from houses to deposit in the waste ponds of the utility provider. The community, in partnership with CCI and the local government representatives, led the planning of the sewerage pipe connections, engineered the best use of nodes and the unique gradient of the settlement. The slopes of the Mji Mpya settlement meant that the waste material was able to flow when flushed through the pipe network without any mechanised support. At present, more than 400 households from that area have been connected to the simplified sewerage system, marking a significant improvement in the sanitation situation. As a result of the project, the utility provider has adopted the concept and written the proposal to the World Bank for support in scaling up the simplified sewerage solution to 12 other informal settlements in Dar es Salaam.

The second example concerns how informal settlement communities in Mwanza were also able to work together with the utility provider and the government officials to establish a forum called the ‘Mwanza City Sanitation Forum’, bringing together representatives of communities and diverse actors, including municipal officials, community health workers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector, to develop initiatives and mechanisms to address sanitation issues that affect the communities. Several initiatives to support sanitation work have already been started, with the most significant being the establishment of revolving funds to finance the improvement of sanitation through different activities in the Mwanza area. Additionally, the utility provider MWAUWASA has also scaled up the simplified sewerage and sanitation solution developed in Dar es Salaam to different parts of Mwanza.

Practitioner reflections on building effective co-production

Building effective co-production networks and collaboration involves several critical factors that require a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the collaboration so that all partners are aligned from the outset, which fosters unity and clarity of direction. Moreover, building trust among partners is fundamental. Trust is developed through transparency and consistent communication. Furthermore, respect for each partner's expertise, perspectives and contributions is essential for a healthy and productive partnership. Regular updates, meetings and discussions help keep all partners informed and engaged. In addition, open and honest communication channels encourage the sharing of ideas, feedback and concerns, facilitating better problem solving and innovation. Also, clearly defined roles and responsibilities help avoid confusion and overlaps, ensuring that each partner knows what is expected of them.

Each partner should contribute equitably, considering their strengths and capacities. This ensures a balanced partnership where no single entity is overburdened. Benefits from the partnership should be shared fairly among all partners, promoting a sense of equity and mutual gain. Also, co-production requires effective leadership that provides direction, inspires confidence and motivates partners. Clear governance structures and decision-making processes help to manage the partnership efficiently. Moreover, the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, challenges and opportunities is crucial for the longevity and success of the partnership. Flexibility in roles, strategies and approaches allows the partnership to respond effectively to new developments, ensuring the availability of resources (for example, financial, human and technical) to support the partnership's activities and goals. Sharing resources, including information and expertise, enhances the partnership's capacity and effectiveness. Finally, understanding and respecting cultural differences among partners foster a more inclusive and harmonious collaboration.

Building effective partnership networks and collaboration requires a comprehensive approach that considers various factors, including clear objectives, mutual trust, effective communication, defined roles, equitable contributions, strong leadership, flexibility, resource availability, monitoring and cultural competence. By addressing these factors, partnerships can be more productive, resilient and capable of achieving their goals.

These considerations above reflect the key observations and lessons from CCI's engagement with different partners in co-production initiatives over the last two decades (2004–24) ([Table 12.1](#)).

Challenges to building co-production

While building co-production partnerships, networks and collaborations can be highly beneficial, the process also raises several challenges. For instance, conflicts and disagreements often arise from the difficulty in aligning all partners around a shared vision and objectives. The core ideal of building trust which is crucial in co-production takes time, and any initial mistrust can hinder the formation of strong partnerships in the future.

Misunderstandings and miscommunication are also common due to differences in language, technical terminologies and communication styles between partners. This is particularly evident between partners from formal and informal institutions. Irregular or inconsistent communication also threatens the collective cohesion among partners. The differences in organisational culture and practices can create friction and misunderstandings reflected by resistance to adopting new practices or changing existing ones which can hinder collaborative efforts.

Other challenges include the scarcity of financial, human or technical resources, and the disparities in resource allocation which lead to tensions and concerns of inequity. The crucial challenge is the awareness of how unequal power dynamics can create tensions and hinder collaborative decision making, and how partners should actively work to address perceived and actual consequences of this (particularly across the formal/informal institutional divide).

Another challenge is the varying levels of commitment and engagement, which lead to inconsistencies in participation and effort between partners. Maintaining long-term engagement and motivation among all partners can be difficult and requires continuous conscious effort. This can also be reflected in how operational and logistical issues are handled. The coordination of activities, meetings and tasks across different organisations can be complex and time-consuming, but necessary to maintain a balance and aim for maximum engagement and participation by all partners. This is necessary whether partners are physically close or geographically dispersed.

Addressing some of these challenges requires careful planning, clear communication, mutual trust and a willingness to adapt and learn.

CCI's experience and lessons of working with different partners over the years point to the need for awareness and consistency of effort in order to be able to mitigate and overcome difficulties and build partnerships for co-production that are meaningful and sustainable.

The impact and the value of co-production

The principal lesson and value of CCI engaging in co-production is the demonstration of the fact that meaningful and sustained partnerships through co-production are what bring real change to communities, and not merely the provision of resources (or donations). This is the message that is being shared with all development actors and the government. The provision of resources alone cannot solve community challenges, but as one of the chapter authors noted, 'it's not only resources which can bring changes within the communities, but [when] the different actors come together to bring their unique characteristics and unique values to the process. That's where you could really see amazing impacts'.

The impacts of CCI's involvement in the co-production of services are extensive and broadly beneficial to several informal settlements. At the community level, one of the major impacts right now is the changes in terms of health benefits within those particular areas where the community had no good toilets. However, the provision of improved sanitation has resulted in better health, an improved environment and social well-being in general terms. This is particularly true for women who have been also significantly affected by illnesses associated with poor sanitation such as urinary tract infections (UTIs). There has been an improvement in health and education outcomes for children, through better health and less disruption to their education through illnesses.

Now, the second noteworthy impact is very specific to the change in outlook and operations of the utility provider. Through this partnership and co-production, CCI can expand its knowledge and understanding of the community challenges and their role as service providers. CCI also facilitated the exchange of knowledge and capacity building of the community through an exchange visit from sanitation officials from Pakistan to come and train the communities in the engineering and construction of the simplified sewerage system. The community has therefore gained skills that have been invaluable in the negotiations with the utility provider and have even transferred their knowledge and skills to the utility provider over the course of the delivery of the project. As a result, the technicians in the utility have gained some advanced knowledge and

Table 12.1 CCI's co-production projects and community initiatives, 2004–24

No.	Project title	Funder	Other implementing partners/key stakeholders	Delivery period	Location
1	Federation building	SDI	Federation/local government/communities	2004–07	Dar es Salaam
2	Water and sanitation for the urban poor	Homeless International/Jersey Foundation	Federation/local government/communities	2007–08	Dar es Salaam, Dodoma and Arusha
3	Water and sanitation for the urban poor	Homeless International/Guernsey Foundation	Federation/local government/communities	2007–08	Dar es Salaam, Dodoma and Arusha
4	Chamazi community-based housing scheme	SDI	Federation/local government/communities	2009–15	Dar es Salaam
5	Miyuji Dodoma community-based housing scheme	SDI	Federation/local government/communities	2010–15	Dodoma
6	Decentralised wastewater treatment for Chamazi project	Homeless International	Federation/local government/communities	2010–11	Dar es Salaam
7	Decentralised wastewater treatment for Dodoma project	Homeless International	Federation/local government/communities	2011	Dodoma
8	Building capacity of CCI to negotiate alternative forced eviction	Homeless International/Baring Foundation	Federation/local government/communities	2010–12	Dar es Salaam

9	Sanitation and hygiene applied research for equity (SHARE research) – city-wide sanitation research	SDI/DFID	Federation/local government/communities	2013–15	Dar es Salaam
10	Vingunguti simplified sewerage sanitation	SDI	Federation/local government/communities	2014–18	Dar es Salaam
11	Slum dwellers working together to improve their living conditions	Homeless International/Comic Relief	Federation/local government/communities	2010–14	Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Morogoro and Arusha
12	Community-led water and sanitation delivery	Homeless International/DFID/GPAF	Federation/local government/communities	2013–16	Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Dodoma and Mwanza
13	Finland sanitation improvement and social enterprise in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	Finland Global Toilet/ Finnish government	Federation/local government/communities	2014–16	Dar es Salaam
14	Risk in informal settlements – community knowledge and policy action	University College London/AXA Research Fund	Federation/local government/communities	2016–17	Dar es Salaam
15	Water improvement at Tungi, Kigamboni	Germany Research Foundation	Federation/local government/communities	2016–17	Dar es Salaam

(continued)

Table 12.1 (Cont.)

No.	Project title	Funder	Other implementing partners/key stakeholders	Delivery period	Location
16	Urban land nexus and inclusive urbanisation in Dar es Salaam and Mwanza	University of Sussex/DFID	Federation/local government/communities	2017–18	Dar es Salaam and Mwanza
17	Strengthening community resilience through capacity building of disaster management committee	University College London/AXA Research Fund	Federation/local government/communities	2019–20	Dar es Salaam
18	Federation building – learning, monitoring and evaluation (LME)	SDI/SIDA	Federation/local government/communities	2018–20	Dar es Salaam and all regions
19	Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW)	University College London/GCRF	Federation/local government/communities	2019–21	Dar es Salaam
20	Co-producing prosperity research in informal settlements in Tanzania	University College London/GCRF	Federation/local government/communities	2019–22	Dar es Salaam
21	Climate and migration project	SDI/Robert Bosch Stiftung Foundation	Federation/local government/communities	2020–21	Dar es Salaam
22	Grassroots insights into urban risk: creating interdisciplinary pathways to resilience in Dar es Salaam	International Institute for Environment and Development/British Academy	Federation/local government/communities	2020–22	Dar es Salaam

23	Tackling the sanitation taboo across Urban Africa (OVERDUE)	University College London/UKRI/GCRF	Federation/local government/communities	2021–23	Mwanza
24	Supporting urban intermediaries to broker and design weather and climate services in urban stakeholders – DARAJA	Resurgency/UKAID	Federation/local government/communities	2018–21	Dar es Salaam
25	Nature-based solutions for urban areas	Kounkuey Design Initiative/SwedBio/ SIDA	Federation/local government/communities	2019–20	Dar es Salaam
26	Realising urban nature-based solutions	Kounkuey Design Initiative/SwedBio/ SIDA	Federation/local government/communities	2021–22	Dar es Salaam
27	African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC)	SDI/Manchester University/FCDO	Federation/local government/communities	2022–23	Dar es Salaam
28	African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC) uptake	SDI/Manchester University/FCDO	Federation/local government/communities	2023	Dar es Salaam
29	Enhancing community-led urban development interventions on COVID-19 recovery and rebuilding efforts with Tanzania slum dwellers for sustainable development	Cities Alliance	Federation/local government/communities	2022–23	Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Dodoma, Mwanza and Zanzibar

(continued)

Table 12.1 (Cont.)

No.	Project title	Funder	Other implementing partners/key stakeholders	Delivery period	Location
30	Developing risk awareness through joint action (DARAJA) for the middle Msimbazi River	IKI-GIZ	Federation/local government/communities	2023–24	Dar es Salaam
31	Increased capacity of residents of informal settlements to take mitigating or adaptive measures to reduce the impact of severe weather conditions on life and property	UNDP	Federation/local government/communities	2022–23	Dar es Salaam
32	Building resilience through risk-informed community-led urban development	GIZ	Federation/local government/communities	2024–25	Mwanza
33	Community-led adaptation in informal settlements	IIED/World Bank	Federation/local government/communities	2023–24	Dar es Salaam
34	Building urban climate resilience through nature-based solutions: sustainable and inclusive approaches to scaling-up community-driven interventions in East African cities	University College London/UK Research and Innovation	Federation/local government/communities	2023–26	Dar es Salaam

skills that have been transferred by the community. This is significant because the current academic curriculum and training do not provide or cover those skills, and there is a capacity gap in innovation and innovative approaches that can deliver sanitation solutions.

The third point on impact is about the recognition that CCI, and the general role that communities and community-based organisations have taken on as viable change agents. Communities of informal settlements in Dar es Salaam, for instance, where CCI is working, are now not only seen as recipients of aid or development initiatives, but also as actors who can contribute and bring ideas, knowledge, skills and resources to the table. A tangible example of the recognition of NGOs gained through co-production is the appointment of CCI as a member of the Municipal Disaster Management Committee. This appointment consolidates the growing recognition of the value of the CCI and co-produced knowledge and initiatives at the community level.

Conclusion: co-production as a viable pathway for community development

Reflecting on the last two decades of CCI's existence, CCI has championed the ethos of collaborative work and engagement of communities in advancing solutions to development challenges. Considerable progress has been made in that regard, although some more work could be done to change mindsets. This makes the use of co-production both an attractive and useful proposition to bring the diverse actors, opinions, skills and resources together. One objective of CCI is to provide a model and ensure that all projects and programmes are funded and implemented by major donors in informal settlements. Donors and development partners need to emphasise the component of co-production and ensure that the communities are not going to be simply recipients or called partners just on paper, but also in practice (by engaging them fully in the planning and implementation of interventions). And this is how co-production is different from traditional collaborations: it has the potential to transform collaborations and partnerships that deliver development projects.

There is also a need to consider how co-production as a topic and practice is considered and treated in capacity-building activities. This includes the academic training that students and future development professionals receive. Graduates (and future professionals) from the local universities and other academic institutions will benefit not only from new skills but also from a critical change in mindset, a 'co-production

mindset', which is an appreciation of the value of co-production and will facilitate the mainstreaming of meaningful community participation and the utility of community agency in all development endeavours. This is one of the pathways for future transformative and sustainable development for local communities.

CCI's very grounded and long-term engagement in co-produced initiatives and interventions demonstrates both the value and potential of community-based development work. It throws a spotlight on how incremental community-based initiatives have filled a significant development void in urban informal settlements in Tanzania, leading to the provision of essential basic services. The overarching lesson from CCI's approach to co-production over two decades (2004–24) is the silent advocacy for a radical shift in policy and practice to support community-based efforts, in urban settlements where the impacts of development fragilities are most evident. Community-based co-production practitioners like CCI are champions of transformative urban development and have provided a model that speaks volumes in terms of the utility of engagement of the lowest level of devolved local government/administrative structures and distinct community-based structures and organisations, as well as private sector actors to solve development challenges in urban settings (for more on this, see Osuteye et al. 2020; Woodcraft et al. 2020; Hofmann 2022; and Johnson et al. 2022).

In a rapidly urbanising continent where several urban communities are in a state of fragility and accentuated poverty, inequality and marginalisation, the 'CCI model' will remain a significant force for good for the foreseeable future, driving the ambition to see the development of thriving, equitable, safe, resilient and prosperous communities in urban centres across Africa.

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From pathways to desire lines: transforming urban change through co-production

Zarina Patel

Introduction

The ongoing polycrises facing humanity and the planet require urgent collective action to address deepening injustices threatening survival. There is widespread acknowledgement that cities and urban processes lie at the heart of reconfiguring global trajectories. Over the past decade, numerous shifts have been triggered to transform the global outlook, including a range of policy interventions at different scales, the burgeoning of a multitude of partnerships and networks, and technological advances to steer urban transformation. Nonetheless, globally, the effects of climate disasters, public health crises, displacement and lack of access to basic services are more acute now than ever before. Glimpses of alternate ways of knowing and action that result in just and sustainable outcomes are increasingly evident, emerging from knowledge co-production experiments across wide-ranging contexts, as documented in this volume. Whilst knowledge co-production initiatives are gaining traction for their transformative potential, critical engagement with practice and theory highlight the limitations and areas for growth that must be addressed to secure credibility and effectiveness. What the Knowledge in Action Towards Urban Equality (KNOW) programme and other knowledge co-production programmes show is that for knowledge co-production to meet its transformative potential, critical engagement with partnerships and pathways is urgently required. Drawing on learning from doing co-production, this chapter brings into plain sight transgressive

deviations to the pathways that are failing to bring about transformative change. These alternate routes to action and change are identified here as desire lines that create room for manoeuvre in terms of deepening both the practice and theory of knowledge co-production in the pursuit of urban equality.

This chapter aims to weave together the conceptual and practice-based strands of co-production in a dynamic feedback loop, learning and cross-referencing between the two. Building on evidence as presented in this volume, this chapter first presents four propositions that shape the conceptual and contextual terrain of knowledge co-production: urban equality as an epistemic challenge; the scalar politics of epistemic equality; interconnected sites of transformation; and identifying desire lines to enrich transformation. The second half of the chapter focuses on four sets of learnings based on the practice of co-production. These are the classic ingredients of a mystery plot: the what (the nature of urban challenges), the who (partnerships and power), the how (co-producing change) and the where (scaffolding for change) of knowledge co-production. Together, these reflections on theory and practice track desire lines that highlight the gaps and room for manoeuvre that must inform critical approaches to co-production as a transformative tool in the expanding toolbox to achieve urban equality.

Situating knowledge co-production

There is no need in this chapter in a book on knowledge co-production in action to rehearse the purpose and intent of this approach. Suffice to say that knowledge co-production is more than a method, used to reconfigure traditional knowledge pathways to uncover multiple perspectives and responses to complex challenges. What is more useful here is to zoom out to the broader political parameters shaping how we think and act on the local challenges around which knowledge co-production projects typically cohere.

Historically, global efforts to address urban inequality have long histories, with nascent seeds dating to the 1972 Stockholm United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which gave rise to a multitude of global pacts, policies and partnerships that have evolved through struggle, sacrifices and principles over the decades. Whilst there have been many positive developments since Stockholm, including the recognition of cities as key sites of transformative action, and commitments to include a wider representation of voices in negotiating actions, patterns of inequality and

environmental degradation are deepening. The world has indeed changed radically since 1972, and the policy space has shifted at a breathless pace. Despite all the talking and theorising, the fundamental systems that drive the economy and our knowledge systems that shape how we know remain largely unchanged and unchallenged. Where we have failed, frameworks are replaced by new goals and objectives, new rhetoric and discourses, without getting to the bottom of what locks us into unsustainable and unjust outcomes, and without an adequate engagement with the politics of how these global agreements translate in different contexts. Four propositions are offered here in order to anchor the local project-based knowledge co-production efforts contained in this book to the wider political and historical context shaping patterns of inequality.

Urban equality as an epistemic challenge

Achieving urban equality globally is dependent on understanding the nature and experience of urban inequality and responding appropriately. Responses can therefore only be as effective as our knowledge of the challenge. How we know and what we can know about urban inequality differs significantly between the Global North and South. Research capacity across these contexts varies tremendously, resulting in universalised assumptions, informing policy frameworks that are designed to respond to inequality. The inbuilt bias towards Northern experiences of inequality presents a myopic approach being entrenched in global policy that is out of sync with systems of informality from which the majority of urban dwellers derive livelihoods and engage urban systems. The global policy pathways we have at our disposal inadequately reflect the complexity of the intersections between formal and informal systems in cities of the Global South, as there is insufficient accessible knowledge about these alternate systems and infrastructures, despite their dominance. Addressing urban inequality therefore means that attention needs to be paid to building capacities for how we know about inequality from multiple localities and ensuring that these diverse realities are reflected in prescribed policy pathways.

Scalar politics of epistemic equality

Given that epistemic inequalities are charted across North-South lines, requiring context specific responses, it is tempting to polarise how we think about urban change according to these binaries. Factors shaping urban morphologies, including histories of colonialism, infrastructure

finance and multi-scalar decision making, imply that the political footprint of what happens in one part of the world has implications for another. Similarly, the mobility of people and the functioning of ecosystems do not cohere around North-South lines, or even national boundaries. As such, what happens in Norway has significance for Nigeria; what happens in Ghana matters for Great Britain. Whilst places are connected, they are not connected in equal or even fair ways. Binaries between Northern and Southern approaches deflect attention from some of the real causes of inequality, while delegating responsibility to already undermined localities. The scalar tensions that shape patterns of inequality are political, and they render some realities more visible than others. Addressing urban equality must break down the binaries between the North and South, and engage the complex webs of interconnections between places and across scales.

Transformation and change

Change lies at the heart of transformation, a change from an undesirable state (inequality) to a desirable state (equality). Three factors are important here: (1) understanding the appearance or character that needs improvement; (2) knowing what the improved state will be; and (3) implementing actions to get to the improved state. Given contextual differences, transformative actions in Bergen will differ from those in Blantyre. Even when places are affected by similar phenomena, responses cannot be the same. To give an example, the effects of climate change leave no corner of the globe untouched. During the second half of 2023, numerous places experienced devastating floods, including New York, Scotland, Cape Town, the Himalayas and Somalia. The uneven coverage of these disasters and the unequal global responses highlight that our starting points in the Global North and South are not equal. The extent of devastation in each of these places is not only dependent on the amount of rain that falls over a period of time, but also on the state of social and material infrastructures that were in place before the floods (Fatti and Patel 2013). How these different places recover will depend on history, governance responses and social capital. Engaging transformation requires a deep appreciation of context and difference. Ensuring equality is shaped by questions of justice, repair, redress and redistribution. Globally, the approach to just transitions is shaped by these very concepts that Nancy Fraser (cited in van Vulpen and Bock 2020) usefully offers as components of justice: redistribution or distributive justice (who gets what); representation or procedural justice (whose voices are heard); and recognition or restorative justice (who matters when repairing harm). We need to take seriously the question of

who a transformation agenda includes and excludes. Conceptually then, transformation is intimately intertwined with questions of justice.

Desire lines and transformative change

Transformative change is often manifest and measured in the realms of what is visible and measurable; however, the material dimension of change is one of three spheres required in order to address inequality (O'Brien 2018). With knowledge co-production, individuals engaged in knowledge exchange processes constitute a further sphere of change, which again can be readily identified. However, the third sphere, which is more difficult to track and is often neglected and/or obscured, is that of the political realm of systems, norms and policy shifts. In contexts dominated by informality, this is the sphere in which the most significant changes are happening. Here the concept of desire lines becomes useful to bring into focus the unplanned routes and paths that emerge over time to reflect preference over planned interventions or routes that emerge in the absence of designated alternatives. The idea of desire lines in planning emerges from engagement with the work of Deleuze and Guattari (2003), who emphasise the spontaneous lines through which desire develops and is expressed. Desire lines draw attention to lines, points or positions – a relationality and connectivity that stretches across past, present and future. They are a form of resistance, invisible to the formalised system, but of relevance as indicators of preferred directions meeting the needs of society in contexts where data and knowledge are in short supply. Engaging desire lines, including alternate informal delivery mechanisms and bridging across different knowledge partners, provides opportunities for increasing the room for manoeuvre through learning and leveraging relevant and just outcomes. Focusing on desire lines recasts our efforts beyond instrumentalist planning and policy interventions by drawing attention to the need to take seriously the interplay between the global and the local, as well as the difficult and thus far neglected shifts required in the political and personal realms.

Making room to manoeuvre: opportunities for critical co-production

Fostering a more inclusive approach to transformation requires deft manoeuvres that allow us to take seriously the dynamics that lie in plain sight. By zooming out, we are forced to confront the following questions:

how do we deal with the co-existence of multiple logics and contestations? How do we prioritise what is rendered invisible by the very tools we have at our disposal to shift current trajectories? Where do we look to find evidence of urban equality? These meta-questions frame the opportunities and limitations of locally based knowledge co-production projects. Zooming in to the project and neighbourhood scale, room for manoeuvre to critically engage the theory and practice of co-production is outlined through critically engaging the what, who, how and where of knowing and doing differently.

What: the nature of equity challenge

The first manoeuvre is a deep engagement with the relationship between sustainability and urban equality/justice. Partnerships for urban equality focus on marginal areas in cities. Within these contexts, peripheralisation is not strictly geographical, but rather falls outside the net of understanding and responding to the complexity of interactions in these spaces. The projects documented in this volume typically present deep engagements with the gaps in knowledge and responses to service delivery in informal areas, highlighting desire lines that are created in the absence of designated alternatives. The materiality of urban inequality is expressed through energy insecurity, waste, inadequate housing, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food insecurity, disasters and risk, amongst others. These urban challenges resonate with the ‘brown agenda’ of the 1990s. It is curious that the ‘brown agenda’ has disappeared from policy discourses, despite its continued impact on the lives of the majority of urban dwellers, and is creeping into cities of the Global North three decades later. What these projects demonstrate is that what we are dealing with are intersectional and wicked challenges that cannot be achieved through technocratic approaches alone. In these contexts, the desire lines laid through co-production are extending beyond the material to incorporate the roles of politics, power, values and culture in ways that build trust in contexts where citizens’ daily needs have been systematically marginalised over decades or even centuries.

The projects also illustrate the tensions between assumptions about pathways held in global policy mechanisms and the alternate desire lines followed in contexts of informality. For example, the logics of informality vary drastically from the logics of the goals and targets of Sustainable Development Goal 11. Informal transport solutions, for instance, are not premised on scheduled rides, but are based on getting to where the needs are and maximising profit. Thus, waiting to fill up a vehicle that

has no pre-determined stop or timetable are the features that configure the regime. Other sectors, such as waste, are configured as hybrids between formal and informal delivery mechanisms. We understand very little about these intersections, and they are certainly not visible in the policy frameworks. Despite their lack of visibility, they provide alternate delivery mechanisms and livelihoods for millions on a daily basis. In doing so, ironically, it is the unserviced who are the real knowledge custodians, as they have a detailed and nuanced understanding of the areas of functioning and dysfunctionality within our cities. The intention here is not to romanticise these alternate ways of engaging, but rather to highlight the inadequacy of global agendas to address the needs of marginalised communities with urgency and with resources – which include finance and technology, but also skills, livelihoods, hope and recognition. What these local and global tensions illustrate is that urban equality and sustainability are intimately intertwined.

Who: power relations

The second manoeuvre is an explicit acknowledgement that rather than try to flatten power relations, the potential of knowledge co-production might be harnessed more productively if the effects of power are recognised, called and steered differently. Co-production is a relational practice where different knowledge brokers come together to share, learn and respond. Bringing different knowledge bearers together is premised on power sharing and the flattening of power constellations. In reality, in spite of work to establish common norms and values, power relations can never be completely erased. Who initiates projects will ultimately always shape what partners cohere around and who steers the process. Co-production programmes, such as KNOW, are typically conducted with funding from the Global North. Funders have a key role to play in this power hierarchy, as they shape the funding calls that determine who partners with who, and that steer the thematic pathways that programmes take. In partnering, the usual suspects from the Global South are called upon again and again. Credibility is a key criterion in short-term funding, leaving many potential partners, projects and places behind. In order for transformative change to occur, who to partner with is as important as what to partner about. Legitimacy and credibility of institutions are necessary but insufficient conditions for leveraging inclusive change.

At the project level, academics who hold the grants that steer co-production projects will set the agenda in broad brush strokes. Yes, the

details are co-produced with knowledge partners, but the premise for coming together and for funding projects will always come with gatekeepers. The labour of engaging partners and working with and against power relations, as appropriate, constitutes the invisible desire lines that researchers and partners must navigate and negotiate. In this relational space, there will be both push and pull vectors. Developing and nurturing the skills to navigate this space is central to addressing questions of epistemic inequalities (Shackleton et al. 2023). Explicitly working with the benefits of partnering through negotiated asymmetric reciprocity (Silbert 2019) – with different knowledge actors working differently together – is a more productive and realistic approach. This shift to maximising reciprocity has the potential for widening the room for manoeuvre. Following the desire lines that seek to maintain institutional integrity in the process of exchange has value for ensuring more enduring outcomes.

How: co-producing change

The third manoeuvre focuses on the work that needs to be done apart – in home institutions – to allow new ideas emerging from co-produced engagement to gain traction. Despite efforts to include a range of partners across higher education, research institutes, policy, industry and societal actors, support for deliberate institutional change to jointly reconfigure immediate and future trajectories are the Achilles' heel of co-production efforts. Many programmes based on these assumptions come to an end with the ceasing of the funding to support the partnerships, without having achieved the full potential of long-term structural changes or the upscaling of solutions that were experimented with. The design of knowledge co-production projects is based on processes of coming together in processes of co-conceptualisation, co-design, co-creation and so on to engage and learn in order to generate new insights. Patel (2022) describes this process of exchange as entering a portal or third space, where new horizons are reached, and alternate worldviews and ways of seeing are configured. The return of individuals to home institutions leaves many in what Polk (2019) refers to as a state of ‘homelessness’, where individuals are unable to achieve new insights in untransformed institutions. Desire lines that connect individuals involved in co-production with the institutional changes required to effect ideas need to be charted to strengthen the effectiveness of co-production praxis and theory.

Developing a relational space between knowledge co-production processes and institutional change can be enriched by disrupting what Perry refers to as the ‘art of co’.¹ The etymology of the Latin prefix ‘co’

is to both bring together and to take apart. Whilst co-production efforts have thus far focused on the coming together, this is a necessary but insufficient condition for change. Navigating the work that needs to be done apart will provide more room for manoeuvre. This work requires desire lines that include leadership, vision and resources, all of which are seldom factored into programmes, and is perhaps the hardest work in contexts with weak and fragile governance structures.

Where: institutional change

The fourth manoeuvre requires that co-production partners question and identify the power vectors and structural barriers in home institutions. Whilst the work of engaging structures applies across all partners, as academics, the university and the wider knowledge ecosystem constitutes the room for manoeuvre. The recognition that universities need to change if they are to remain relevant is reflected in the acknowledgement of the ‘third mission’ of universities to engage with and in society and through the impact agenda. Despite these strategic shifts, our understanding of the kinds of changes required to support working across disciplines and beyond the university is lagging behind (Scheba and Scheba 2023). In reality, researchers face several constraints, including factors ranging from the lack of flexibility in finance systems to the systems of reward and incentives surrounding publications and promotions, which are traditionally premised on disciplinary depth (Shackleton et al. 2023). In addition to the inflexibility of university structures, desire lines that cross disciplinary systems in curriculum and pedagogy development need to be supported to ensure that appropriate skills are developed.

Changing university systems requires a manoeuvre that brings into plain sight the roles of the knowledge infrastructures shaping academic practice, where excellence is rewarded through h-indices, funding grants, memberships of professional bodies and positions on editorial boards, amongst others. Identifying and developing desire lines within these systems to foster manoeuvres that redefine excellence by adding to narrow confines of disciplinary depth is required. Co-production projects also demonstrate the challenges of illustrating impact. Impact is often difficult to evidence within the short duration of a project. Following the desire lines that are launched by programmes, beyond their lifespan, by tracking processes and individuals will reveal the real impact. Re-imagining impact as well as ways of measuring and tracing impact will provide room for manoeuvre to give scholars working in the co-production space a firmer foothold in the academy.

Closing reflections

Experiments in knowledge co-production provide sufficient evidence to show the transformative potential of epistemic partnering to chart desire lines of alternate and relevant actions towards urban equality. The moment is now to harness insights and learnings to meet the scale and urgency of the urban challenge. A critical co-production that extends theory and praxis in the pursuit of justice and equality must bring into plain sight existing alternate desire lines. Situated scholarship and practice that zooms out and extends beyond the confines of project and programme is required to leverage the wider political economy of knowledge production and the systems and structures of partner institutions. The scalar implications of these manoeuvres necessitates that boosting co-production to the next level is necessarily a global, interconnected and asymmetric effort. This might seem like a tall order; however, all partners have a sphere of influence that can be deliberately engaged, as a necessary extension beyond the sphere of project-based knowledge exchange and integration. In order for critical co-production to fully embrace its potential as responsible and responsive scholarship, partners must exercise empathy, question assumptions and challenge sources of epistemic injustice. This transformative values-based agenda embraces ‘love and care … [as] radical acts’ (Daya 2022, 12; see also Sellberg et al. 2021), together with courage and connection.

Note

1. A term coined by Professor Beth Perry, Urban Institute, University of Sheffield at various conference presentations as Director of the Mistra Sheffield-Manchester Local Interaction Platform.

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Liberating 'expertise': knowledge co-production as emancipatory practice

Caren Levy and Barbara Lipietz

Introduction

This book has sought to capture the multiple purposes and myriad ways in which knowledge co-production is taking place in different contexts. As the chapters in this book powerfully illustrate, 'there is no single recipe for co-production' (Introduction). Yet amongst this diversity, one common thread runs through all these practices – that co-production is an acknowledgement not just of the value but also of the *urgency* of recognising multiple sources of knowledge if we are to address the complex urban challenges of our time. Contemporary challenges, such as the climate emergency, pandemics, the digital revolution and the reproduction of conflicts at multiple scales, highlight the ongoing need for transdisciplinary responses that embrace the realities of people's lives and the ways in which they understand them.

Knowledge co-production (KCP) builds on and enriches a repertoire of approaches and methodologies that have sought to break out of confining, disciplinary expertise. These include action research, participatory action research and other approaches that facilitate the active participation of all kinds of people in applied research. By legitimising a diversity of knowledge holders beyond academia and professional circles, knowledge co-production extends the breadth of knowledges that can be mobilised to address inequalities and to co-construct more inclusive cities. The book, capturing the wide-ranging experiences of the Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) programme, illustrates

the transformative power of such an approach. The book also highlights the potential of KCP in fostering collective reflection and social learning. This is a critical step in building a common understanding, or ‘periodic consensus’ (Levy 2007), for collective action to address inequalities in cities. As the chapters in this volume convey, KCP is also critical in helping create new capacities that can strengthen the competencies of all agents of change, especially those that appear to be powerless.

Finally, the book provides a sharp reminder that legitimising multiple actors and their knowledges to participate and shape urban arenas is deeply political. Such processes of legitimisation require a reflexive engagement with – and a challenge to – the unequal power relations and structures that drive mainstream systems of knowledge production, their institutions, procedures, resources and value hierarchies. This unequal political economy of knowledge production continues to be driven by a particular modernist understanding of science which underpins the professionalisation of planning expertise. It also remains deeply embedded in the colonial and post-colonial histories which have shaped its present configuration. Many of the chapters in the book illustrate just how those histories influence the process of co-production, but also how co-production challenges the colonialities that determine what is valid knowledge and what is not.

In this concluding chapter, we briefly discuss the reproductions and strictures of mainstream ‘expertise’ and propose a set of principles to guide the collective construction of knowledge that can advance pathways to urban equality. We argue that the operationalisation of these principles, which take on different configurations in different contexts, is a prerequisite to liberate ‘expertise’ and to reclaim the transformative power of actionable knowledge for equality.

The strictures of expertise

Since the turn of the twentieth century at least, the production of legitimate knowledge on cities – and legitimate actionable knowledge specifically – has been considered the mainstay of professionals and experts trained in the land-based professions of architecture, engineering and surveying. In response to the massive disruptions brought about by the Industrial Revolution, these experts took hold of the urban question, guided by the belief that socio-economic upheavals would best be addressed through interventions in space. Steeped in modernist

conceptions of progress inherited from the Enlightenment, and armed with design and engineering toolkits, architects, landscape designers and ‘utopian planners’ (Legates and Stout 2000) sought to (re)organise space as a means of ordering urban processes and urban societies. In the post-war era, the gradual and often contested expansion of planners’ toolkits through the integration of additional disciplinary lenses (including economics, sociology, geography and health) conveyed further legitimacy to planners’ expertise on fast-growing cities (Healey 1985; Davoudi and Pendlebury 2010). Their work was buttressed by modern and rapidly expanding technologies of data processing that enabled the synthesis of multiple data sources and expanded their capacities for forecasting, and were further supported by an expansive, process-oriented method linking ‘ends to means’ (Banfield 1973). With these tools, the rational comprehensive planner came to embody planning expertise, understood as the technical capacity to mould the future.

In turn, the planner’s (scientific and technical) expertise was supported by a rapidly expanding professionalisation infrastructure – a process that interacted with the establishment of the statutory basis for planning within the state (in the UK, for example, the early Town and Country Planning Acts of 1932, 1946 and 1947). In many parts of Europe and North America, new bodies emerged to orchestrate, regulate and codify planning as a profession, along with the knowledge base upon which it rested. In the UK, for instance, the Town Planning Institute, established in 1913, developed planning syllabi, qualification mechanisms and accreditation systems which both enabled the expansion and recognition of planning professionals, and controlled their ambit and remit (Davoudi and Pendlebury 2010). Thus, whilst professionalisation helped to consolidate planning as ‘expertise’, Healey and other observers have argued that ‘the professionalisation of institutional planning has delayed innovations in the content and mode of delivery of planning expertise’ (Healey 1985, 503).

These critiques notwithstanding, planning expertise developed in Northern knowledge institutions, in response to context-specific urbanisation challenges, made its way through most parts of the globe through the combined effects of colonial and post-colonial practices, alongside a highly unequal political economy of higher education. Under the guise of developmentalist or hygienist principles, the ordering/controlling logic present in European planning found its harsher incarnation in the exclusionary planning practices introduced in the colonised cities of Africa and Asia, and largely perpetuated through the mainstream ‘anti-poor’ and ‘development control’-focused policies of the post-colonial

era (Yiftachel 1998; Watson 2009). Northern-based planning expertise, imbued with scientific rationality and an attachment to formalisation, was exported at first through colonial administrations and, later on, through circulating planning curricula and ‘best practice’ approaches in a context marked by ‘severe quantitative deficits, outdated pedagogies, and qualitative shortfalls in current planning education’ in many Global South contexts (Wesely and Allen 2019, 139). The result has been the propagation of planning knowledge and practices divorced from the realities of those who inhabit the city.

The above vision of planning expertise and knowledge has gradually been challenged from within and outside the profession, in response to questionable state-based planning actions and/or the collusion of planners with the market. As critiques have noted, such actions presented under the guise of ‘the public interest’ or as ‘value-free’ (Healey 1985) resulted in both the Global North and South in often violent eviction and displacement of urban residents, the criminalisation of informality and the invisibilisation of certain voices in ‘scientific’ approaches to planning. Underpinning such critique is an interrogation of the assumptions of the scientific method adopted by planning, and also a demand for ‘critical reflection on how the structures of settler colonialism are embodied in the knowledge, presumptions, and actions of planners’ (Barry and Agyeman 2020). The call for knowledge co-production has emerged out of this now-established critical tradition, as a practical response to the shortcomings of expert-led urban development planning.

Breaking the mould: transdisciplinary principles of knowledge co-production

The cases analysed in this book highlight a range of alternative practices to generate and use knowledge collectively in urban planning. In this section, we discuss the principles on which such an alternative practice is based, recognising that the form these principles take is driven by the context in which they are applied and the purposes of the collective action. We argue that operationalising these principles is a prerequisite to challenging the unequal power relations that underpin mainstream approaches, and therefore the basis for constructing a KCP process that can contribute to transformative pathways to urban equality.

These operational principles were first proposed in the context of the KNOW research programme, where they were presented as ‘revisable’ (Osuteye et al. 2019, 11). In the spirit of these principles, we argue

that they remain revisable and open to continuous learning, even as they build on the accumulation of a wide range of KCP experiences, some of which are reflected in this book.

Our starting point in framing KCP for urban equality lies in the adoption of a *transdisciplinary* approach, specifically a transdisciplinary approach that ‘acknowledg[es] the centrality of knowledges from the ground up’ (Osutseye et al. 2019, 11). The by now well-established call for pluri-disciplinarity or interdisciplinarity in the apprehension of complex phenomena reflects ‘a host of concerns about the pitfalls of specialization and the compartmentalisation of knowledge’ (Bernstein 2015, 13). The more recent turn to *transdisciplinarity* is a further step in this direction of travel, building on a recognition of the interdependence of knowledges required to grasp complex processes and causalities. It further reflects the growing call for epistemic justice in our rendition of general phenomena and our understanding of urban development, more specifically in the context of planning as city making (Frediani and Cociña 2019). A transdisciplinary lens implies a dialogue across disciplines such as planning, engineering, health and gender studies – but also, crucially, a dialogue across diverse ways of apprehending the world through diverse epistemologies. Our starting point, then, is that a transdisciplinary approach aimed at addressing urban inequalities needs to centre the voices and knowledges of those at the coalface of such inequalities, even as we recognise the interdependency of multiple knowledges for developing just planning solutions.

Within this transdisciplinary framing, we highlight four critical operational principles that guide alternative approaches to generating knowledge for urban equality. First, knowledge co-production is a *situated* endeavour, that is, ‘sensitive to the various, localised configurations of barriers to urban equality’ (Osutseye et al. 2019, 11). This implies a recognition of the embedded character of knowledge and knowledge production or ‘that the production of any knowledge is an outcome of social position, location or situatedness producing a particular way the world is understood, the way questions are formulated, the methods chosen to answer the research question and the interpretation of the results’ (Genat 2009, 108).

In turn, such an approach demands an appreciation of context from a variety of perspectives. From a spatial and material perspective, this implies understanding local expressions of the political economy of a place, the specific articulation of intersectional power relations and how they play out in the material and spatial opportunities and constraints of diverse residents’ lives. From a temporal perspective, this implies also paying

attention to the notion of context-as-trajectory over time, with a past, present and future (UCLG 2022; Raja 2023). Working with context further implies an understanding of the diverse discursive practices to which intersectional power relations give rise, and the implications of such practices for understanding ‘whose knowledge counts’. Effectively, this means taking language, its expression and interpretation seriously, including acknowledging the range of knowledge cultures operating in a particular context, at a given time and across different actors (Gherardi 2008; Rongerude 2023, 554; Lepore et al. 2024). Understanding knowledge co-production as a situated practice in the ways outlined above enables applied researchers to collectively identify actionable knowledge, recognising that: ‘However unique a context, it can serve as a generative source for identifying principles (not prescriptions) across place and time’ (Raja 2023, 569).

The second principle of KCP for urban equality relates to its *strategic* ability to contribute to innovative, transformative propositions, able to challenge structural barriers to more socio-environmentally and spatially just urban development (Osuteye et al. 2019). This implies a capacity to ‘read the cracks’ (Healey 1997) and assess the ‘room for manoeuvre’ (Safier 2002; Levy 2015) – or action space – for progressive change in a particular context at a given time. We contend that in order for such actionable knowledge to be strategic, it must be predicated on a collectively agreed definition of the problems at stake (or at least on a periodic consensus – Levy 2007 – regarding the definition of such problems), and a collective understanding of the kinds of knowledges, and knowledge production processes, required to address them. Effectively, this is a conception of KCP as *strategy* not only for building actionable knowledge able to ‘trigger transformative change’ (Schneider et al. 2019, 27). A critical additional factor here, highlighted in several contributions in this book, is that KCP provides the conditions for building collective coalitions for change across communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia and local government.

This leads to the third principle, which is that the relationships between actors engaged in knowledge co-production are *horizontal* or ‘based on partnerships of equivalence in co-production processes’ (Osuteye et al. 2019, 11). The recognition of the need to build horizontal relations and networks is driven by an ethical concern with addressing power relations that too often intrude upon KCP processes. Ignoring such hierarchies of power runs the risk of further entrenching relations of inequality and marginalisation.

This fundamental interrogation of traditional approaches to research and knowledge production takes on critical meaning in the context

of the unequal political economy of international higher education research. Based on a critique of this global context, the KNOW programme promoted the notion of ‘partnerships with equivalence’ (Levy 2012) built on mutual respect, transparency and accountability between research partners in the Global North and the Global South. In developing the notion of partnerships with equivalence, a key objective was to challenge the universalist worldview (and the structures supporting it) emanating from the Global North, and instead to showcase the value of co-producing knowledge not only as co-learning, but also as part of a wider post-colonial and cosmopolitan project (Allen, Lambert and Yap 2018). At the local level, this principle plays out in KCP practices that build on horizontal partnerships, based on a foundational acceptance and legitimization of the multiple knowledges necessary to understand contemporary urban challenges (see, for example, Sandercock 1998; Lepore et al. 2024).

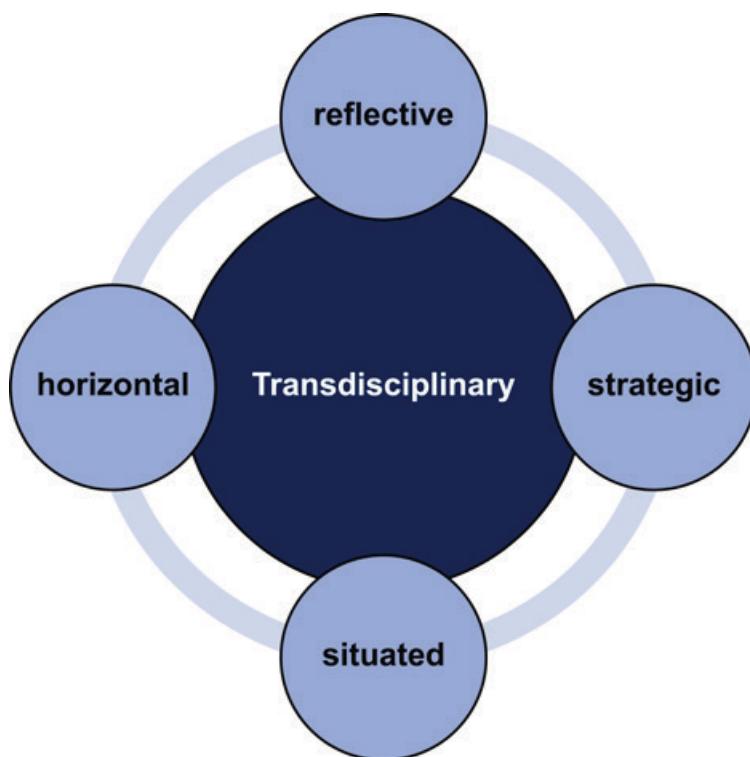


Figure 14.1 Operational principles of a transdisciplinary approach to knowledge co-production.

Source: Adapted from Osuteye et al. (2019)

The fourth and final principle of this new paradigm for generating knowledge is *reflexivity* or the constant questioning of implicit and explicit worldviews and the assumptions they carry, embedded in material and discursive practices. Reflexivity also implies taking not only individual but also *collective* learning seriously (Schön 1983, 1987; Osuteye et al. 2019, 11). With reflexivity comes a process of ‘inherent questioning of theoretical and methodological apparatuses, with a view to developing new understandings, and creatively producing renewed possibilities of thinking and action’ (Allen et al. 2015, 39). Reflexivity requires a willingness to unlearn and relearn, as a mechanism of collective learning and growth (Lipietz and Newton 2016). In turn, the creative potential of reflexive practice requires that it is embedded in situated, strategic and horizontal processes of co-production.

The experiences documented in the book demonstrate the operationalisation of each of these principles (see [Figure 14.1](#)), given form and meaning in each context. By actualising transdisciplinarity, they challenge traditional disciplinary silos in producing knowledge aimed at addressing the range of problems faced by marginalised urban communities and co-constructing pathways to urban equality.

Conclusion

The practice experiences captured in this book and the conceptual discussion in this chapter clearly locate KCP as a political process. Moreover, when KCP is directed specifically at shaping pathways to urban equality, this approach to the creation of collective actionable knowledge can become a transformative political project, within and across urban territories, in the context of North–South relations in development policy and planning, in the context of the unequal political economy of higher education, and, more theoretically and methodologically, in the context of the academic disciplines galvanised to understand ‘the urban’.

Persistent global, regional and urban inequalities are at the root of the range of complex problems faced by humanity. Emerging methodologies like KCP are showing alternative and effective responses to addressing these complex challenges, opening up opportunities for ‘doing things differently’. As acknowledged, this process goes ‘beyond the “inclusion” of marginalised voices, drawing attention to deeply contested and power-laden processes through which diverse knowledges are (or are not) mobilised, recognised, and actioned’ (Butcher et al. 2022, 207). This book, and the diverse experiences it

demonstrates, is a contribution to this urgent and growing transformative, emancipatory project.

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Afterword: provisional conclusions and final thoughts

Vanesa Castán Broto and Cassidy Johnson

Introduction

The visionary writer Ursula K. Le Guin (2004) pointed towards the power of words by talking about words as events, doing and changing things, and emphasising how words transform both the speaker and the hearer, feeding embodied understandings of emotions. The powerful potential of language becomes self-evident in co-production processes. Through co-production, a process of exchange happens. Central to that process of exchange is language. Co-production is made up of stories: the stories we tell ourselves about what happened, how it happened and why it happened.

The challenge is that the story changes depending on the audience. When we do co-production as part of a project, there is a specific audience that is addressed at every step. For projects, there are often donors who shape not only what resources are available, but also what kind of messages are desirable. This was the case in the KNOW project that informed this book and the cases presented within it. KNOW was funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), and it was the UK government whose decisions shaped the fate of the funds. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK government then led by Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson took the decision to move funding away from the GCRF, despite its enormous achievements. This disruption sent shock-waves across many of the projects it currently funded, including KNOW, that were captured in debates about woke culture that transcended the project.

This shock underscored the fact that at the end of the day, KNOW was a four-year project and as such was inadequate to respond to the needs of co-production, which – as emphasised throughout the chapters in this book – requires a long-term engagement that engages a process

of urban change in which directed actions are intertwined with spontaneous ones in a soon-to-come but never-realised sustainable future.

But in any case, the audience of KNOW was elsewhere. It was composed of a large network of practitioners, academics and students who re-imagine the production of urban environments every day. This is an audience whose commitment to co-production extends beyond independent projects into an attitude towards the urban environment and urban life. This audience understands the urban as responding to the demands of a shared life. This requires a politics of conviviality which engages with a conception of living cities that resists conventional urban analysis by focusing on the inhabitation practices themselves, recognises the heterogeneity of urban communities, and relates urban liveability with complex human and non-human relations that become reinforced by practices of urban living.

In this context, the project-based approach is not sufficient to generate such a dialogue between the fundamental radical heterogeneity that characterises urban areas. This is something that the team in KNOW understood well. Instead of bringing new co-production projects, the project leaders in each city sought to root each project in its local context, building on initiatives or relationships that already existed. Some, like the project in Lima ([Chapter 3](#)), even changed to adapt to the demands of the context when COVID-19 caused a food crisis that led to the need for solidarity kitchens. All of the projects were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and due to their embeddedness in the context, they all needed to switch gears and to adapt ways of working to cope with the demands of the pandemic and the needs of the communities.

This afterword reflects on this need to transcend the project approach in co-production and what this means in terms of rethinking its impacts in the long term. It asks the following question: what are the main lessons for these experiences when read together? The focus here is not going back to literature and debates on co-production, but on our personal reflections after engaging with the chapters of the book. Two key points emerge from the discussions: the pervading impact of local politics and the question of heterogeneity (of material systems, of narratives), and the problem of voice.

Engaging local politics

It is a commonplace that local politics shape co-production. This is generally accepted by co-production practitioners, and yet there are few

deliberate efforts to engage with it. Part of the challenge is a sense that local politics need to be understood deeply to be acted upon. In that vein, many anthropologists and political scientists working in co-production have attempted to track the politics of context as a means to make co-production more effective.

However, the chapters of this book put a different spin on the question of local politics. In a sense, all these works – many of which emerge from a long-term engagement with those politics – accept that those politics can never be fully understood. Moreover, these politics are not an independent object of study that emerges as a background for the co-production exercise. Instead, those doing co-production are an inherent part of the exercise and therefore modified it, making it impossible to understand local politics as a phenomenon independent of the co-production exercise.

Perhaps one case in point is the case of Main Bhi Dilli campaign in New Delhi ([Chapter 6](#)), in which different organisations used co-production to actively change the local politics that inform masterplanning practices. In doing so, they not only created alternative pathways for such a master plan, but redefined what the potentials are for co-production not as a disruptive enterprise, but as one that aims to work with the local circumstances and move them in a direction in which all those implicated feel is going forward. What ‘going forward’ means will depend on the context and will change over time. And for that reason, success is not achievable in co-production. But the Main Bhi Dilli campaign shows that a sense of success grows among participants when they feel they gain access to a political process that otherwise remains closed to them.

Local politics are central to co-production, even in cases where changing these politics is not the central objective of the action. For example, in Goba in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, it is the gradual shifting of collectively held views around responsibility, gender and work which ultimately leads to a sense of shared purpose within the community ([Chapter 1](#)). In contrast, in the case of the institutional experience of the Makerekre Urban Lab ([Chapter 2](#)), there is the reproduction of an engaged academic community committed to advancing urban equality that represents the power of co-production in local urban politics, empowering an actor (a local academic institution) that can mediate the interests of the most disadvantaged in a context in which other powerful interests are shaping the urban fabric. For new entrants in the co-production space, this could be a disquieting experience, but as the stories from PhD students show ([Chapter 11](#)), it is also an experience that helps them grow further in terms of advancing progressive research and action agendas. This has

also been a constant in our own trajectory for the co-authors of this afterword, who have often felt disquiet because of the possibility of becoming complicit in hegemonic processes of oppression by oversight or distraction. Without being able to resolve this dilemma, we navigate contexts of co-production with an attitude of openness and fallibility, which should not distract attention from its potential.

The heterogeneity of urban environments

The book reveals how each place, each community and each context is heterogeneous, and thus so is the process of co-production. When we talk about co-production, many views come into place. They may differ – and this is almost always obvious – on understanding what is the purpose of co-production. Even when participants agreed that the purpose was achieving urban equality (as did all the communities and institutions whose experiences are reported in this book), the very definition of urban equality was at stake. This, for example, has been a central question for the experiences of the Centre for Community Initiatives (CCI) in Tanzania ([Chapter 12](#)), which has not only attempted to develop urban equality for the communities it works with along the axes of better service provision and resilience to risks, but has also attempted to understand how communities define urban prosperity and how those notions of prosperity bring urban equality as an objective to advance through co-production. The enterprise is incomplete, but the very attempt to bring these discussions to the fore, in a way that recognises the centrality of communities' perspectives, builds a basis of understanding about the process of co-production. The Community Learning Platforms developed in Freetown ([Chapter 9](#)) are themselves institutionalised mechanisms to help build such common objectives.

However, even when such an understanding exists, there may be wider aspects that shape the extent to which co-production can deliver those objectives. For example, the context of co-production may vary widely. Even when there is an agreement about the objective of co-production, there may be wide divergences about the conditions to achieve such objectives. The Nakhon Sawan Community Development Network is an example of this ([Chapter 8](#)). It started as a small collective of women in the 1980s and started to move forward to a strong collective which eventually was supported through the Baan Mankong government programme to upgrade their housing. The chapter presents personal narratives as a means to engage with the nuanced complexities that shape experiences

of co-production. Mutual learning was the strategy to facilitate building trust across divergent experiences – something that requires a great deal of time, patience and care from community members who built the network with the resources they had at hand in their locality. However, in the case of the Nakhon Sawan Community Development Network, their engagement with external actors at the national level helped to give material shape to what was otherwise only an idea, by providing the means to deliver housing. The driving force was the communities themselves.

Other initiatives have faced similar challenges of engaging with local resources, and infrastructure and institutions, while accessing external actors who can provide key forms of support to keep the co-production project going. In supporting communities, the work of CCI ([Chapter 12](#)) shifts funding strategies towards ‘research’ to gain more access to funds, and looks for openings into municipal decision making such as the disaster management committee. The cases of Lima ([Chapter 3](#)), Yangon ([Chapter 5](#)), Kampala ([Chapter 7](#)) and many others show the need to engage opportunistically with the opportunities provided by the context of action, while mobilising supporting networks across the community.

Thus, co-production is inherently incremental; it aims to make change in small steps within the conditions of action and thus it struggles to become revolutionary or radical. However, this does not entirely annul its emancipatory potential. Co-production can create meaningful and emancipatory change over time. It can help people achieve their dreams, if only in incremental steps, sometimes moving sideways, sometimes backward and sometimes forward.

External actors may catalyse a key moment of engagement that facilitates further action or help to overcome adversity in long-term trajectories of emancipation. When community members engage in building co-production institutions or partnerships, they construct alternative models of citizenship and solidarity, showing how mutual effort builds mutual empowerment. This is something that can be admired from afar. However, no one but community members should have a say in their engagement in these processes. There are no ‘best practice’ cases here that can be touted as co-production models. What happens in one place is borne from the struggles of people in that place, and each group must find its way to respond to those struggles, drawing on the room for manoeuvre they find, the openings they actively build, the relationships they constantly redefine and the resources that reveal themselves in that place.

Many of the authors of the chapters in this book are ‘external’ actors who sometimes just look from afar. What is their role? This is particularly the case for those involved in the GOLD report ([Chapter 10](#)),

who saw themselves as building common narratives that could reflect the heterogeneity of contexts without losing track of feasible strategies for action. Our own experience as external actors to co-production has led us to develop a role as mediators or allies, who sympathise with collective aspirations and aim to provide the catalyst force (funds, technical resources and networks) that will make co-production possible.

Voice and development?

A strong justification for the involvement of external detached participants in the co-production process has been to facilitate the possibility of ‘giving people a voice’. This justification implies that communities may need help in building storylines of their own experiences and deprivation, and that these stories should be communicated beyond the contexts in which they operate. A voice is of course not just the utterance of sound, but also the possibility to bring one’s own opinions, views or narratives into a communicable form. Cities grow and change in a context of epistemic injustices in which many people not only cannot access information, but may also be denied the right to imagine their own future in meaningful, actionable ways. Allies may play a key role in facilitating the construction of such voices, finding ways in which subaltern voices may be articulated within hegemonic discourses.

Fals Borda’s concept of *sentipensar* ([Chapter 4](#)) reflects indirectly on who has this voice, particularly in the context of an academic world shaped by Western perspectives. When we say ‘Western’, we mean shaped by those powers that once held the helm of imperial dreams and who thus bear responsibility for the forms of coloniality that pervade contemporary thought on well-being and development. The challenge is that these forms of coloniality are so embedded in knowledge-making practices that they operate beyond the agency of the co-production practitioners, even when they see themselves as allies. Similarly, co-production comes to support planning practitioners who recognise the multiple knowledges that create the city ([Chapter 14](#)). Patel ([Chapter 13](#)) also speaks of epistemic partnering as a means to deliver on the knowledge emancipation promises of co-production and giving a role to academics who want to make a difference.

Back to the starting point in this afterword, co-production is always a discursive exercise, always shaped by words and language that perform multiple functions and that can be easily appropriated beyond the intentions that motivate them. For that reason, as co-production

scholars, our main role is one of producing narratives that continuously contest solidifying accounts of collective action. There will always be a need for co-production critiques, for co-production is an imperfect process which will never deliver an urban utopia; it will only provide the means for people to achieve short-lived dreams within a bounded context in space and time. People gain autonomy and freedom when their desires are recognised and when they can build opportunities to work towards them within the communities in which they live. This is what in this book we have called ‘emancipation’.

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Co-production of actionable knowledge as a development strategy entails working in partnership with different institutions and sharing power so that communities can participate in planning urban futures. From housing, access to land, services and livelihoods, co-production strategies serve to advance collective interventions to improve inhabitation in cities around the world.

Over time, experiences of co-production have generated critical insights about the opportunities and limits of such partnership strategies. *Co-production of Knowledge in Action* engages with this critique from the perspective of practice. It examines how co-production is articulated and deployed in cities such as Lima, Freetown, Kampala, Dar es Salaam and Delhi, and explores ongoing experiences of co-production-inspired action, mapping the different aspirations that inform co-production practices and the impacts on urban communities.

While the volume recognises the limitations of co-production, and the ways it can serve to reproduce power structures if emptied of its political, transformative intent, the authors also seek to understand the emancipatory potential of co-production as an incremental strategy that has the power to transform urban planning practices.

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