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## **The World Bank, Turner and Sen - Freedom in the Urban Arena**

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**THE WORLD BANK, TURNER AND SEN – FREEDOM IN  
THE URBAN ARENA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The World Bank has redirected its conceptualization of poverty based on income deprivation to one based on Amartya Sen's concept of development as freedom. Evidence is inconclusive on the impact of Sen's thinking, in practice, on the World Bank's urban programmes. Meanwhile the concept of freedom applied in the urban development context is not a novel approach. During the 1970s and 1980s a heated debate took place around Turner's concept of *freedom to build* and the self help approach to squatter upgrading. In this context, this paper contributes to the current discourse by examining Sen's concept applied in the urban sector through a comparison with Turner's writings and critiques. This paper argues that, while developing their ideas in different ways, there is a continuity from Turner's to Sen's conceptualization of freedom. The assessment of the critiques of both writers reveals that by focusing on individual freedom their work shows similar weaknesses: concern with local short term needs; alleviation of poverty rather than tackling root causes of poverty; and expansion of market mechanism that can create even greater burdens for urban dwellers. The main contention of this paper is that the comparison between Turner and Sen illustrates how the World Bank has used the freedom discourse to support the development and expansion of neoliberalism, thus perpetuating social, political and economic inequalities.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Shortage of housing and increasing expansion of squatter settlements are amongst the key challenges in the urban areas of developing countries. Through squatter upgrading programmes, the World Bank hopes to contribute to the millennium development goal of improving the lives of at least 100 million dwellers by 2020 (Cities Alliance, 2003). Due to the limitation of the market oriented approach to tackle inequalities and the housing problem in the developing world, the World Bank has recently redirected its concepts of development, moving away from one solely based on income generation to one influenced by Amartya Sen's concept of development as freedom. In this context squatter upgrading becomes the mechanism to tackle not just the lack of infrastructure but complex new dimensions of poverty such as powerlessness and vulnerability. However the freedom discourse applied at the context of urban sector is not necessarily a novel concept. John F. C. Turner used the same vocabulary *Freedom to Build* in 1972 to elaborate his concept of self-help housing. During the 1970s, Turner's self help approach became the dominant housing strategy of international agencies.

For the present, evidence is inconclusive on the impact of the recent revival of the freedom discourse, in practice, on the World Bank's urban programmes. But the approach raises major questions about the concept and application of the freedom discourse, which this paper examines through the work of Turner and Sen.

By focusing on freedom, both authors detached themselves from a materialistic approach to embrace an idealistic pursuit. People are perceived as agents of change, and not mere recipients. Commodities are analysed by what they *do* to people's lives and not by what they *are*. While there are similarities in the works of Turner and Sen, critics have also shared some common ground by demonstrating the connections between freedom, individualism and neoliberalism. Rather than a shift in direction of the development paradigm by international agencies, the focus on freedom seems to be a continuation and evolution of the previous development strategies. By

looking at the continuity and contrasts of thinking from Turner to Sen, this paper seeks to shed light on the freedom and development discourse in general and more specifically what the freedom discourse tells us about urban sector policies and practices. The main contention of this article is to argue that the freedoms discourse then and now reinforces the neo-liberal approach of urban development thinking.

The first section of this paper clarifies the multiple discourses that can be justified under the flag of freedom and establishes the links with the literature on neoliberalism applied in an urban context. Then the application of Sen's concepts in the urban context is explored and evaluated through a comparison with Turner's works and critics. Firstly the similarities between both authors are highlighted, such as the idealistic perception of development, as well as the differences, such as their conceptualizations of freedom. Secondly, a more analytical approach towards Turner's and Sen's concepts is presented, exploring how far the criticisms of Turner relate to the works of Sen. The heated debate of the 70s and 80s around the concept of self-help housing posed questions about Turner's ideology that become relevant to the current individual freedom discourse. The final part of the paper analyses the relation between the development of market orientated urban policies, supported by international agencies such as the World Bank, and the shift from Turner's to Sen's concept of freedom. This comparison reveals that the focus on individual freedom is merely a continuation of the development strategy by international agencies, rather than a shift in direction.

## 2. FREEDOM, NEOLIBERALISM AND THE WORLD BANK

The concept of freedom is at the crux of the development mainstream discourse. As much as popular, the concept of freedom is ambiguous. Politicians, philosophers, grass root movements and economists have used this concept to justify their demands, goals or policies. However in the last 30 years, the concept of freedom has been mainly linked to the rise and expansion of neoliberalism. This first section of the paper aims at making a brief introduction on definitions of freedom and its connections to

neoliberalism, focusing on the urban development context.

### **a) Freedom**

The ideal of freedom as a human good was identified in much ancient philosophy, which was concerned with the question of *eudaimonia* and concentrates on “the state of having an objectively desirable human life” (Honderich, 1995:252). Since then the concept of freedom has evolved in many different directions. In the field of philosophy the main concern is with an individual’s “free will”. For social scientists freedom is conceived in terms of relationships and discussions explore the extent to which individuals are “free agents” in social life. On the other hand, political theorists define freedom as an ethical ideal or normative principle (Heywood, 1999).

Another way of clarifying the meaning of freedom is by distinguishing it from “unfreedom”. The dual conceptualization of freedom can be traced back to the writings of the French liberal Constant (1818). “Liberty of the ancient” was distinguished from “liberty of the moderns”, as the former refers to the distribution of power among citizens while the latter freedom denotes “security in their private possessions” (1818:253). Following this dualistic approach, Isaiah Berlin (1969) identified a “positive” and a “negative” concept of freedom. This can be understood as a distinction between “free to” do something, and being “free from” something (Heywood, 1999).

The concept of freedom has also been linked to the concept of individualism (see Lukes, 1973 and Berlin, 1969). The significance of this contention will become clear because I will argue that the freedom discourse reifies individualism over communitarian actions.

### **b) Neoliberalism and The World Bank**

Individual freedom, as defined above, has been the founding concept of neoliberal thought (Harvey, 2005). Liberalism is a political ideology that has changed over time, “but that generally emphasizes the benefits of markets, the rule of law, the need for individual human and especially property rights. In its approach to poverty, it eschews

major redistribution, and emphasizes moral discipline and (again) markets” (Craig and Porter, 2006:11). Neoliberal development policies were conceived by the World Bank and IMF and profoundly influenced global policy making in development strategies in general and the urban sector in particular. In an urban context, the application of the neoliberal agenda meant that cities have become perceived as commodities competing with each other in the international market for foreign direct investments. The move of economic policies from import substitution to export orientation marks the aims of cities in developing countries to increase levels of productivity, enhance their competitiveness thus attracting multinationals corporations (Zetter, 2004).

However, due to the increasing inequalities generated by the market enablement policies, Craig and Porter (2006) argue that neoliberalism has recently shifted its focus from “negative” to the “positive” aspect of liberty. While conservative neoliberalism aimed at getting the state out of markets, deregulating, privatising and reducing public spending, “inclusive” neoliberalism based on positive liberalism emphasizes “empowerment”, “participation”, building human capital via services and poverty alleviation programmes.

For the World Bank the shift towards “inclusive” neoliberalism resonates increasingly with the use of Sen’s language and concepts to justify policies that on one hand increased productivity of cities and on the other addressed the multi dimensions of urban poverty. The commitment to use Sen’s language is clearly seen in the article written by the president of the World Bank, Wolfensohn, and Sen (1999): “For the World Bank, too, development is a process that ends with freedom from poverty and from other social and economic deprivations”. In the urban context the move meant the inclusion of new targets for urban interventions, such as liveability, powerlessness and vulnerability (World Bank, 2000). According to Pugh (2004) “the intention was to draw together the economic roles of urban development and the qualities of “livable cities” in terms of poverty reduction, improved environments, and

progress in housing and health” (Pugh, 2004:66). In this sense, squatter upgrading projects became on one hand the means to improve the image of the city, thus expanding its competitiveness and productivity, and on the other hand enhancing participation, empowerment and inclusion of the poor into the formal city.

Nevertheless it is important to note, with Harvey (2005), that neoliberalism is far from a coherent paradigm:

A contradiction arises between a seductive but alienating possessive individualism on the one hand and the desire for a meaningful collective life on the other. While individuals are supposedly free to choose, they are not supposed to choose to construct strong collective institutions (such as trade unions) as opposed to weak voluntary associations (like charitable organizations). (Harvey, 2005: 69)

The analysis of the relation between freedom and neoliberalism is of extreme relevance when analysing the underlying dynamics that influence contemporary urban development policies, such as squatter upgrading programmes. Thus, in the following sections of this paper, the comparison between Turner and Sen aims at unfolding in detail the challenges and contradictions of this shift from conservative to positive neoliberalism in the urban development arena.

### **3. FROM TURNER TO SEN – A COMPARISON**

Modern political economy and social science disciplines have shown little interest in the Ancient Greek concept of *eudaimonia* and *human flourishing*. Most development economists avoided the idealist tradition and focused on the materialist perception of development, avoiding ethical questions and value judgements while concentrating on more practical issues such as the determinants of economic growth and the merits of competition and trade. By focusing on freedom, Turner and Sen attempt to bring the debate on freedom from the domain of classics and philosophy into the development discourse, bringing with it an idealist perception of development. Both writers show dissatisfaction with the

materialist approach, by moving away from a perception of what commodities, such as housing, *are* and focusing on what they *do* to people’s lives.

However it is important to highlight the context of the time when Turner’s and Sen’s main works were written: Turner and Fichter’s *Freedom to Build* was published in 1972, and it augmented a growing amount of literature of the time critiquing the modernization approach to development that had been dominant since the end of the Second World War (see Table 1). Until then, housing policies had been strongly influenced by Lewis’ (1966) dualistic conceptualization of poverty, which argued that the poor had a “culture of poverty” and the only way to overcome this in developing countries would be by carrying out housing improvements mirrored in western standards. Policies recommended eradication of squatter settlements and provision of package housing built to western standards on the outskirts of urban centres.

When Sen’s *Development as Freedom* (1999) was published, the basic needs paradigm, promoted by writers such as Turner, had been superseded in the 1980s, by the emergence of a neo-liberal paradigm. Sen’s book is a response to this market oriented ideology that dominated the development paradigm. Placing Turner’s and Sen’s writings in the context of the shifts of development paradigms, it is possible to argue that while both called for an approach based on freedom, Turner argues for freedom from the state-centralized interventions of the modernization period consistent with growth with equity/redistribution paradigm, and Sen calls for freedom from the market orientated ideology that has dominated the neo-liberal period.

**Table 1.** Turner and Sen in context: Development strategies and housing solutions

Even though the contexts were different, Turner and Sen have in common the critique of the utilitarian approach. While comparing the central state housing programmes with self-help initiatives in Peru, Turner moves to

a discussion of measurement of human and material values. In other words, it is a movement from what housing is in physical terms to what it does for users. Turner criticises the way in which “housing problems are defined by material standards and housing values are judged by the material quality of related products, such as profit or equity” (Turner, 1972:152). Turner calls for an approach in which commodities are analysed by their *use value*, “housing is perceived as functions of what housing does in the lives of its users – of the roles which the process plays in their life history – and not in the material qualities” (Turner, 1972:159). While not developing a framework contradicting to the utilitarian approach, Turner identifies some “functions of housing”, which besides quality of shelter also focus on location and promote alternative forms of tenure, emotional, physical and financial security.

As Turner shifts the concept of housing from a materialistic premise to one based on functions, Sen shifted the conceptualization of poverty from an income-led premise to one based on freedoms. By arguing that the freedom approach should concentrate on the expansion of people’s capabilities to achieve the things they value Sen also focuses on what policies do to people’s lives. The capability approach “relates to the *use* a person makes of commodities and characteristics at his or her command” (Clark, 2002:34). The use of a commodity is shaped by valued freedoms related to that specific commodity. When evaluating policies, it is necessary to assess their impacts on those freedoms and not only the physical aspects. Therefore, according to Sen and Turner the purpose of housing intervention should move from focusing on quantity and physical quality to one based on the impacts on people’s freedom to expand the things they value being and doing.

The core of Turner’s argument is that slum dwellers are better able to judge their housing needs than the hierarchical, bureaucratic, centralized, large scale government led residential programmes. “The fact that so many squatters and owner-builders do so much better for themselves than even well-intentioned government

agencies or private organizations can do for them is, perhaps, the most persuasive argument for increased autonomy in housing” (Turner and Fichter, 1972: 242). Therefore Turner calls for autonomous systems, free from impediments such as building regulations and over regulated housing market network systems. Turner builds up the argument by indicating that the housing problem would only be realistically tackled by moving away from centralised state housing programmes and focusing on network arrangements, compounded by access to information and basic resources for housing such as land, materials, tools and credit:

Network arrangements can help to provide for all dwellers the autonomy which, through money, permits dwellers at the upper end of the income scale to participate in commercial markets as relatively self-sufficient, self-directing human beings (Turner and Fitchter, 1972: 253)

While Turner has identified the need for an alternative approach to the utilitarian one, and suggested some dimensions of this approach, he has not proposed an alternative which could replace it. Sen, on the other hand, has precisely focused his work on the development of a comprehensive alternative. Thus Sen elaborates much more fully than Turner on conceptualization of freedom by proposing an approach that is based on two concepts: *capabilities* and *functionings*. Capabilities are the freedoms people have to achieve the lifestyle they have reason to value. Those variables that people value doing or being, Sen terms *functionings*. This approach is based on an Aristotelian tradition, conceptualizing development as a process of expanding people’s freedom to be and do what they may value. “The “good life” is partly a life of genuine choice, and not one in which the person is forced into a particular life – however rich it might be in other respects” (Sen, 1996:59).

Thus there are significant differences between the two authors on the way freedom is conceptualized. Turner’s perception of freedom focuses on the negative aspect of liberty. It is concerned with “absence of impediments” and freedom

from something. Meanwhile Sen has developed a much more elaborated perception of freedom, which embraces also the positive aspects, such as choice, power and autonomy. In other words, Sen goes further than Turner by not only focusing on “freedom from”, but also acknowledging the need to expand the idea of “freedom to” (Frank, 1994). Sen acknowledges in his writings the inequalities generated by market mechanisms and that people need freedom to compete fairly. Therefore focusing only on “freedom from” market and government interventions would not be enough to encourage “freedom to” achieve the doings and beings people value. Sen makes a distinction between the opportunity (freedom to) and process (freedom from) aspect of freedom.

Sen defines the process aspect of freedom as one concerned with *autonomy of decision* and *immunity from encroachment*. Meanwhile the opportunity aspect of freedom would be concerned with a person’s *opportunity to achieve*, hinting at structural conditions. Enabling market mechanisms would on the one hand impact positively on the process aspect of freedom by encouraging *autonomy of decision* and *immunity from encroachment*, but on the other hand the impacts on the opportunity aspect of freedom tend to exacerbate inequalities (Sen, 2002:526). Sen identifies a gap “between the freedom-invoking rhetoric, often used in the literature, in defence of the market mechanism (e.g., that it makes people *free to choose*) and the exclusively *welfarist* treatment of the market mechanism in conventional welfare economics” (2002:565). However he does not clarify where he stands between those two extremes. Nevertheless Sen does argue for an interventionist approach to correct the unequal impacts of the market on the opportunity aspect of freedom.

Sen’s conceptualization of freedom has been developed by researchers into a framework called the capability approach. Their aim is to develop a broad normative framework for the evaluation of individual well-being and social arrangements (Nausbaum, 1988<sup>1</sup>; Sen, 1999; Chiappero Martinetti, 2000; Alkire, 2002; Robeyns, 2003). The core characteristic of the

capability approach is to move away from the income-led evaluation methods implicit in the neo-liberal agenda, and focus on the ability people have to achieve the things they value. Therefore wellbeing can be measured by assessing people’s freedom and choices, rather than their level of income or consumption. Very similar to Turner’s proposition, freedom friendly policy design should be “removing obstacles in their [people’s] lives so that they have more freedom to live the kind of life which, upon reflection, they find valuable” (Robeyns, 2003:6).

Both Sen and Turner perceive people as agents of change, but Sen goes further again on this issue by arguing that participation should go beyond the construction of one’s house. According to Sen “the people have to be seen, in this [development as freedom] perspective, as being actively involved – given the opportunity – in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs” (1999:53). It is interesting to note in this quotation the inclusion of the opportunity aspect of freedom, which differentiates Sen and Turner. By taking this more broad and elaborated definition of freedom, Sen’s approach applied in the context of squatter upgrading projects, would not only focus on self-help or the network systems, but also on the freedom people have to participate in the network systems and decision making processes. Therefore a squatter upgrading intervention, moving from Turner to Sen’s perspective, would not only focus on the process aspect of freedom such as freedom to build one’s own house (autonomy of decision), privacy (immunity from encroachment), but would also be enabling the opportunity aspect of freedom of the most in need. Even though not making himself clear on this topic, Sen seems to be supporting a targeted welfare system to assure that the disadvantaged would have enough resources to realise their valued freedoms. This targeted welfare system would protect people’s freedom to be left alone while also recognising the freedom not to be left behind, therefore correcting the market failures of the opportunity aspect of freedom.

Despite their differences on the conceptualization of freedom, Sen and Turner have very similar ideas about what urban interventions should focus on, since they argue that interventions have to accept and optimize the already existing dynamics of urbanization. Closely related to Turner's ideas, an intervention focusing on expansion of capabilities would be supporting and enhancing local dynamics, accepting the extant resources of slum dwellers and removing the obstacles to the expansion of their valued freedoms. "If you have to decide what has to be done in the slums it is not a question of what the slum dwellers need – you have to find what they could do if they had the freedom to do it" (Sen in Khosal and Samuel, 2005: 70). While Turner criticises the hierarchical approach, Sen argues that top down interventions, by state or international organizations, not sensitive to local livelihoods will destroy the existing capabilities acquired by dwellers and it will generate further difficulties for the poor to emerge from poverty.

Applying both protagonists' ideas to the urban context, it is possible to see a continuity of a critique of the instrumentalist planning of cities which promote, through rules and regulations, some kind of holistic order. By calling for freedom in urban planning, Turner and Sen are criticizing the top down "master planning" of cities and the need for the city to be compatible with a single ideal. Universal solutions for the enhancement of urban populations would be increasing coercive regulations, restricting people's freedoms and encouraging the replication of a global and monocultural city model (Khosla and Samuel, 2005: 19). An alternative approach based on freedom would be concerned with the interaction between agents, and not the dualistic relation between the included and excluded; with the multiple dynamics taking place in cities, and not universal values. City planning becomes a challenge for enabling agents to flourish in their own and different ways rather than promoting a preconceived ideal of the city.

The comparison between Turner's and Sen's approaches unfolds a continuity of the idealist approach towards development, where the ideal of freedom is pursued. Even

though both writers emphasize the need to focus on what commodities do to people's lives and not on what they are, Sen has developed a more elaborated and in-depth conceptualization of freedom. By focusing on process but also on the opportunity aspect of freedom, Sen recognises that an objective of a welfare system is to correct the inequalities generated by the free market strategy and the absence of regulation. Applied in the context of urban development and squatter intervention, both writers criticise the modernist tradition of a stylistically uniform city, and both writers call for an approach that can maximize what dwellers already do. But, while Turner's self-help approach calls for dwellers' freedom from impediments, Sen includes new dimensions such as participation in decision making and equal opportunity to acquire the freedoms people value, where the state would be deregulating markets while also supporting the disadvantaged to participate in them.

The next section now develops a more analytical approach towards Turner and Sen's concepts, by comparing two squatter upgrading projects and assessing the critiques, challenges and contradictions of the freedom approach. This will lead to the final section where it is argued that the shift in the development paradigm to a conceptualization of development as freedom, supports the expansion of neoliberalism into the urban arena rather than a shift in direction.

#### **4. FROM TURNER TO SEN – A CRITIQUE**

Many of the critiques of Turner and Sen share common ground by analysing the impacts of the bias towards individual freedom and focusing on commodity use values. During the 70s and 80s a heated debate took place around the broad long term social implications of Turner's concept of self-help housing and individual freedom. As international institutions embrace an understanding of development as freedom, a similar debate becomes relevant to the contemporary development discourse. Critics of Turner (Burgess, 1982; Pradilla, 1976; Harms, 1982; Marcuse, 1992) argue that focusing on individual "freedom to build" weakens collective actions, increasing the possibility for cooption of individuals and

project leaders. Policies may focus on individual measures rather than tackling the structural inequalities which led to shortage of houses in the first place. Self-help critiques have argued that such an approach helps to maintain the status quo and does not challenge the sources of inequalities and injustice. Similar critiques have been posed concerning Sen's capability approach. Sen refuses to accept the role of collective capabilities and, by doing so, researchers argue that he is excluding group or collective freedoms.

The implications of squatter intervention policies based on individual freedom for squatter inhabitants are assessed in five areas: regulatory systems, spatial dimensions, collective bonds, role of state and role of the market. The analysis of these five areas considers the way in which a focus on individual needs rather than collective capabilities can impose certain values, suppress local dynamics of interaction with the space, and weaken collective bonds while not challenging the causes of poverty. Nevertheless, as Sen elaborated a more in-depth understanding of freedom than Turner, the last part of this section assesses how supporters of the capability approach would respond to the critiques developed here.

### **i) Regulatory System**

Critics have argued that the focus on individual freedom leads to the privatization of housing provision under the ideological banner of greater user control, *autonomy of decision* and *immunity from encroachment* (Harms, 1982). Privatization of housing leads to the expansion of market mechanisms by separating private from public spaces and regularizing land tenure and urbanizing squatter settlements, which is mainstream World Bank policy.

Firstly, individual land tenure regularization policies, rather than deregulating interests, instead regulate commodities which had never been regulated. From the state perspective it seems as if urban laws are promoting new freedoms, but from the squatter inhabitants' perspective this represents an increase in restrictions and unfreedoms. Size of houses become limited to what is determined in the title document,

and any variation in the delimitation brings the house back to illegality. Instead of accepting existing collective regulatory systems of squatter settlements, the individual freedom approach advocates the inclusion of the *excluded* into the formal city. "Those policies created for the integration of the *other* are sustained by projects that most of the time represent the imposition of cultural values, such as private property and family life<sup>2n</sup>" (Ribeiro, 2005:34).

### **ii) Spatial Dimension**

The second contradiction of the individual freedom discourse occurs in the separation of the mixed use spaces, leading to replacement of a collective by an individualistic perception of the use of space. For example Jacques (2002) argues that private and public spaces are not clearly divided in Brazilian squatter settlements (*favelas*). "During the day the small streets become the continuation of the houses, semi-private spaces, while the majority of the houses with their open doors also become semi-public spaces. The idea of the *favela* as a big collective house is common among the residents"<sup>3</sup> (Jacques, 2004, <http://www./..>).

Instead of perceiving the mixed use of spaces as a capability, individual freedom writers, such as Turner and Sen, see them as a constraint on autonomy and an instrument to impose collective principles. As Lukes argues "the exercise of autonomy requires a certain area of privacy or non-intervention by others: one cannot be self-determining if one's valued activities are constantly being interfered with" (1973:135). The splitting and separation of private from public spaces is done by defining clear boundaries between the two spaces. On the one hand the urbanization of squatter settlements clarified the limits between street, pavement and houses while regularization of tenure delimited where the house or private space finishes and pavement or public space starts.

The contradiction of the individual freedom discourse is that, on the one hand it argues for the expansion of squatter inhabitants' to interact with space, while at the same time it replaces opportunities for the flexible and mixed use dynamic of space with rigid,

separated, disjointed, fragmented spatial form.

### iii) Collective Bond

Squatter intervention policies based on the ideal of individual freedom encourage the fragmentation of spaces while constraining the spirit of co-operation and collective action. The increase of regulation and the clear spatial limitation between public and private spaces constrained the capability that people have to interact with their house and neighbourhood by “plastering” the squatter settlement. Jacques (2002) argues that urbanization projects concerned only with the physical improvements of squatter settlements inhibit the evolution of the *favelas*, transforming the place of constant change and interaction into a place of planned and rigid form which has the potential to break collective bonds.

Turner's self-help approach has been condemned as being socially divisive due to the focus on individual freedom. “Self-help militates against collective action; its power comes from the desire of an individual household to provide for its individual needs” (Marcuse, 1992:20). The same critique therefore can be made of Sen's approach. By enhancing individual capabilities, collective unfreedoms can still be perpetuated. Collective action is constrained in squatter settlements by the exacerbation of inequalities. This process takes place, on the one hand, by targeting self initiated projects and on the other hand, by accelerating the logic of the market.

### iv) Role of the State

The discourse commending the expansion of extant capabilities has a direct impact on the role of the state: its role is less as a provider of social services and more one of enabler. Instead of tackling broad structural constraints that cause housing shortage, policies are concerned with the enablement of self-initiated projects. Inequality both within squatter settlements and citywide is exacerbated by the fact that only the better organized will be eligible for government funding. Co-operation and solidarity is replaced by a system of competition for scarce resources among individuals or neighbourhoods. Meanwhile project based approaches are limited to immediate problems and not integrated into broader

planning strategies. “Participants in each project have primary concern only about the success of that project, rather than in the establishment of conditions favourable to the success of all projects” (1992:20).

The implication here is that the housing problem is perceived as a local technical problem, thus avoiding broad socio-political change. Such a critique has been asserted against both Turner and Sen. Carter (1999) has criticised Sen by arguing that a person might be individually free but collectively unfree to overcome their exploitive situation because of structural constraints in social and economic arenas. This links well with Burgess's (1982) critique of Turner, which argues that projects based on individual freedom might answer for the short term needs of dwellers but do not challenge the social context from which those needs originate. However, Burgess (1982) goes further by arguing that the approach based on individual freedom contributes to an acceleration of the logic of the market which intensifies the process responsible for housing shortage.

### v) Role of the Market

Both writers would support the idea that expansion of individual freedom improves squatter inhabitants' abilities to interact with the market mechanisms. However, Burgess' (1978, 1982, 1992) and Pradilla's (1976, 1982) critiques of Turner have highlighted how, by introducing squatter inhabitants to a system of transferable private property rights under the flag of *autonomy of decision*, residents have been exposed to taxes and commodity markets in land and property. “As a consequence the poorest have been expelled from the projects or forced to live in high rent overcrowded accommodation within them” (Burgess, 1992:87). The economic eviction takes place because regularization of tenure is not followed by regulation of land market prices, due to the technical difficulties but also unwillingness from the state since that would mean restriction on *autonomy of decision*.

Meanwhile the individual freedom approach does not tackle the structural determinants of housing problems such as: privatisation of services, high interest rates which deny dwellers access to credit without falling into

severe debt; monopoly control of critical building materials such as cement, iron, glass etc.; and the impact of the market mechanism on social segregation and inequalities (Burgess, 1992). Finally Pradilla (1976) argues that squatter upgrading policies focusing on individual freedom transmits a private property and consumption ideology that undermines the arena for social co-operation and collective actions.

#### **vi) Responding from a Capability Approach Perspective**

Nevertheless supporters of the capability approach argue that by having a more elaborated conceptualization of freedom, Sen's approach can respond to some of the critiques discussed at the five areas above. While not accepting collective capabilities, Sen conceptualizes well-being as going beyond self interest: "...the insistence, which, alas, is rather common in parts of economics, that a person cannot reasonably value anything other than her own well-being does little justice to the reach of reason" (Sen, 2003: 15). Robeyns (2005) argues that the capability approach is individualistic in the sense that each person is taken into account, but at the same time recognising that individuals' functionings and capabilities are not independent of their concern for others or of the actions of others. Therefore the focus on improving squatter settlement from an individual freedom perspective would not necessarily mean expansion of selfish goals. Self initiated projects, made up by free individuals and run by a democratic local institution, can lead to policies that expand collective action, tackling broad long term goals. In the same line of argument, Fiori and Ramirez (1992) have defended self-help housing by arguing that interventions based on the concept of dwellers as agents of change open the door for an arena of negotiation between users and state. Even when varying from clientelism and patronage to the strengthening of social movements, participation is perceived as a political process that has the potential to "ensure the transference and redistribution of resources in a more permanent and continuous way" (Fiori and Ramirez, 1992:29).

Supporters of the capability approach would also argue that a more elaborated conceptualization of "freedom" does offer an opportunity to evaluate and intervene in social and political structures. Freedom is understood as a concept made of well-being and agency. The latter plays a role in the conversion of commodities into realized functionings (Robeyns, 2003). As a consequence of this conceptualization of freedom, the state's agency role promotes freedom by interacting with individuals' conversion factors. Therefore the critique made of Turner for supporting the roll back of state intervention and welfare cannot be applied to Sen's approach.

Sen's differentiation between the process and the opportunity aspects of freedom also calls for a more active state in the provision of social security than does Turner's approach. As explained in the previous section, Sen acknowledges that while market mechanisms tend to do well in terms of the process aspect of freedom, involving autonomy of decision and immunity from encroachment, their impact on the opportunity aspect of freedom is unequal. Targeted welfare is supported to strengthen the most deprived to cope with multiple unfreedoms, including the negative effects of market mechanisms. In practice the impact of such an approach can be perceived as palliative, minimizing the impacts of market mechanisms and still not tackling the root causes of housing shortage.

The capability approach, while still having an individualistic root, incorporates concepts that make it much more able to challenge the critiques of Turner's ideas. By understanding freedom as a concept made of well-being and agency Sen's approach tackles human freedoms as well as the structural conditions affecting those freedoms. However, such elaboration is only theoretical and there is no guidance on how to expand individual freedom while at the same time tackling structural injustices in practice. In this respect, Sen's approach has similar weaknesses to Turner's because the implications of policies based on individual freedom remain unanswered: internal fragmentation, weakening of collective

bonds, transmission of private property ideology.

Comparisons of the critiques of both writers have revealed the contradictions of the individual freedom discourse when applied to squatter settlement interventions: the immunity from encroachment concept is applied inconsistently, for example by deregulating markets but regulating land through legalization of tenure. Furthermore local dynamics of the mixed use of space are replaced by the clearly defined separation between private and public spaces. The comparison between Turner and Sen illustrates how the focus on individual freedom can support the development and expansion of the neo-liberal approach. The final part of this paper analyses the relation between the development of the neo-liberal policies and the shift from Turner's to Sen's concept of freedom.

## **5. FROM TURNER TO SEN – A CONTINUATION**

After unfolding and comparing the critiques of Turner and Sen, this section of the paper returns to the initial discussion on the relation between their conceptualizations of freedom and the development of neoliberalism (see table 1). A progression of the discourse based on individual freedom has been identified. While Turner was a precursor of the first phase of neoliberalism in the urban sector, Sen's concepts have been appropriated by the second stage of neoliberalism: market enablement with targeted welfare through poverty alleviation.

Turner's work was used and appropriated by the World Bank during the mid 1980s to justify the development of the market enablement paradigm. The urban policies of the World Bank aimed at tackling poverty through the enhancement of efficiency and productivity of the housing market. However due to the raising inequalities generated by the neo liberal policies, the World Bank recognised in the 1990 development report a need for an approach to development that could answer their twin objectives: expand markets while tackling the side affects of structural adjustment programmes. These objectives were elucidated by the managing director of the World Bank at the World

Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen (Sandstrom, 1995).

As Sandbrook (2002) confirms, Sen's more elaborated approach to development is being deployed by the World Bank to answer these twin objectives. From a Sen perspective, *autonomy of decision* and *immunity from encroachment* would be enhanced by market enablement policies, while poverty alleviation programmes would be expanding the poor's *opportunity to achieve*. As Sandbrook (2002) argues, rather than a change of paradigm, Sen's more elaborated conceptualization of freedom has been used by international donors to justify a continuation of the market enablement policies, while attempting to lighten the burden of urban poverty. Instead of changing the previous paradigm, Sen's concepts serve as conceptual and ethical grounding for the rise of, what Sandbrook (2002) calls, "pragmatic neoliberalism".

This pragmatic adaptation of Sen's thinking, Gore (2000) argues, represents a continuation of two trends in the neo liberal paradigm: the ahistorical performance assessment; and the partial globalization of development policy analysis. The neoliberal period marked the shift of focus from history to "performance". Since the 1980s grand narratives were questioned, and development agencies abandoned their tokens of "modernization" and emancipation of the people from oppression to embrace the role as monitors of "performance", making local economic and social institutions "work" more efficiently. According to Gore (2000) the application of Sen's writing in the development mainstream does not change a short term performance driven paradigm. It actually expands as a more multidimensional approach is used to measure and increase performance, thus merely making the Washington consensus more humane.

As for the partial globalization of development policy analysis, Gore (2000) argues this combines a global understanding of development norms, but methodologically nationalist in its explanations. In other words, Sen's work is used to expand the neoliberal trend of proposing local solutions to global problems.

Gore (2000) calls this approach to development “neoliberal populism”, concerned with provision of targeted welfare while not tackling structural inequalities.

Sen’s conceptualization of freedom has been used to justify an expansion of the market enablement ideology in the urban sector. But as this paper argues, the expansion of such an approach has the potential to create more obstacles for squatter inhabitants to escape from poverty and intensify the causes that created the housing shortage.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This analysis of the World Bank urban policies through the comparison between Turner and Sen’s writings and critiques sheds light on many of the strengths, limitations and contradictions of the application of the freedom discourse in the urban development context. Their concepts of freedom share much common ground leading to common propositions for urban interventions in developing countries. The idealist approach based on individual freedom calls for the removal of squatter inhabitants’ unfreedoms to expand the ability the poor have to “get out of poverty”. The freedom approach offers a conceptual opportunity to break from the dualistic perception of cities (informal/formal; legal/illegal) by recognizing multiplicities and criticising the idea of the city as a uniform or holistic environment. Local urban dynamics are defended, accepting the multiple ways people interact with the environment. For urban interventions aimed at enhancing these local dynamics, the aim is to focus on what commodities enable people to do with them, rather than what they are in a strict materialistic sense.

While Turner and Sen explore the same arena, Sen develops the ideas of freedom in a different way to Turner by introducing the opportunity aspect in his conceptualization. Freedom is perceived by Sen not only as *autonomy of decision* and *immunity from encroachment*, but also as *opportunity to achieve*. Therefore improvements to squatter settlements should expand freedom on the one hand by protecting privacy and freedom for squatter inhabitants to improve their houses and, on the other hand,

interventions should assure that the most disadvantaged are helped to realize the things they value.

Meanwhile, this article argues that the World Bank’s applications of the writings of Turner, from late 1970s, and Sen, twenty years later, share common weaknesses and contradictions. Focus on individual freedom encourages internal fragmentation by the split of private and public spaces, weakens collective bonding, while transmitting a private property ideology which can be socially divisive. Meanwhile this approach transforms the dynamics of squatter settlements from being places of interaction and movement to more rigid environments mediated by the urban regulatory system. Furthermore the comparison has shown contradictions of the individual freedom approach because of the very selective use of what kind of freedom to protect and expand. By not accepting collective freedoms, local dynamics of social networks are replaced by an individualistic perception of development that enables a market oriented ideology to expand among squatter inhabitants. The prioritization of individual freedom activates the privatization of the housing question, expanding market mechanisms, allowing land speculation to take place freely, and expelling the poorest to even more remote locations.

Rather than a change in direction, Sen’s thinking is being used by the World Bank to advance neoliberalism, which aims to alleviate the most disadvantaged with targeted welfare, while still sustaining the structural adjustment programmes. The structural causes of poverty remain untouched, perpetuating social, political and economical inequalities. Furthermore, the policies based on this individual conceptualization of freedom have the potential to destroy the few collective freedoms that residents have enjoyed in squatter settlements. It is not the freedom discourse that perpetuates neoliberal policies, but rather its application of it. Further research is needed to clarify how the freedom approach can make a positive contribution in the long term struggle against urban poverty. However, the starting point has to be the acceptance of collective freedoms and the strengthening of social

movements which can make a more effective political impact on city governance. Meanwhile, the honourable flag of freedom has been used to protect the freedom of the few at the cost of expanding the freedom of most.

## APPENDIX 1 - TABLE

Table 1. Turner and Sen in context: Development strategies and housing solutions

Development Strategies	Concept of poverty	Housing solutions
Modernization  1945- 1960s	e.g. Lewis  Culture of poverty	Eradication and  Provision of houses on outskirts of cities.
Basic Needs  Growth with Equity  <b>1972 – Freedom to Build</b>	e.g. Turner  Help the poor to help themselves	Site and services, Slum and squatter upgrading  Self help housing  World Bank leading advocator
Neo-liberal  1984- Mexican crisis  1989 - Washington Consensus	e.g. De Soto  Poverty was a result of the failure to employ the market effectively.	Upgrading with structural adjustment to boost the housing market sector.
Emerging Paradigm  <b>1999 – Development as Freedom</b>  2000-2001 World Development Report	e.g. Sen  New dimensions: vulnerability, voicelessness and powerlessness	Move from housing sector to city development strategy  Poverty Reduction Strategy

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