

# Space and capabilities: approaching informal settlement upgrading through a capability perspective<sup>1</sup>

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## 1) Introduction

Definitions around the concept of poverty have fundamental implications as to how the role of space is understood in shaping and tackling deprivations in the urban context. The capability approach has emerged as a prominent evaluative framework in the redefinition of poverty as a multi-dimensional, dynamic and socially constructed phenomenon. However, there has been very limited interrogation of how such an understanding of poverty takes into account the role of space and how it could therefore contribute to discussions exploring the relationship between space and poverty. This chapter draws on different case studies to explore how capabilities are conditioned by spatial arrangements and imaginaries, but also how the expansion of capabilities of the urban poor can contribute towards a more socially just production of space.

Drawing from the work of Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2011), capabilities are understood as people's freedom to achieve the values they have reason to value. The notion of 'capabilities' differs from the notion of 'capacities', as it makes reference to a wider set of issues shaping people's freedom to pursue the aspired dimensions of well-being. Instead of focusing on life satisfaction, writers within the capability approach literature have been calling for studies not to focus merely on individuals' well-being achievements, but, most importantly, on the options, abilities and opportunities of individuals and groups to pursue well-being dimensions. Options are the available strategies to expand well-being aspirations. Abilities refer to the set of skills and capacities individuals and groups have access to which would mediate the achievement of a certain dimension of well-being. Meanwhile, opportunities are the structural elements conditioning the availability and use of abilities and options (see box 1 for an illustration of this definition). A capability analysis requires therefore a dynamic assessment of the relationship between options, abilities and opportunities to achieve well-being outcomes. By exploring freedoms as well as well-being achievements, capability-led studies would require an engagement with the exploration of the structural processes conditioning people's freedom to pursue social change.

### **Box 1:** The Bicycle Example

In the capability literature, the relationship between a bicycle (an example of a commodity) and capabilities are often utilised to illustrate Amartya Sen's concepts with more clarity. To examine the success of an initiative that has focused on the distribution of bicycles to reduce poverty, one would have to firstly question the purpose for using a bicycle; for enhancing mobility, generating income opportunities, leisure, and etc. Such outcomes, are the

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 3, in Lemanski, C. and Marx, C., 2015, *The City in Urban Poverty*, Pelgrave: Basingstoke. pp. 64-84.

multiple dimensions of well-being associated with cycling. There are a series of factors conditioning people (individuals and groups in all of their diversity) in their use of the bicycle for achieving their valued aspirations. Such social, economic, environmental, political, and physical elements are defined as conversion factors (Robeyns, 2005). These factors can be understood as individual abilities (i.e. skills to cycle or physical impairment), collective abilities (i.e. mobilization capacities to push for legislations that will protect cyclists), or opportunities (i.e. social norms constraining some social groups from using bicycles). Meanwhile, a capability analysis would require engaging also with the alternative options for achieving people's valued aspirations, to allow the examination if people are using bicycles because of a lack of options, or based on choice to do so (for more on this, see: Oosterlaken, 2009 or Frediani, 2010).

Thus, there is a more fundamental question concerning issues of justice and equity underlying the debates on how capabilities are understood and pursued. Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's works have contributed to the on-going debates to push current understandings of justice beyond utility maximization, and to interrogate questions of equity in the distribution of capabilities. The understanding of social diversity present in the capability approach has contributed to emphasizing how difference is constructed and how it shapes groups capabilities. As with other debates in this field (White, 2010), the capability approach has the potential to bring together material, relational and subjective components of well-being, directly referring to issues of recognition and distribution present in preoccupations with justice. The capability approach is not about exploring levels of satisfaction or happiness; it positions well-being within debates of social change and justice, emphasizing the importance of the enabling or disabling environment for the pursuit of well-being.

Nevertheless, most of the advancements in the capability literature focusing on its operationalization have been around measurement and how data can capture the multidimensional aspects of poverty. The limited work so far exploring issue of space and the urban context in the capability literature has evolved in two ways. The first approach has focused on how the availability of infrastructure or characteristics of the built environment might compromise or facilitate individuals' abilities to enhance their well-being. The second trend in this field has focused on attempting to measure the diverse levels of quality of life spread across the urban territory, making use of GIS mapping and visualization techniques to express urban inequalities in terms of distribution of resources.

The first area of work in this field draws on discussions about the functioning of the built environment to explore how individuals in all of their diversity make use of particular urban facilities. The capability approach literature is used in this context to stress the importance of looking not only at the availability of certain urban infrastructure facilities, but of who uses them and for what purposes (i.e. Lewis, 2012, Oosterlaken, 2009 and Talu and Blečić, 2012). The concept of 'conversion factors' within the capability literature resonates particularly well with the preoccupations in this field, as it highlights the importance of exploring a series of factors that mediates the availability and use of commodities (i.e. personal, environmental and social factors) (Robeyns,

2005). Such tendencies have often reduced notions of capabilities and freedom to mere usability of space, without sufficiently addressing the wider social, political and economic trends underpinning the production of such spaces.

The second trend linking space and capabilities explores the measurement of quality of life in urban territories. Such studies address important questions of how public resources are distributed in the city and thus have the potential to generate important evidence on spatial segregation (i.e. Blečić, Cecchini and Talu, 2013 and Fancello, 2011). Such preoccupations are present in many urban sociology studies, which have brought together data around the availability of infrastructure and levels of vulnerability to produce maps of deprivations in cities. Baud's chapter in this book on mapping spaces of deprivation is a particularly useful contribution in this field, articulating the added value of a multidimensional understanding of poverty to the identification of spots of deprivation in cities. While arguing for a more comprehensive data set, the potential contribution of the capability approach in such studies is still inconclusive. The focus on measurement within these initiatives runs the risk of establishing reductionist assumptions about the relationship between the availability of and proximity to urban facilities and the reduction of poverty that contradicts some of the underlying notions of capabilities. Thus, so far in the capability approach literature the links between concepts of space and poverty have been done in a limited, instrumental and localized manner.

On the other hand, the literature on critical urban theory has focused on examining space to understand structural causes of injustices and inequalities in cities. Although not tackling poverty per se, various writers have elaborated on the dialectical relationship between the *spatiality of injustice* and the *injustice of spatiality* (Dikeç, 2009). The former concept relates to how injustices are manifested in space, while the latter explores how space and the way in which it is produced relates to social, political and economic dynamics structuring injustice. In particular, studies from the critical urban theory perspective explore the linkages between material (distribution of goods and resources) and relational (set of relationships governing distribution of opportunities) aspects of justice in the city, but often neglect the subjective (multiple imaginaries and values associated with life-style options) implications of such debates. While Fainstein (2010) recognizes the potential of the capability approach in contributing to this articulation of the material, relational and subjective dimensions of justice from a critical urban theory perspective, little has been done to advance this front.

This chapter argues that relating notions of capabilities to debates emerging from critical urban theory can make a valid contribution to reflections on the linkages between poverty and space. This contribution can be elaborated by exploring the relationship between space and the three core concepts articulated by the capability approach on the examination of poverty: abilities, opportunities and aspirations. However, in this chapter, they are positioned in relation to discussions from the literature on critical urban theory. Thus, 'abilities' is understood as agency to pursue social change; 'opportunities' are the structural conditions governing the set of relationships that produces (in)justice; and

'aspirations' are the imaginaries and values associated with various lifestyles that people pursue in the city.

This chapter draws on reflections from three case studies to illustrate these three components of analysis. Firstly, the relationship between space and 'abilities' is interrogated through the exploration of the impacts of a housing typology implemented in an informal settlement upgrading programme in Salvador da Bahia (Brazil) called Ribeira Azul. Secondly, the relationship between space and 'opportunities' is examined through the analysis of the impact of a delegated management model implemented in an informal settlement upgrading project in Kisumu, Kenya. Finally, the relationship between space and 'aspirations' is explored through the findings and reflections from a participatory design workshop undertaken with the community of Los Pinos in the periphery of Quito, Ecuador.

## **2) Space and Abilities**

As articulated by Lefebvre, the ways in which spaces are conceived, perceived and lived has a direct relationship with how urban citizens have access to entitlements in the city. Urban citizens' entitlements are shaped by their access to political, social, natural, physical, financial and human assets that can be facilitated or constrained due to how space is produced and experienced. Informal settlement upgrading are examples of spatial welfare programmes, targeting a certain territorial locality with the objective of enhancing local residents' access to assets and thereby reducing poverty. However, underlying such programmes is a complex set of relationships between urban design, delivery strategies, social relations, political structures and economic opportunities that mediate their success in terms of poverty reduction.

The exploration of the impacts of the Ribeira Azul informal settlement upgrading programme in Salvador da Bahia (Frediani, 2007a) emphasizes the linkages between space and the ability of local residents in accessing assets. This research focused on a housing estate called Nova Primavera, which was part of a multi-stage programme called Ribeira Azul, implemented by the state government of Bahia in collaboration with the Italian Association of Volunteers in Active Service (AVSI) and supervised by the Cities Alliance. Implementation took place between 2001 and 2006 with funding of US\$80 million from a variety of sources, including a World Bank loan and grant from the Italian government. Nova Primavera was implemented in 2001, which relocated residents living on stilts from the Cabrito Cove into an adjacent housing estate of nearly 4 hectares, targeting 312 households. Each housing unit is of around 44 square meters and the design of the housing estate resembles a village, with many open spaces and courtyards, which aims to encourage sociability.

The research focused on the identification of housing aspirations of local residents targeted by the programme, and explored its impact on residents' capability to achieve them. Through focus group activities and semi-structured interviews with local residents, five key housing aspirations were identified and described in the table 1 below. Such housing aspirations are associated with the

everyday housing practices of local residents, revealing the underlying intentions and values embedded in the way local residents interact with their dwelling spaces.

**Table 1:** Dimensions of Housing

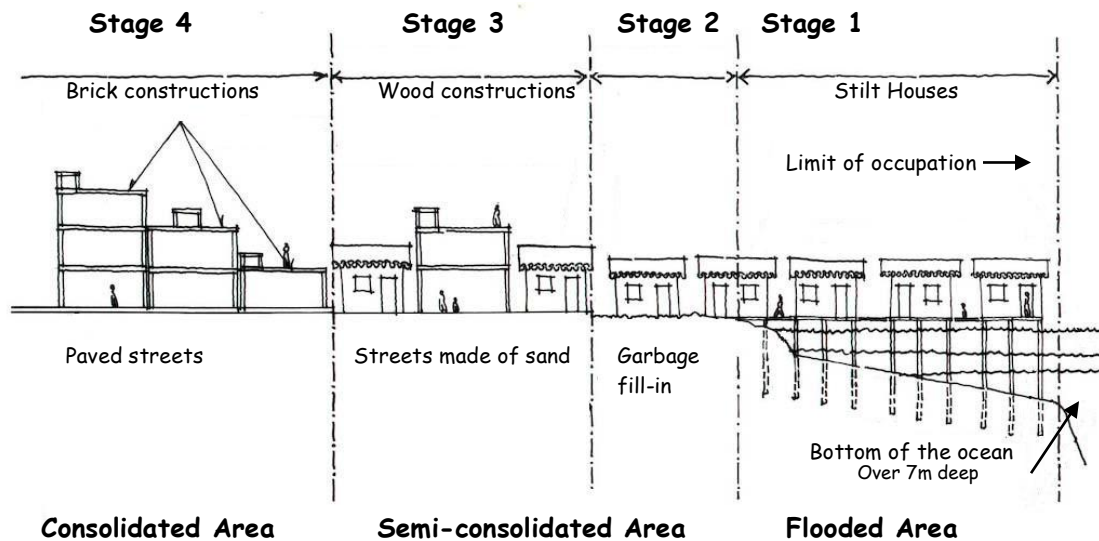
Housing Aspirations	Definitions
Individualize and expand	Freedom to interact with one's environment as a way of reflecting one's culture, social, economic and political interests. This dimension was articulated as a mechanism of social mobility by investing in ones property.
Maintain social networks	Freedom to maintain and expand bonds of relationships that are valued as a positive for the housing process. Such networks were articulated as crucial elements to foster a sense of belonging and enhance support systems in their neighbourhoods.
Healthy environment	Freedom to have secure tenure, sustainable access to infrastructure and services, resilience against environmental threats, access to health care and education, and safety.
Participate in decision making	Freedom to participate in the spaces of decision making in communities and in the city. This aspect was brought up as an important issue not only in the implementation of upgrading projects, but more widely as a goal of democratization in the city.
Afford living costs	Freedom to afford the living costs where one lives. This dimension was particularly emphasized due to the fear of upgrading programmes generating costs that households would not be able to cope with, and therefore pushing most vulnerable groups to move into more peripheral and affordable areas.

Source: Compiled from Frediani, 2007b.

After identifying the dimensions of housing, the research aimed to explore the impacts of the upgrading programme on residents' freedom to achieve these housing aspirations. One of the main findings of the research revealed that the typology of the design of the housing estate and the process of designing it compromised residents' freedom to pursue their housing aspirations. In the previous stilt houses, residents felt a strong sense of ownership of their space, as they actively engaged in the incremental process of consolidating their dwelling environment. In the illustration below (see picture 1), Teixeira (2002) shows the self-help practices of consolidation by local residents, where initial stilt settlement was originally designed with the intention of construction of future roads and verticalization of houses. Teixeira's (2002) research showed that apart from building on local and embedded norms of urbanization, such incremental

practices allowed local residents to strengthen social networks and practices of solidarity with family members as well as among neighbours. This was confirmed in the research in Nova Primavera, as local residents stressed the importance of making extensions to their houses as a means of maintaining tight family support systems, especially in a locality where there is a substantial number of single mothers working long hours, and where family members provide crucial support for the upbringing of children.

**Picture 1:** Stages of consolidation of stilts



Source: Adapted from Teixeira, 2002

In contrast to such incremental practices, at Nova Primavera residents were not permitted to expand and individualize their living environment. Such a break from familiar processes of incremental improvement has led to a general detachment from their dwelling spaces. Residents argued that they do not feel a sense of ownership of their houses as they cannot change it as they please, and therefore feeling as though they are temporary occupants.

Meanwhile, those that have expanded their houses have experienced unanticipated physical and social consequences. Following ground floor extensions, many walls of the houses started to crack. According to the municipal government technical experts in charge of supervising the extension process in informal settlements in Salvador, the Nova Primavera estate does not have the necessary foundations that would allow the secure form of incremental expansions. Furthermore, the horizontal extensions of the bottom floor of the vertical terrace units (see picture 2 below) generated conflictual claims over the slab of the extension. The bottom household argued that it was their space for future growth, while the upper household claimed that it was now their terrace for their own future extension. The design of water and sanitation system also added further tensions between upper and ground floor neighbours. Water tanks of the ground floor households were placed inside a room of the upper flat. To

reduce costs of installation, sanitation was based in an interconnected system, meaning that if there were blockages or damages in one of the pipes, both flats would experience disruptions. All these factors combined meant a profound change in social relations, turning bonds of solidarity into feelings of competition and conflict, thereby causing community fragmentation.

**Picture 2:** Vertical Terrace Units of the Nova Primavera Estate



Picture by Eduardo Teixeira

This case study highlights the importance of engaging with the relationship between dwelling practices of local residents and their strategies for poverty reduction. Spatial productions that fail to recognize this relationship can potentially create new obstacles and reproduce cycles of marginalization. In the case of Nova Primavera, it has meant that most vulnerable households ended up selling informally the flats acquired through the upgrading programme, and settling in even more peripheral locations of the city (Soares and Espinheira, 2006).

### **3) Space and Opportunities**

Apart from a series of reflections on people's ability to bring about social change, Sen's writings have been particularly important in highlighting the structural conditions causing inequality and poverty. Sen's (1981) examination on the causes of famine were particularly important in shifting a debate focusing merely on the production and availability of food, to one focusing on the processes shaping the inequitable distribution of food. Similarly, critical urban theorists (i.e. Harvey, 2009; Marcuse et al., 2009; Soja 2010) have also articulated the importance of engaging with the structuring processes shaping the production of spaces in the city and consequences in terms of justice. Instead of merely outlining the availability of resources in the city, this literature

emphasizes that it is fundamental to understand the underlying processes producing unjust geographies.

An examination of a Delegated Management Model (DMM) of water delivery in the informal settlement of Manyatta B in Kisumu, Kenya, reveals the importance for urban poverty-oriented interventions to engage with the underlying processes of production of spaces in the city. Manyatta B contains a population of nearly 30,000 people, with a high-density mix of structure owners and rental tenants. Over 65% of its residents have access to water through communal stand pipes, which experience high risk of contamination, causing frequent incidences of waterborne diseases such as typhoid and dysentery.

With the objective of generating a more effective and efficient water system, the 2002 Kenya Water Act encouraged a move from state-led provision of water to a privately run system, managed and maintained by Water Service Providers (WSPs). In Kisumu, the managing WSP is the Kisumu Water and Sewerage Company Limited (KIWASCO). Within this context, the Delegated Management Model has been put forward as a strategy for delivering water in informal settlements in Kisumu. This entails the formation of community groups known as 'Master Operators', who manage the master meter that accounts for the connection between the community facility and KIWASCO's main water pipes. The community groups are responsible for the maintenance and running of water connections within the informal settlement.

In 2013 a group of students from the Masters programme in Social Development Practice at the Bartlett Development Planning Unit carried out a 4 month research project on the impacts of the DMM on the well-being of local residents in Manyatta B, which included a two week field trip to Kisumu. In this particular case, the DMM was part of a wider participatory planning project led by international NGO Practical Action, called People's Plans into Practice. The project's objective was to strengthen the capacity of residents of informal settlements in Kisumu and Kitale to participate in decision-making processes in the city. The findings from the students' report revealed that while access to water at Manyatta B has increased, this process of water delivery has not challenged underlying power imbalances shaping the production of the urban environment in Kisumu. Whilst new spaces of participation have been created, and communities' abilities to negotiate with the government and KIWASCO have improved, the DMM has transferred new burdens and responsibilities to local groups without the necessary conditions to cope with these sustainably and equitably (Martinez Cure et al, 2013).

Based on the analysis of water policy documents in Kenya, the students identified six relevant dimensions of well-being that have been impacted by the DMM of water delivery: security of livelihoods, bodily health, water security, safety, empowerment and community cohesion. The evidence of their research in Manyatta B shows that through this model, new water kiosks have been installed in the neighbourhood, which has generated many positive impacts on the wellbeing of local residents around these dimensions (See table 2 below).



**Table 2.** Summary of findings of Impact of DMM on wellbeing dimensions

Dimensions	Findings
Security of livelihoods	DMM offered increased opportunities for income generation through the running of water kiosks and points, while also reducing water prices (20-litre jerrycan bought from water vendors reduced from 20 Ksh to 3 Ksh bought from kiosks and water points).
Bodily health	DMM facilitated a reduction in the physical effort required by water fetcher (primarily women and children) and increased consumption of clean water through improved proximity to water points and better affordability.
Water security	Residents expressed that they felt they could rely on the quantity and quality of water provided through the DMM.
Safety	Personal safety for water operator and consumers is perceived to have improved, particularly for women.
Empowerment	DMM project has opened new spaces for dialogue between community residents and the government and KIWASCO.
Community cohesion	Residents expressed that DMM activities facilitated new spaces of interaction, improving local networks and forging bonds of solidarity among residents.

Source: Compiled from Martinez Cure et al., 2013.

However, the DMM simultaneously reproduced a market logic for service delivery which devolves new responsibilities and risks to communities. This logic is potentially viable in contexts where local groups are resourced and well-organized, but leaves behind localities and residents that are more vulnerable. KIWASCO requires a series of criteria and fees for the management of a master meter, which presents a series of challenges to community groups identified by NGOs working in this context. Community groups find it challenging to keep records of their accounts and to cope with the maintenance costs caused by theft of the master meter, leakages, bursts and illegal connections. Furthermore, while the intention of increased privatization was to allow ‘water-users’ to regulate Water Service Providers, in reality community groups are unable to exert any influence in KIWASCO practices. The government authorities do not mediate this relationship, which due to lack of bargaining capacity of local communities results in the devolution of risks to community groups as well as in assuring that greater benefits are accrued by KIWASCO, which is able to tap into a vast informal market with little investment and responsibilities.

Although the DMM has the potential to enhance the authority of local residents over their water services, the lack of management support, unequal distribution of risks and limited government mediation has compromised the impact of this

model of service delivery on the set of relations governing the distribution of resources in the city. Therefore, the study argues that this mode of public-private partnership reinforces a mode of production in the city that commodifies the delivery and access to resources in a way that can reproduce inequalities, leaving behind the most vulnerable. Despite improvements in particular well-being dimensions due to better access to water, Martinez Cure et al. argue that “the model as it currently exists serves as a mechanism to cope with the current system of entitlements, rather than working to contest the unequal distribution of resources and recognition” (2013: 34).

#### **4) Space and Aspirations**

By approaching poverty as deprivation of capabilities, the literature on the capability approach emphasizes the importance of revealing and examining aspirations. Understanding poverty as deprivation of capabilities requires recognising it as a process that relates not only to material and relational aspects of wellbeing, but also to people’s values, informing their visions of the future and life-style options. Appadurai’s work on ‘capacity to aspire’ (2004) makes the important distinction between wants, being a set of immediate desires, and aspirations, which are of ‘higher order normative contexts’ as part of “wider ethical and metaphysical ideas which derive from larger cultural norms” (2004: 67-68). Building on Appadurai’s definition of aspirations, White (2010) defines this subjective aspect of well-being as “much more than a random selection of individual perceptions or preferences. Instead these perceptions are seen as constituted in culture and ideology, which in turn structure the material, social, and personal through a cascade of associations that makes them meaningful and designates some as pressing” (White, 2010: 162).

Conradie and Robeyns (2013) have explored the role of aspirations in the expansion of capabilities and argue that it has two potential roles: firstly voicing and reflecting about aspirations can help in prioritizing capabilities that are most valued or important for people; secondly, talking and reflecting collectively about aspirations can unlock agency, especially when reflection is associated to action.

Similar interrogations between aspirations and process of change have been unfolding within critical urban theory literature, where the role of space has been explored in unleashing new urban imaginaries. Lefebvre’s (1991) writings articulate the importance of thinking about space in contesting the reproduction of the contemporary city, where market-driven hegemonic structures have conditioned all areas of social life, including the ability to envision alternative futures. Thus, a key form of contestation in urban areas have been conflicts over differing spatial imaginaries in the city, where critical urban theorists call for imaginaries to be driven on the vision of the “city for people, and not for profit” (Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer, 2011). Within such a context, spatial imaginaries are seen as a mechanism to encourage utopian thinking, which is defined by Friedmann (2000) as:

“the capacity to imagine a future that departs significantly from what we know to be a general condition in the present. It is a way of breaking through the barriers of convention into a sphere of the imagination where many things beyond our everyday experience become feasible. All of us have this ability, which is inherent in human nature, because human beings are insufficiently programmed for the future. We need a constructive imagination that we can variously use for creating fictive worlds” (2000: 463)

A series of participatory design workshops entitled ‘Change by Design’, run by Architecture Sans Frontières (ASF) – UK in recent years have focused on how discussions about space can be used to capture the aspirations of urban dwellers. Such aspirations are related to values associated with living in the city. Following Bourdieu’s (2007) definition, such spatial imaginaries “are collectively shared internal worlds of thoughts and beliefs that structure everyday life” (Bourdieu, 2007: 2596). Two-week workshops took place in 2009 and 2010 in Salvador da Bahia (Brazil), in 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya, and in 2013 in Quito, Ecuador. The activities of the workshops were designed to contribute to the upgrading of the informal settlements where the activities took place through the elaboration of community plans.

The methodology of the Change by Design process is underpinned by a desire to interrogate spatial imaginaries whilst acknowledging three main concerns: 1) the diversity of interests and identities of local communities; 2) the asymmetries of power between stakeholders in the process of informal settlement upgrading; 3) and the need to unpack issues associated with the various scales of urban interventions. To address such concerns the workshops have partnered with local social movements and grassroots networks, and focused their activities on the urban experience, identifying linkages between local processes and wider issues associated with urban trends. Activities during the workshop included a series of spatial action research and visioning exercises as well as design charrettes between workshop participants, local residents and key informants. These activities exposed, integrated and overlaid systematizations of various everyday practices of appropriation of the urban environment. Through the discussions, diagnoses were aimed at moving from merely describing the manifestation of injustices, towards reflections that addressed trends and processes driving current living conditions (Frediani, French and Nunez Ferrera, 2011).

After the initial diagnosis, activities focused on the production of design principles<sup>2</sup> based on the aspirations of local residents. For the Change by Design methodology, it is important to position the debate about aspirations in the process of critical engagement with current conditions and urban trends. As articulated by Jacques (2001), the search for such spatial principles aims to establish a bridge between the wider processes of urban change to the everyday manifestations and meaning expressed in and by the production of space. In the context of Salvador da Bahia, the concept of dignified housing emerged as a

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of design principles is drawn from Boano et al., 2013.

prominent vision, linking the material, relational and subjective components of housing. In Quito, the process of articulating such spatial imaginaries in the site of Los Pinos (see box 2 below) emerged out of the values associated with different scales (dwelling, community and city) and policy and planning processes. Local residents and activists were interested in linking the localized spatial imaginaries to the broad development agenda of 'Buen Vivir'<sup>3</sup>. Thus, activities aimed to capture and reveal principles associated with the spaces of 'buen vivir' in the city. The diagram below shows the integrated principles and how they relate to the principles emerging from each scale.

**Box 2: A Brief Description of Los Pinos**

Los Pinos is a peri-urban site, located on agricultural land owned by the Ministry of Agriculture (MAGAP) in the municipality of Mejia, bordering Quito. The site is an area of approximately 13 hectares, and was previously considered unsuitable for urban use. It was occupied through an 'invasion' seven years ago when over 300 people settled on the plot of unused public land at once.

Instead of building shacks in a disorderly fashion, residents decided to plan the process of occupation. Firstly the area was divided into plots, and a small number of houses were built through collective-self help strategies (known as Mingas). An improvement committee was set up, where representatives were elected every 2 years. New houses were built progressively with the slow upgrading of services. Occupiers have a very strong position against densification, as they do not want to duplicate extremely precarious conditions. Currently, only 62 families are living in their plots. In order for them to stay in the plot and be able to apply for some kind of regularisation, they have to generate a management plan to demonstrate to MAGAP and governmental authorities that the intended use of the area responds to MAGAP requirements as well as to the land use regulations of local municipality. The Change by Design workshop intended to support local residents in developing such a plan. At the same time, it hoped to contribute to the on-going debates about democratizing the production of spaces in Quito and therefore support the realisation of the 'Buen Vivir' development agenda in an urban context as well as pursue goals expressed by the 'Contrato Social por la Vivienda' (Social Contract for Housing), set up between civil society organisations and the municipality of Quito in 2005.

Source: Frediani et al., 2014

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<sup>3</sup> 'Buen vivir' is literally translated as 'good living'. This agenda emerged from indigenous movements as an alternative to market driven development plans by articulating the need to address social, cultural, environmental and economic issues in an interconnected manner

**Diagram 1: Design Principles**

<b>Integrated Principles</b>	<b>Dwelling</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Policy and Planning</b>
<b>Promote socially inclusive processes</b>			Participation in the improvement environmental conditions;	Adaptable processes and product;
<b>Articulate relations with external actors</b>			Reinforce existing knowledge networks; increase relations among neighbourhoods;	Reinforce existing networks;
<b>Strengthen community organisation</b>				Strengthen the organisational structures of the community;
<b>Inclusive design of the built environment</b>	Respond to the cultural diversity through multiple housing typologies;	Accessible design of the neighbourhood;	Integrate urban and rural agendas;	Equitable spatial opportunities;
<b>Right of permanence</b>			Stability in short and long term in space;	Security of tenure;
<b>Respond to generational changes</b>	Provide the freedom to expand and adapt according to changing needs;	Ability to maintain proximity to family and social networks;	Intergenerational solidarity;	Intergenerational equity;
<b>Economic security</b>	Affordability in the short and long term;	Creation of economic opportunities in community spaces;	Increase of income generation opportunities;	Integrated development; Secure and sustainable provision of services;
<b>Live according to one's possibilities</b>		Utilize available resources in its full potential;		Strengthen community's capacity to resist shocks, stresses and trends;
<b>Basic qualities for dignified housing</b>	Allow the opportunity for independent housing environment; Provide quality and comfort for a dignified way of living;	Adequate response to the conditions of the locality; Ability to maintain proximity to family and social networks;		
<b>Access to dignified public services</b>			Equitable access to the city;	Dignified quality of spaces and services;
<b>Adequate balance between rural and urban lifestyles</b>	Provide an appropriate balance between urban and rural conditions;	Appropriate balance between urban and rural conditions;	Live in an urban-rural area;	
<b>Responsible management of natural resources</b>		Sustainable design of infrastructure and neighbourhood; Equal access to resources in the community	Inhabit an environment of healthy life-style;	

Source: Adapted from Frediani et al., 2014: 88-89.

Some key reflections on the relationship between aspirations and space arose from the workshop in Los Pinos. Firstly, it is interesting to note that while activities were focused on the spatial imaginaries from the territory of Los Pinos, issues discussed were associated not only with that space, but more broadly concerned with the municipality/region within which the community is located and the wider processes of urbanization. The focus on aspirations opened up the possibility of a dialogue that engages with multiple scales. Secondly, while the principles identified were cross-scalar, it was difficult to discuss actions that

were of the same nature. Participatory design activities ended up generating a rich diagnosis, and brought to the table a deliberation of wider contextual issues. However the localised nature of the participatory process (circumscribed by the boundaries of Los Pinos) made it challenging to deliberate on actions that went beyond the area defined by the community management plan. As a consequence, cross-scalar principles were mainly used to inform localised actions. Nevertheless, the activities generated a set of contextualized aspirations, which were in line with the broad visions of Buen Vivir, but with much clearer resonance to the urban environment, its opportunities and challenges.

While it is not possible to draw any conclusions about how reflecting about aspirations unlocked agency, as articulated by Conradie and Robeyns (2013), according to local partners of the workshop from the Universidad Politecnica Salesiana, this synergy between local and wider development plans generated the potential to enhance communities' leverage to bring about local change. Furthermore, the partners of the workshop<sup>4</sup> also aim to contribute to the realisation of the Buen Vivir goals, by setting precedents that can illustrate the potentials of such collaborative efforts.

Furthermore, the workshop revealed that the focus of the community plan on design principles as opposed to concrete physical interventions, had the potential to mediate tensions within the community of Los Pinos without homogenizing identities, and at the same time building bonds of solidarity. This potential of the link between space and aspirations has also been articulated by Miessen's (2010) work on 'conflictual participation'. By making reference to Derrida's (1997) work on the politics of friendship, Miessen argues that for constructive conflict to generate critical engagement there is a need to engage with "friendly enemies" who share a symbolic space: "they [friendly-enemies] agree on the ethnic-political principles that inform the political association, but they disagree about the interpretation of these principles, a struggle between different interpretations of shared principles" (2010: 102).

Thus, the 'Change by Design' work has been interested in finding mechanism through participatory informal settlement upgrading to construct collaboratively such symbolic meanings of space, while at the same time reveal different ways through which they can be materialised in the built environment through concrete physical and social interventions. The alternatives for the materialisation of the design principles are summarised through a 'portfolio of options' exercise. Through debates elicited by negotiations among concrete design and planning options, this exercise is approached not as mediation or resolution of conflicts, but rather as a mechanism to discuss trade-offs, priorities, differences and values. This resonates with Till's (2005) reflections on transformative participation, when he quotes Forester (1985) to argue that design should move away from a problem solving approach towards one that focuses on a process of making sense of realities: "If form giving is understood

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<sup>4</sup> Workshop partners included Universidad Politecnica Salesiana, Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales, neighbourhood committee of Los Pinos as well as the National Confederation of Neighbourhoods of Ecuador (Confederacion Nacional de Barrios del Ecuador, CONBADE).

more deeply as an activity of making sense together, designing may then be situated in a social world where meaning, though often multiple, ambiguous and conflicting, is nevertheless a perpetual practical accomplishment” (Forester, 1985: 14).

In this manner, this spatially-led participatory engagement stimulates imaginaries about the type of city one wants to live in, while at the same time, constructs concrete alternatives to materialise aspirations. From this perspective, the outcomes of design are then not purely associated with its product, but also with the process of deliberating, reflecting, and therefore enhancing collective capabilities to bring about change. From this perspective, space acquires an instrumental role in instigating and constructing the multiple dimensions of well-being in the city and unleashing collective agency to make localised improvements while opening up avenues to struggle towards addressing the structural drivers of urban poverty.

## **Conclusions**

The three case studies explored in this chapter aim to illustrate some of the linkages between the concept of poverty and space when analyzing informal settlement upgrading initiatives through a capability perspective. When evaluating the impacts of the upgrading programme in Salvador, the relationship between space and abilities highlights the importance of engaging with the impact of physical interventions on residents’ agency. Instead of minimizing the side effects of upgrading programmes, this research calls for a reorientation of upgrading processes, moving away from a physical deterministic approach, to one that understands space as a social product. The research calls for approaches that can recognise local spatial practices as a key component in the reduction of poverty, as they mediate social networks, support systems and sense of belonging as well as economic opportunities.

The case study of Kisumu, exploring the relationship between space and opportunities reveals the importance of engaging in the various scales of the processes of urbanization when tackling poverty. The case study illustrates how localized approaches might not necessarily provide mechanisms to address structural drivers reproducing injustices in the city. In such contexts, the reflections highlight the limitations of spatially targeted welfare approaches, and calls for an upgrading process that is based on setting precedents in terms of a new set of relationships governing the production of spaces in the city. The renegotiation of relationships means engaging with not only with the way in which responsibilities are shared, but most importantly, who absorbs risks. The role of the state is emphasized, supporting communities in their negotiation with the private sector and creating the conditions for more equitable partnerships.

Finally, the reflections from the Change by Design workshops on participatory design highlight the importance of space in the debate about aspirations and the multiple dimensions of poverty. Spatially based participatory approaches, focusing on values and imaginaries have the potential to stimulate agency and bonds of solidarity while recognizing multiple forms of living in the city. In this

sense, spaces of participation in urban interventions are located not only in forums and focus groups discussions, but also in the practices of everyday life, where spatial production has a symbolic meaning related to how people value living in the city. The role of such participatory initiatives becomes to support the reading of such meanings, and generate alternative options to bring about positive change. This chapter hopes to engage in the debate on how capabilities are contested in spaces, whilst also showing how spaces are mediators of capabilities, unleashing imaginaries, conditioning opportunities and shaping agency.

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