

Entangled Urbanization Conference 2017

Day 1 Breakout Group 2 Summary_Liam Magee

Ben challenged the group to develop themes that are “useful, usable, feasible”, and at the same time focussed on “changing the world”.

Discussion turned to comparisons between the four cities, with the Human Development Index (HDI) being one existing and commonly used measure. Criticisms of HDI were raised, including its reductiveness and choice of households as the unit of analysis, which ignored variation within households: “different members have different achievements”. The group raised alternative names - “minimum standard of life”, “social fragmentation index”, - and methods - interpretive, qualitative, “assessment” rather than “index”. A further example is the Individual Deprivation Measure [IDM](#), which aims to be at the individual level, multidimensional, intersectional, and practical to administer. Such assessment would have, broadly, three aims: (1) to enumerate and compare capabilities; (2) to record achievements in each of the cities; and (3) to develop collaborative policy briefs. Assessment would also derive from participatory methods: consultations with groups about which variables and indicators matter most. The experience of New Delhi's Aam Aadmi Party's participatory budgeting efforts could be instructive here: in one case, participants identified “local libraries instead of underground parking” as being a more relevant area for municipal expenditure. Such an approach could be applied to the methodology for comparing cities: rather than fixed indicators, progress on city-selected measures could be compared. This involves a more complex research methodology, combining qualitative (focus-group discussion, “town hall” or “community centre” voting) with quantitative (survey, government data) approaches.

Other points raised included:

- Need to measure across multiple units of analysis: individual, household, and state-based / structural - how power is configured for urban communities. This latter point would need to assess levels of centralisation vs decentralisation of state power, and the degrees of participation vs representation of political expression.
- The relationship of service delivery to participation (i.e. does the absence of services also constrain participation?)
- Specific “latent” variables such as “unpaid domestic work by women”
- The need to translate abstractions of “capability” - what people want to do, be - into tangible instruments, methods and conclusions.
- The need to focus upon “sites of contestation”, where “local municipalities engage various stakeholders, including slum-dwellers”, and seek examples of where conflict is minimised and benefits are maximised.

In conclusion, the group considered a research agenda might need to include assessment methods that combine fixed (e.g. IDM) and variable (via participatory) indicators; qualitative and quantitative methods; present states, trends and achievements, and future policy direction.

A list of relevant themes and variables considered by the group included:

- Basic services
 - o Housing
 - o Water
 - o Electricity
 - o Health
 - o Education
- Economic
 - o Income
 - o Employment

- o Financial Capability: adequacy of income / debt / avenues of investment, opportunities.
- Legal
 - o Formality
 - o Recognition
 - o Legal rights
 - o Land and tenancy rights
- Political
 - o Participation
 - o Feeling of identity, citizenship
 - o Leadership
 - o Vision
 - o Long-term policies
 - o Social fragmentation