

# EXPLORING THE 'ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE' FOR 'DRIVERS OF CHANGE':

## Promoting Sustainable Progress in Urban Areas

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**M**aximising the potentials and contributions of urban areas towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of reducing poverty and improving human development, through depends upon successful innovations and the spread of such positive and productive policies, practices and institutional capacities across the whole spectrum of urban life. What this requires is that all those attempting to bring about such advances - here referred to as 'drivers of change' - can find appropriate ways and means of making such innovations implementable and sustainable.

This has to be attempted in the face of initial scepticism or even opposition to doing things differently on the part of established individuals and institutions; and

in the face of particular circumstances which appear to severely limit the resources available for implementing novel ideas.

All 'drivers of change' need to make a balanced appraisal of their position in order to steer a course between advancing unrealistic aspirations and expectations on the one hand, and acceptance of conservative or conventional assumptions about any possibilities of significant change on the other. This territory of progressive developments that have proved both desirable and possible, is the one being (and hopefully continuing to be) explored by individuals and groups in cities worldwide such as those that are registered in this compilation.

To help clarify and assist the wider exploration of 'the desirable and the possible' by all those individuals and groups acting as drivers of change, there is available a systematic approach (among others) which can be used to rapidly identify different directions and combinations in which such explorations can be pursued in any given situation. This approach is in principle simply a further application of 'inter-dimensional' analysis (see Annex 1) building in this case on the work of historical sociologists and social policy analysts. (see endnote).

Here inter-dimensional analysis provides the rationale for indentifying a four-dimensional model of the 'action space' of drivers of change, in terms of which they (you) can estimate the degrees of freedom, or 'room for manoeuvre' open to them (you) in promoting progressive interventions in urban affairs, and, equally important, in expanding that space. These four



dimensions of any action space and their corresponding areas of pro-active possibilities are:

- 1) **Technical:** in advancing local knowledge-based, or technical-professional (in the broadest sense) innovations in urban products or processes, and in individual or group ethics and behaviours;
- 2) **Organisational:** in extending institutional and inter-organisational reforms - of goals, roles, priorities, procedures and resource allocations;
- 3) **Social:** in expanding social interaction and mobilisation - in involvement in modes of inclusive, participative, and collaborative, bargaining and negotiation;
- 4) **Strategic:** in enlarging the scope of strategic analysis and tactical response to the dynamics of urban development in time and place.

The four dimensions together make up a space with individual but intersecting boundaries which combine to define the existing limits to action by drivers of change, in their support for progressive interventions intended to help bring about the achievement of not only the millennium goals, but also greater equality, inclusiveness, democratic process and social justice.

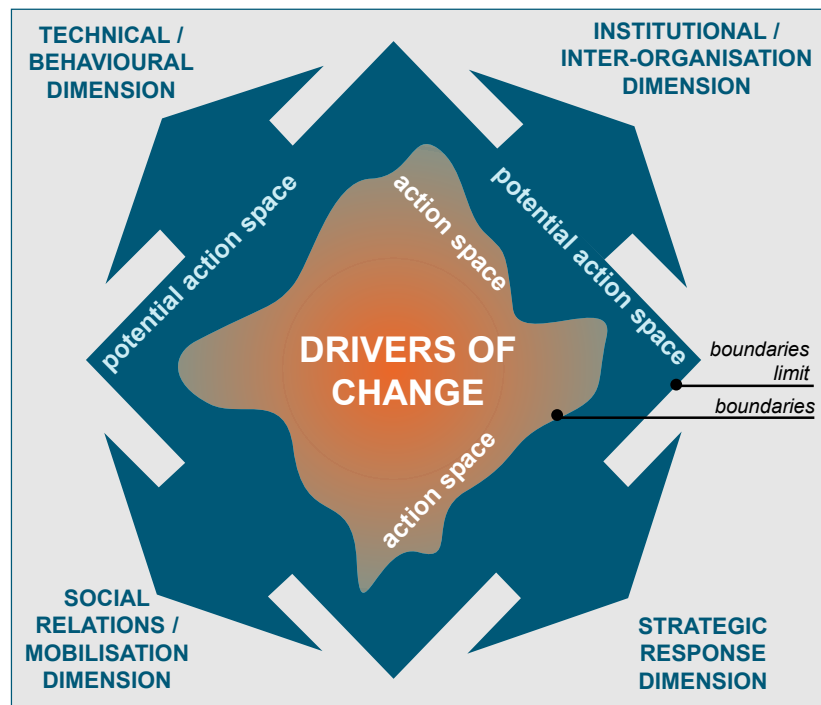
Exploring the dimensions in more depth, we can observe that:

- 1) the **'technical'** sphere of room for manoeuvre (RfM) includes the promotion of new products or improved technical solutions, of the kind successfully promoted by innovations in 'intermediate technologies', 'affordable' housing units, 'sustainable' energy uses, or 'eco-friendly' construction materials; but also new procedures for policy, planning and management processes, under the guidelines of greater participation, inclusion and negotiation such as 'rapid appraisal', 'participative planning' or 'community-led budget allocations.

- 2) the **'organisational'** sphere of RfM includes promoting in 'good governance' involving greater accountability, transparency, co-ordination and efficiencies in local government institutions, but also progressive forms of partnership between local government and both private and social sector organisations in service delivery, as well as greater involvement by residents and communities in democratic decision making and programme design.

- 3) the **'social'** sphere of RfM includes promoting in the recognition and enablement of especially poor and marginalised people to build their own development and governance capacities and associations, in alliance with and supported by other stakeholders and technical specialists, including the building of community-based organisations, as well as a variety of social movements in 'civil society' - such as women's movements, residents associations, environmental alliances and a rich diversity of non-government organisations and networks.

Fig. 1 Four dimensional action space of 'room for manoeuvre' in planning



- 4) the **'strategic'** sphere of RfM includes making advances in identifying and exploiting new or emerging strategic situations in the specific local context in which

drivers of change are operating, often brought about by larger scale 'global' shifts that impact on local circumstances, often with remarkable rapidity. These may include new economic trends - in trade relations and investment; new economic policy regimes - such as structural adjustment; new political movements and changes in governments - in tendencies towards democratisation; or in contrast, increasing repression - new social and cultural tendencies; changes in consumption patterns or family structures - and the consequences of crises and emergencies; human or natural - such as the aftermath of violent conflicts.

The initiatives already carried through by a variety of 'drivers of change', illustrated in this compilation, can be seen as successful attempts to explore, consolidate, expand (and sometimes make a tactical retreat from) the boundaries of these different dimensions of 'room for manoeuvre'. The boundary conditions will vary in degrees of resistance or permeability over time and place, representing the hegemony, or the vulnerability, of specific distributions of power and influence, vested interests, and initial conditions and dynamics in cultural, political, social and economic affairs.

Since the existing 'status quo' is always reinforced along all dimensions by specific limitations imposed on each, it will be equally crucial for all drivers of change to examine the potential for 'multiple interrelatedness' of potential initiatives, in terms of their mutual or reciprocal reinforcement. Such an 'inter-dimensional analysis' will provide a basis for priorities and strategies for action in which a combination of different types of initiative would be most productive in any given circumstances.

Such a general formulation needs empirical illustration, which can only be hinted at here with the use of a few case references, taken from the community and the city level. Two contrasting examples concern the actions of community-based groups allied to non-governmental and individual professional practitioners groups in the search for greater manoeuvrability.

In **London**, the Kings Cross Railway Lands Group developed and persevered for fifteen years in a sustained effort to secure a more socially just treatment of local residents in the proposed 'regeneration' schemes variously promoted by private and public sector agencies. Their human resources and action space was always restricted by their small scale and voluntary basis, but over time they explored and extended the boundaries of their room for manoeuvre in terms of

innovative planning proposals, engagement in the inter-organisational politics of local area regeneration, and consistent efforts at building coalitions around an open, inclusive and highly participative form of social mobilisation. Their room for manoeuvre was most crucially suppressed by the global and local development dynamics of their site, and the hugely powerful forces gathered in public-private partnerships determined to 'redevelop' the area in the interests of capital and state: eventually, despite heroic resistance, the pressures from above have almost collapsed the action space and their ability to operate within it.

By contrast, in **Mumbai** (Bombay), an alliance of poor people's movements with progressive non-governmental groups has been able to considerably expand its room for manoeuvre by the aggressive mobilisation of grass-roots action and by exploiting the



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divisions between powerful institutional interests in the inter-organisational dimension, in which the Municipal Government, Indian Railways and the World Bank have been variously involved. This has involved little strictly technical professional innovation, but has been carried on in a new strategic dimension in which some elements of accommodation for poverty reduction and social justice have been widely accepted.

At the city level, in the case of **Karachi** in the mid-1970s, an initiative to create a 'Metropolitan

Development Programme' provides a specific context for an examination of the 'dimensional requirements' of such attempts to inspire progressive development in a situation of extreme inequalities in income, wealth, access to resources and opportunities, and where social injustice was both blatant and routine.

An 'inter-dimensional analysis' of potential initiatives being attempted in the action space of a given city, highlights the significance of:

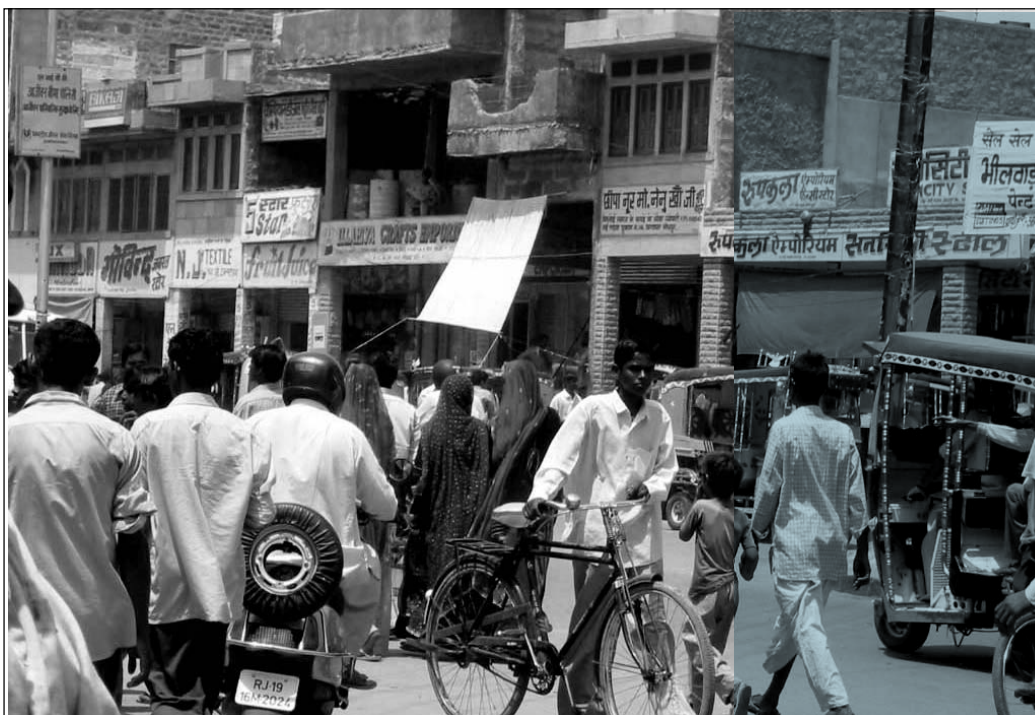
**1. In the technical and behavioural dimension:**

- innovations which incorporate technical soundness, efficient resource use, and operational detail;
- the need for flexible response to the perceived risks of un-winnable confrontation (the handling of 'hot issues' on the boundary limit), exercising the

- awareness of administrative and management capacities and the possible place for new 'institution-building'.

**3. In the social relations dimension;**

- the crucial need for engaging the community,
- respecting local initiative
- enabling participation on the part of those commonly excluded.
- on the strategic dimension a realistic appreciation of the local context in terms of overall resource availability;
- 'manoeuvrability' of limited available resources away from those who are 'embedded' in dominant positions of power.



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art of 'strategic compromise' and the value of tenacity over long-periods of follow-through on initial manoeuvres

**2. In the institutional and inter-organisational dimension;**

- 'political responsiveness', and the widespread involvement of policy, planning, management and service providing agencies,
- sufficient time for dialogue on major issues,

These examples of different 'drivers of change' illustrate the potentials of access to a wide variety of innovative behaviours and cases, in order to strengthen the exploration of 'room for manoeuvre' by others interested in making their own initiatives. This compilation is intended as a concentrated compilation of such instances, a toolbox of principles and practices made available for accelerating such explorations. ■