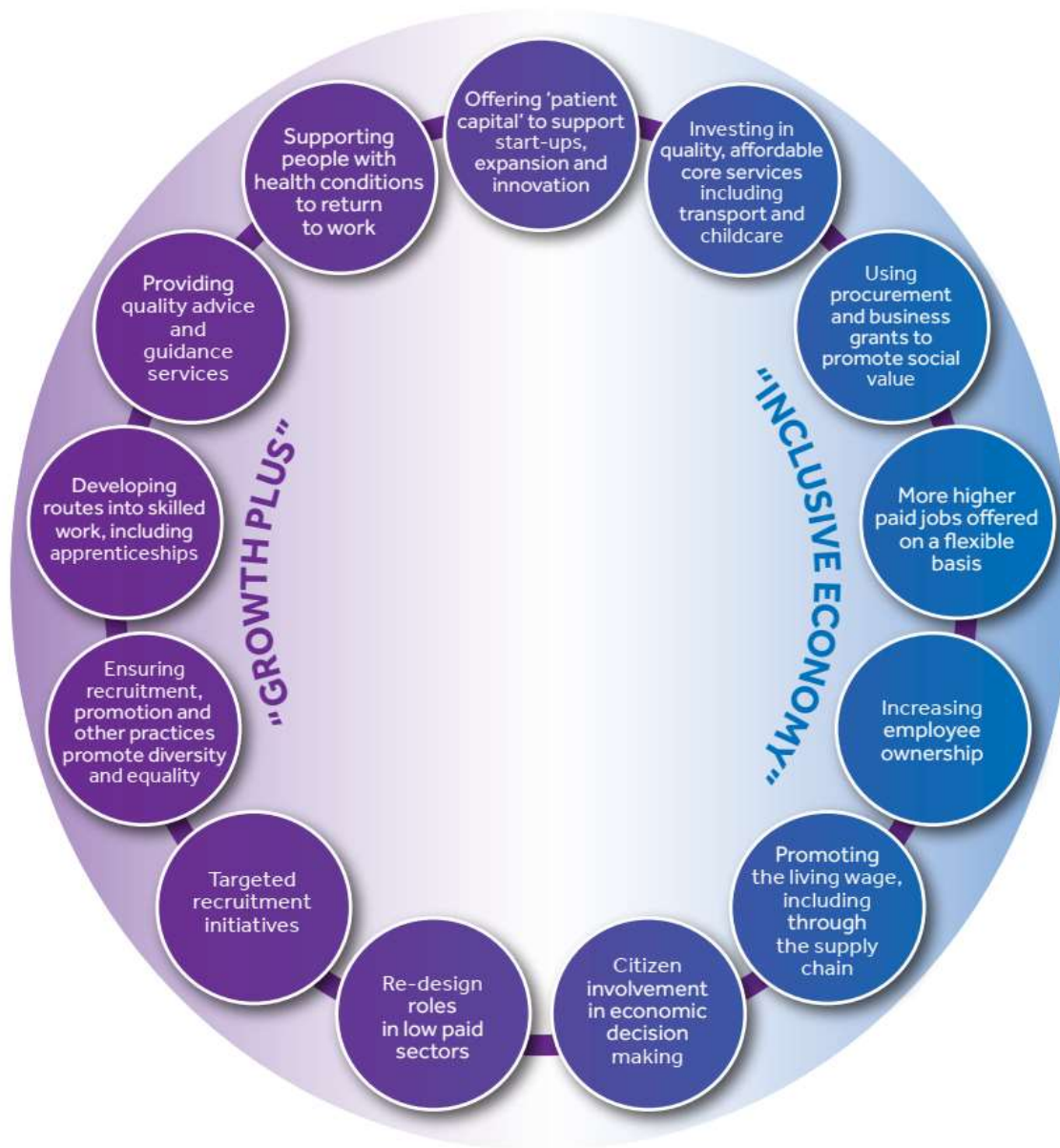




Seeing the inner city from the South: women-led urban movements & 'inclusive growth'

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Overview



- Inclusive growth...what role for urban social movements?
- Slum/Shack Dwellers International: practices for change
- “Seeing the inner city from the South”: action, change & challenges

Relational perspective on poverty

- *Mosse, 2010 describes a relational perspective as:*
'one that first views persistent poverty as the consequence of historically developed unequal economic and political relations, and second, that **emphasises poverty and inequality as an effect of social categorisation and identity**' (Tilly 1998: Marx and Weber)
- For Tilly (1998), **addressing inequality requires a rebalancing of power relations between citizens and the state** so that those less powerful can use the state to control the behaviour of private capital

Relational perspective on inclusive growth

- To achieve **inclusion** you have to address inequality
- To address inequality you have to engage with **the social and political power relations** that underpin its perpetuation
- To have power, people living in poverty need to **believe in their ability to effect change** and **work for change through collectives** not as individual ‘beneficiaries’ of services
- This requires organising through urban social movements

Relational inequality & USMs

- Transformative social movements are those which fundamentally alter social power relations (Castells, 1983; Satterthwaite & Mitlin, 2014)
- inequality is not just about income but about social categorisation, social relations, power relations between people on low incomes and state and market actors or those on higher incomes
- Examples of transformative women-led urban social movements organising in low income settlements in the Global South abound... ACHR/SDI
- Such communities experience remarkably similar operations of power and socio-spatial inequalities to long-term urban neighbourhoods in the UK
 - e.g. categorical discrimination, internalised norms, systemic failures, lack of representation and voice, divisive clientelism, spatial marginalisation amidst privatisation of public land and services
- These movements are autonomous from political parties and capacitate low income people through federated structures for effective collective voice and challenge entrenched attitudes towards people living in poverty (Castells, 1983; Satterthwaite & Mitlin, 2014)



www.sdinet.org

Hypotheses

- i. Autonomous urban social movements driven from below are critical to reducing inequality and advancing the needs and interests of long-term deprived communities
- ii. Urban social movements that aim to be women-led are likely to have more transformative effects on socio-spatial inequality and localised forms of democratisation than gender-blind movements
- iii. Adapting lessons from such movements in the Global South has the potential to catalyse these kinds of movements in cities of the Global North: translation from South to North is possible and opportune

International exchange



Local exchanges



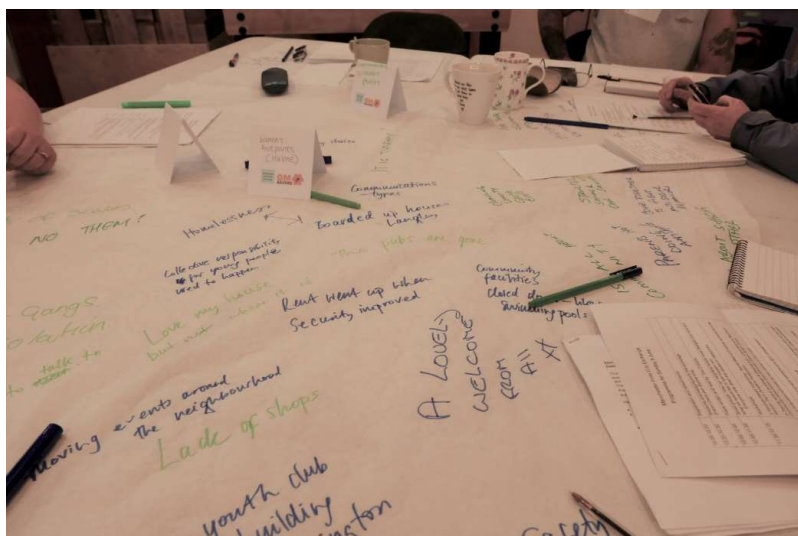
Savings mobilisation



Coalescing around local issues



Creating a city-wide network



Relationships and capabilities

- New neighbourhood based, city-wide, regional, national and transnational relationships of solidarity
- Increased sense of capability including through learning from each other's experiences
- A new network www.gmsavers.org.uk and support agency 'Community Led Action and Savings Support' (CLASS)
- Incremental reshaping of relationships between local residents and neighbourhood level service providers, authorities and politicians
- Professional interest and supporters... city-scale activists, urban development professionals, academics... a new and increasing web of social capital

Normative and discursive effects

- Experiencing effective autonomous community action in conditions of extreme poverty inspires and catalyses questioning of status quo
- A (nascent & fragile) renewed belief that working together with others can achieve positive change
- Deepens analysis of drivers & encourages a stronger focus on power relations and strategy
- Councillors and public authorities: mixed responses but
“This is the first time in 20 years of being a councillor that a group of residents in this area has raised an objection”

Political effects

(i.e. negotiation and contestation over resources - Leftwich, 1996)

- From “we don’t bother with the council” to “we need to get the councillors working on our behalf”
- Significantly increased awareness and discussion about the **need** for communities **to mobilise around land, property & community assets**
- Incrementally increasing awareness of mechanisms through which this can be achieved

Challenges – professional/community relations

- Control of land, property and decision-making by private agencies with limited accountability (*extent of power imbalance*)
- Neighbourhood-level clientelism
- Party political paranoia (*heightened by local elections*)
- Blanking or continuous postponing of invitations to interview and attempts to control other people's participation

Challenges – grassroots mobilisation

- **Placing demands on low income women** who are already under significant pressure... ethical dilemma
- **Fragmented communities** with intergenerational personality politics (*autonomy requires collective identity*)
- Well-founded **defeatism** (*autonomy requires belief that change is possible through autonomous collective action*)
- Hollowed-out and **co-opted VCSE** (not all but this was a *sphere through which autonomy could once be fostered*)
- Populist/extremist politics and the **rise of the far right** (*dangers of sweeping discontent under the carpet*)

Opportunities...?

- Networking and exchanges... solidarity!
- Radical younger new guard in MCC (significance remains to be seen)
- New(?) discourses... land for the many.... Alternative models of ownership... new municipalism... community wealth building... BUT... GE 2019
- Building bridges between long standing and newer gentrifying sections of the community... potential model for preserving the right to the city amidst gentrification