

Conceptualising and measuring prosperity

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In particular, the present paper has contributed to Chapter 8 on 'Prospering', which focuses on prosperity as a culturally specific and multi-dimensional concept: one that includes, but is not limited to, the concept of income. The chapter explores key drivers of urban inequality reflected in the scarcity of decent work and in social-spatial disparities in the location of different productive activities within cities. Through the lens of 'prospering', the chapter analyses how local and regional governments can increase decent work opportunities, and, drawing on the impacts of COVID-19, how they can mitigate the effects of future pandemics and of climate change on decent work, urban prosperity, and inequality.

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Introduction

A narrow definition of prosperity as material wealth measured by economic growth and rising GDP, has dominated political thought and action throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) challenge this vision and seek to redefine prosperity as a state of shared flourishing to be pursued alongside eradicating poverty and hunger, tackling inequalities and safeguarding the environment.¹ This vision represents a major shift in global discourse signalling the emergence in urban policy and governance of a new and more expansive conceptualisation of prosperity, in which the range of conditions, rights and freedoms, and capacities necessary for people everywhere to live "fulfilling lives" are acknowledged to extend far beyond sustainable economies, inclusive growth and decent work.²

This Working Paper discusses current debates about prosperity in research and development planning policy: first, examining the emergence of post-GDP discourse and calls for alternative measures of societal flourishing, which have given rise to new theories, measurement frameworks, and policy programmes focused on well-being and happiness. Second, drawing on new empirical work, it notes that prosperity as a lived experience is both multi-dimensional and context-specific, and must be analysed in relation to the

structural conditions that can support or prevent people from living fulfilling lives and the multiple scales at which they operate. This means moving away from assumptions that economic growth will necessarily benefit all, and that individual well-being measured by individual feelings of happiness, life satisfaction, anxiety, and civic purpose, can be an adequate proxy for shared prosperity. Finally, **it argues that a redefined prosperity must be understood as an emergent feature of a whole ecology, which shifts conventional thinking about prosperity as an outcome of economic and social policy, toward an understanding of prosperity as dynamic and processual.** Prosperity is dynamic in that it means different things to different people and places (this is one of the reasons why GDP as a fixed proxy for prosperity fails to take into account the subtleties of place, the environment and quality of lives). And prosperity is processual because it evolves over time and according to context; thus it is necessary to interrogate the processes by which it comes into being (i.e. the way civil servants may behave or how policy is interpreted into infrastructure on the ground). This recognition has consequences for theories of change, for operationalising prosperity, and for policy formation, with implications for the role of regional and city government in delivering social innovation for prosperity.

1. Prosperity in research and policy: current trends and debates

The work of redefining prosperity is part of an emerging critique of the 'economics-first' approach to progress, which responds to the failure of mainstream economic policies based on the assumption that economic growth would 'trickle-down' in the form of job opportunities, wage rises, improved public services, and higher living standards for all.³

'Trickle-down' theory has been widely critiqued over the past 30 years as high rates of economic growth have not translated into consistent reductions in poverty and inequality.⁴ Researchers

have concluded that in many developed economies a ceiling has been reached in terms of what increasing material wealth can do for living standards, health and well-being.⁵ It is now widely recognised that the exclusive pursuit of economic growth is not sustainable—neither in the context of limited planetary resources, nor in addressing the urgent challenges of inequality, environmental degradation, and climate change.⁶ Growing inequalities in life chances and quality of life have driven a now a well-established argument for seeking measures of progress beyond economic growth and GDP.⁷

1. UN-Habitat, 'City Prosperity Initiative', 2019, <https://unhabitat.org/programme/city-prosperity-initiative>; UN Habitat III, 'The New Urban Agenda', 2016, <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>; UN Habitat, *State of the World's Cities 2012/2013* (Nairobi: United States Human Settlement Programme, 2012).

2. For recent work on prosperity, see: John F. Helliwell, Richard Layard, and Jeffrey D. Sachs, *World Happiness Report 2018* (New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2018); Tim Jackson, *Prosperity without Growth: Foundations for the Economy of Tomorrow*, 2nd edition (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017); H.L. Moore, 'Global Prosperity and Sustainable Development Goals', *Journal of International Development* 27, no. 6 (2015): 801–15; Saffron Woodcraft, Emmanuel Osuteye, Tim Ndezi and Festo Makoba, 'Pathways to the "Good Life": Co-Producing Prosperity Research in Informal Settlements in Tanzania', *Urban Planning* 5, no. 3 (2020): 288–302; Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *Mis-Measuring Our Lives: Why the GDP Doesn't Add Up* (New York: The New Press, 2010); and Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality Is Better for Everyone* (London: Penguin, 2010). And for earlier work, see Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Random House, 1999).

3. Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, *Mis-Measuring*

4. Henrietta Moore and Nikolay Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?* (London: UCL Institute for Global Prosperity, 2021)

5. Jackson, *Prosperity Without Growth*; Wilkinson and Pickett, *The Spirit Level*.

6. Moore and Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?*; Isabelle Cassiers (ed.), *Redefining Prosperity*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 2014); Paul Dalziel, Caroline Saunders, and Joe Saunders, *Wellbeing Economics: The Capabilities Approach to Prosperity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Jackson, *Prosperity Without Growth*; Moore, 'Global Prosperity and Sustainable Development'.

7. See, for example: Lorenzo Fioramonti, *The World After GDP: Politics, Business and Society in the Post Growth Era* (Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2017); Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, *Mis-Measuring*; and Helliwell, Layard, and Sachs, *World Happiness Report*.

In this context, research aiming to conceptualise and measure non-financial aspects of natural and human flourishing has proliferated. The next section discusses the development of 'beyond-GDP' measures and argues that while they represent a significant shift in global policy discourse about

1.1 Beyond GDP: 'Wealth plus well-being'

The body of 'beyond-GDP' research includes high-profile theories of happiness and well-being;⁹ work on social progress that has developed a series of measures to assess social/non-economic development beyond GDP;¹⁰ the Foundational Economy Collective who have emphasised the social as well as material infrastructures on which we all depend;¹¹ the Legatum Institute whose annual Prosperity Index ranks countries according to their pathways from poverty to prosperity;¹² the OECD's Better Life Initiative that charts whether life is getting better across the OECD and partner countries;¹³ and the Sustainable Development Index that uses aggregate data to assess the ecological efficiency of countries in delivering human development.¹⁴

Of these varied approaches, it is well-being and happiness theories and metrics that have gained considerable attention in global policymaking over the past 15-years. Two disciplines – economics and psychology – have led the development of happiness and well-being studies: from early research examining the relationship between levels of GDP and happiness¹⁵, to debates about the limitations of happiness as an indicator of wider fulfilment and life satisfaction¹⁶, and literature examining optimal measures of subjective well-being.¹⁷ Such approaches adopt a 'wealth plus well-being' model - measuring the levels of well-being 'generated' by a nation's economic productivity, employment and household income,¹⁸ and deploying a universal definition of well-being as a state of individual happiness, life satisfaction, absence of anxiety and feeling that life is worthwhile.¹⁹

Efforts to expand the forms of knowledge that are used to inform and evaluate policymaking should be welcomed. However, this research agenda concentrates on understanding

what economies should return to societies, prosperity as a lived experience remains under-studied and under-theorized. At the beginning of the 'decade of delivery' (2020–2030) on the SDGs, policy-relevant knowledge for transformative action on prosperity is lacking.⁸

well-being and happiness as individualised, emotional states, with little sustained attention given to examining either situated meanings²⁰ or the material, political, and institutional contexts that shape individuals' experiences.²¹ In this context, cross-cultural studies addressing the measurement equivalence of well-being, happiness and life satisfaction in different contexts have proliferated²², prompting a critique of efforts to translate 'global' measures to developing country contexts rather than paying attention to differences in the meaning, value and relevance of these concepts in the Global South.²³

Acknowledging that what constitutes a 'good life' is contextual and relational means that efforts to improve quality of life for specific persons in specific locales must be context specific.

Participatory approaches to researching poverty as a multi-dimensional lived experience are well-established.²⁴ Yet similar approaches to building context-specific, multi-dimensional models of well-being and quality of life are less common²⁵, and studies examining 'lay' meanings of prosperity are notably absent from quality of life and well-being literature.²⁶ This means that in relation to well-being - the dominant area of "beyond GDP" research and policymaking – little attention is currently given to exploring how related concepts such as prosperity or quality of life may have context-specific meanings and practices that vary across places, cultures and generations. As a consequence, **questions about what different societies value, the specific ways in which visions of a good life lived well are materialised in policy, infrastructure and institutional frameworks, and issues of power and equity that arise when different visions of the good life intersect, are marginalised in the production of policy-relevant knowledge.**

8. Woodcraft et al., 'Pathways to the "Good Life".'

9. Examples include: Richard Layard, *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (London: Penguin, 2011); Paul Dolan, *Happiness by Design: Finding Pleasure and Purpose in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 2014); Felicia A. Hupper et al. 'Measuring Well-being Across Europe: Description of the ESS Well-being Module and Preliminary Findings', *Social Indicators Research*, 91, no. 3 (2008): 301-315; Dalziel, Saunders and Saunders, *Wellbeing Economics*; and Ed Diener and Martin Seligman, 'Beyond Money: Toward an Economy of Well-Being', *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 5, no. 1 (2004): 1-31.

10. Social Progress Imperative, '2020 Social Progress Index', available at: <https://www.socialprogress.org/statistics/8dace0a5624097333c2a57e29c2d7ad9/2020-global-spi-findings.pdf>, accessed August 12, 2021; Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, *Mis-Measuring*.

11. Luca Calafati et al. *How an Ordinary Place Works: Understanding Morriston* [The Foundational Economy Collective, 2019]; Julie Froud et al. *Foundational Liveability: Rethinking Territorial Inequalities* [The Foundational Economy Collective, 2018].

12. Legatum Institute, 'The Legatum Prosperity Index 2021', available at: <https://www.prosperity.com/rankings> [accessed January 21, 2022].

13. OECD, *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-Being* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020).

14. Moore and Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?*; Jason Hicke, *Less is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World* (London: Random House, 2020).

15. Richard Easterlin, 'Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence', in *Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honor of Moses Abramovitz*, ed. Paul A. David and Melvin W. Reder (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 89-124.

16. Gus O'Donnell et al. *Wellbeing and Policy* (London: The Legatum Institute, 2014); Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, 'Hedonia, Eudaimonia, and Well-Being: An Introduction', *Journal of Happiness Studies* 9, no. 1 (2006): 1-11.

17. For a discussion of different approaches see Sarah White and Shreya Jha, 'The Ethical Imperative of Qualitative Methods: Developing Measures of Subjective Dimensions of Well-Being in Zambia and India', *Ethics and Social Welfare* 8, no. 3 (July 2014): 262-276; and Sarah Atkinson, 'Beyond Components of Wellbeing: The Effects of Relational and Situated Assemblage', *Topoi* 32, no. 2 (2013): 137-44.

18. Ed Diener, 'Subjective well-being', *Psychological Bulletin* 95, no. 3 (1984): 542-575; Ed Diener and Eunkook Suh, 'Measuring Quality of Life: Economic, Social and Subjective Indicators', *Social Indicators Research* 40 (1997): 189-216; Easterlin, 'Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot?'

19. Ed Diener and Louise Tay, 'New Frontiers: Societal Measures of Subjective Well-Being for Input to Policy', in *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Happiness and Quality of Life*, ed. Luigino Bruni and Pier Luigi Porta (Cheltenham, UK; Mass, CA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), 35-52.

20. Laura Savu Walker, *The Good Life and the Greater Good in a Global Context* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015); Sarah White, 'Relational Well-being: A Theoretical and Operational Approach', *Bath Papers in International Development and Wellbeing No. 43* [University of Bath Centre for Development Studies, 2015].

21. Antonella Delle Fave et al. 'Lay Definitions of Happiness across Nations: The Primacy of Inner Harmony and Relational Connectedness', *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (2016) [unpaginated], available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00030> [accessed January 24, 2022]; David Disabato et al., 'Different Types of Well-Being? A Cross-Cultural Examination of Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being', *Psychological Assessment* 28, no. 5 (September 2015): 471-482; Angelina Wilson Fadji, Leana Meiring and Marie Wissing, 'Understanding Well-Being in the Ghanaian Context: Linkages between Lay Conceptions of Well-Being and Measures of Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being', *Applied Research in Quality of Life* 16, no. 2 (2021): 649-677.

22. Fadji, Meiring and Wissing, 'Understanding Well-Being'; Daphna Oyserman, Heather M. Coon and Markus Kimmelmeier, 'Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses', *Psychological Bulletin* 128, no. 1 (2002): 3-72.

23. Laura Camfield, 'Quality of Life in Developing Countries', in *Handbook of Social Indicators and Quality of Life Research*, ed. Kenneth C. Land, Alex C. Michalos, and M. Joseph Sirgy (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2012), 399-432; Fadji, Meiring and Wissing, 'Understanding Well-Being'; Rhonda Phillips and Cecilia Wong, *Handbook of Community Well-Being Research* [Dordrecht: Springer, 2017]; Sarah White, 'Bringing Wellbeing into Development Practice', *Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) Working Papers; No. WeD Working Paper 09/50* [University of Bath/Wellbeing in Developing Countries Research Group, 2009]; White, 'Relational Well-Being'.

24. Karen Brock and Rosemary McGee (eds.), *Knowing Poverty: Critical Reflections on Participatory Research and Policy* (London: Routledge, 2002); Caroline Robb, *Can the Poor Influence Policy? Participatory Poverty Assessments in the Developing World* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 1999).

25. Camfield, 'Quality of life'; Fadji, Meiring and Wissing, 'Understanding Well-Being'.

26. Woodcraft et al., 'Pathways to the "Good Life".'

1.2 Shared prosperity: poverty reduction by another name

This is most clearly evident when one looks at the dominant knowledge currently driving policy and action on prosperity in the Global South, which is based on narrow concepts and measures developed by the World Bank to operationalise its mission goals of poverty reduction and shared prosperity. Although this work is contested by international donors, governments and scholars,²⁷ this critique is yet to be incorporated into governance frameworks evidenced in the long running structural and systemic disadvantage experienced by regions, sectors and communities through time as others have benefited from globalisation, automation, investment and human capital accumulation.

The World Bank's programme on Poverty and Shared Prosperity, which was adopted in 2013, has two central goals: "ending extreme poverty globally and promoting shared prosperity in every country in a sustainable way".²⁸ The Bank's agenda seeks to address the issue of income inequality in relation to inclusive growth²⁹, with inclusive and equitable systems designed to ensure "the relatively poor in societies are participating in and benefiting from economic success".³⁰ Shared prosperity is conceptualised as "the growth in the income or consumption of the bottom 40% of the population in a country".³¹

The Poverty and Shared Prosperity programme focuses on the disproportional benefits that can arise from income and expenditure growth for the poorest 40 per cent, and identifies areas of public policy that can reduce poverty and support income growth to generate shared prosperity including: universal access to good-quality education, universal health care, conditional cash transfers (CCTs), investments in rural infrastructure (roads and electrification), and taxation, mainly on personal income and consumption. **While income growth for the poorest households is necessary to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty, long-run analyses show that income growth as the primary dimension will not increase life chances in a sustainable manner.** Sustainable poverty reduction demands

a coherent range of interventions that focus on increasing the public provision of goods and services; investments in human capital; a robust social safety net; and progressive taxation of income and wealth. This is especially relevant in contexts characterised by poor governance, under-developed infrastructures, and multiple forms of insecurity. Taking Africa as an example (because the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty in African countries is rising), low levels of human capital and gender inequality are acknowledged to impede poverty reduction efforts.³² The range of interventions listed here shows that even a narrow definition of shared prosperity as income and expenditure growth for the poorest is understood to depend on complex, multi-dimensional and multi-scalar systems that encompass infrastructures, conditions and policies at the local, regional and national levels.

Defining shared prosperity as income growth to alleviate extreme poverty misleadingly situates poverty and prosperity in a binary relationship: 'prosperity' being the outcome of poverty reduction efforts that focus on wealth, assets, and enhanced livelihoods. Not only does this definition of shared prosperity fail to take account of the things that make life worth living for individuals, but it also obscures the collective and systemic qualities of prosperity. Prosperity is about the relationship between individual lives and the larger systems and constraints within which they are embedded. Prosperity is best understood as an assemblage,³³ a particular configuration that emerges through time through unpredictable interactions.³⁴ The assemblages that make up prosperity are part of wider human and natural systems which are themselves characterised by nonlinear dynamics and sets of open-ended capacities that exceed the properties of their component parts.³⁵

There is an extensive literature that aims to differentiate the outcomes of inequality driven by individual life choices, from the inequality caused by an individual's circumstances over which they have no control, like place of birth, sex, gender, race, ethnicity,

27. Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, *Mis-Measuring; OECD, How's Life?; NZ Government, The Living Standards Framework: Dashboard Update* (NZ Treasury, 2019), available at: <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-12/lstf-dashboard-update-dec19.pdf> [accessed January 24, 2022].

28. World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018), p. 20.

29. Kaushik Basu, 'Shared Prosperity and the Mitigation of Poverty: In Practice and in Precept', *World Bank Policy Research Working Papers* (2013). <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-6700>.

30. World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018*; World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016).

31. World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016*, p. 1.

32. Kathleen Beegle and Luc Christiaensen, *Accelerating Poverty Reduction in Africa* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2019).

33. Henrietta Moore and Hannah Collins, *Assembling Prosperity in a Post-Covid United Kingdom* (London: Institute for Global Prosperity, UCL, 2021); Moore and Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?*

34. Andrew Barry, *Material politics: Disputes Along the Pipeline* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013); Stephen J. Collier and Aihwa Ong, 'Global Assemblages Anthropological Problems', in *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, edited by Stephen J. Collier and Aihwa Ong (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2007), 3–21; Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006); Tania Murray Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2007); George Marcus and Erkan Saka, 'Assemblage', *Theory, Culture and Society* 23, no. 3 (2006): 101–106; Martin Müller, 'Assemblages and actor-networks: Rethinking socio-material power, politics and space', *Geography Compass*, 9, no. 1 (2015): 27–41.

35. Jeffrey A. Goldstein, 'Emergence and radical novelty: from theory to methods', in *Handbook of Research Methods in Complexity Science*, edited by Eve Mitleton-Kelly, Alexandros Paraskevas and Christopher Day (Cheltenham, Glos: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018), 507–524; Deborah Dougherty and Danielle Dunne, 'Organizing Ecologies of Complex Innovation', *Organization Science*, 22, no. 5 (2011): 1214–1223.

and many other aspects.³⁶ This literature acknowledges the significance of place to material living standards and life chances in terms of life expectancy, infant mortality, years (and quality) of education, and health outcomes. A child born in one of the countries with the worst health is 60-times more likely to die than a child born in a country with the best health. In several African countries more than one out of ten children born today will die before they are five years old. In the countries where people have the best access to education – in Europe and Northern America – children of school entrance age can expect 15 to 20 years of formal education. Children entering school at the same time in countries with the poorest access to education can only expect 5 years.³⁷ Increasing an individual's income and thereby capacities to meet their basic needs can mitigate some of the effects of these inequalities by increasing nutrition, calorific intake, or ability to purchase medicines. However, the combined effects of these inequalities are too great for individuals to control, influence, or mitigate against by making individual investments in health, education or enterprise that increased income might allow. This points to the importance of considering the ways that structural conditions intersect with the experiences of individuals and population groups at different scales (household, community, city, nation) – prosperity as an assemblage, an outcome of complex systems.

The aim of the next section is to revisit the ambitious and inclusive vision of prosperity articulated in the

SDGs – for people everywhere to live “fulfilling lives” - and to highlight a disconnect between the aspirational rhetoric of shared prosperity espoused by Agenda 2030,³⁸ which emphasises human flourishing and fulfilment, and the narrow measure of income and consumption growth for the poorest that is used to operationalise shared prosperity.

Progress toward shared prosperity is measured using indicator 10.1.1 from the UN's Global Indicator Framework:³⁹ “Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population”, which originates from the World Bank's Poverty and Shared Prosperity programme.⁴⁰ **It is critical to connect literature about the limitations of pro-poor income growth, described above, to discourse on defining and measuring prosperity in the context of the SDGs.** Poverty reduction is an essential step towards enabling people to live prosperous and fulfilling lives, however, income growth is not equivalent to living a good life with material security, free of conflict, and with life chances and opportunities. Pro-poor income growth is based on a logic of individual self-sufficiency, rather than collective inter-dependency, and of basic needs rather than human flourishing. Given the strong connection between place and systemic inequalities in opportunity and outcomes, this calls for both multi-dimensional and contextual approaches to understanding the determinants of prosperity.

2. Examining prosperity in context

Research at the Institute for Global Prosperity (IGP) has examined how we might redefine prosperity for the 21st century by working with local communities to understand what prosperity means for them and how those local understandings relate to structural features of the economy, infrastructure, public services provision, and systemic social and political inequalities. IGP has developed a mixed-methods community co-production process, led by residents working in partnership with academic researchers and NGOs, to address

the lack of context-specific policy-relevant knowledge about prosperity and to challenge normative definitions and frameworks that privilege income growth over a broader understanding of what people need to live fulfilling lives.⁴¹ The process, known as the Prosperity Index, seeks to co-produce locally and culturally specific conceptual models of prosperity and prosperous lives, from which context-specific measures of prosperity can be developed and using new household survey data, local Prosperity Indices can be constructed.

36. John Roemer, *Equality of Opportunity* (London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

37. Max Roser, 'Global Economic Inequality', *OurWorldInData* (blog), 2013. <https://ourworldindata.org/global-economic-inequality>, accessed January 24, 2022.

38. United Nations General Assembly, 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', October 21, 2015. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>, accessed January 26, 2022.

39. Progress on the SDGs is monitored using a database of available global, regional and country data and metadata for the SDG indicators, which is maintained by the United Nations Statistics Division and is available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>.

40. United Nations, 'Global Indicator Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' p. 10. A/RES/71/313. Online at: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202020%20review_Eng.pdf, accessed January 24, 2022; World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016*; World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018*; World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020).

41. Henrietta Moore and Saffron Woodcraft, 'Understanding Prosperity in East London: Local Meanings and "Sticky" Measures of the Good Life', *City & Society* 31, no. 2 (2019): 275–98.

The Prosperity Index methodology is based on three assumptions: (1) co-producing knowledge about the lived experience of prosperity with citizens and communities—examining aspirations, practices, situated conditions and the effects of policy—generates more accurate, relevant and actionable knowledge about context-specific challenges and pathways to prosperity; (2) working collaboratively through multi-actor, multi-sector partnerships will create more transparent, democratic and inclusive spaces of knowledge production and critical social enquiry that can lead to grounded theory building; and (3) working through these multiple partnerships builds the capacity of communities and government, development agencies and public actors, increasing the likelihood that new concepts, forms of evidence and ways of working are adopted).⁴² The Prosperity Index has been deliberately designed as a process for understanding prosperity as a lived reality in context rather than as a fixed research methodology. It is based on three principles that determine the essential purpose and nature of each step in the process yet leave considerable scope for local adaptation, content, and context-specific action. The methodology has been developed and tested by IGP, in partnership with citizen social scientists and NGOs in cities in Tanzania, Lebanon, Nairobi and rural centres in Kenya, and several neighbourhoods in London, United Kingdom.⁴³

The next section uses empirical work in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, as a case of the Prosperity Index methodology in practice. The research was conducted as part of the KNOW project, undertaken in partnership with local NGO the Centre for Community Initiatives (CCI), which works with and supports the federated collectives of urban poor residents, under the Slum/Shack Dwellers International umbrella.

Dar es Salaam is the main commercial and cosmopolitan hub of Tanzania and one Africa's fastest growing urban centres. It has an estimated population of over 5.5 million and is forecast to expand by more than 85% during the next decade and exceed the 10 million mega-city status by the mid-2030s.⁴⁴ Rapid population growth has outstretched the supply of adequate and affordable housing and other requisite services in Dar es Salaam, and approximately 70% of the population lives in informal or unplanned settlements leading to increasing socio-economic and spatial inequalities.⁴⁵ The rate of growth of the informal settlements is two times the average urban growth rate in the City.⁴⁶ Many informal settlements are in hazardous locations, such as floodplains, riverbanks and wastelands, which further expose them to risks such as flooding, disease outbreaks further accentuating poverty and inequalities.⁴⁷ In this context, understanding how the well-being and prosperity of residents and communities can be improved and enhanced is a major challenge for urban planning and governance.⁴⁸



Vingunguti community meeting about research July 2018
(Source: pictures taken by David Heymann)

⁴² Woodcraft *et al.*, 'Pathways to the "Good Life"':

⁴³ Nikolay Mintchev *et al.*, 'Towards a Shared Prosperity: Co-Designing Solutions in Lebanon's Spaces of Displacement', *Journal of the British Academy* 7, no. 2 (2019): 109–35; Saffron Woodcraft and Benjamin Anderson, *Rethinking Prosperity for London: When Citizens Lead Transformation* (London: Institute for Global Prosperity, UCL, 2019).

⁴⁴ African Development Bank, 'Tracking Africa's Progress in Figures', 2014. Online at: https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/2019/08/28/tracking_africas_progress_in_figures.pdf, accessed April 4, 2020; Sam Sturgis, 'The Bright Future of Dar Es Salaam, an Unlikely African Megacity', *CityLab* (blog), 25 February 2015. Online at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-02-25/tanzania-s-dar-es-salaam-is-on-track-to-become-one-of-africa-s-most-important-megacities>, accessed January 24, 2022.

⁴⁵ Woodcraft *et al.*, 'Pathways to the "Good Life"': Fikreselassie Kassahun Abebe, 'Modelling Informal Settlement Growth in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania' (MSci diss., University of Twente, 2011); United Republic of Tanzania (URT), *National Human Settlements Development Policy* (Dar es Salaam: Ministry of Lands and Human Settlements Development, 2000); Wilbard Kombe and Volker Kreibich, *Governance of Informal Urbanisation in Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2006).

⁴⁶ Wilbard Kombe and Tim Ndezi, *Translocal Learning for Water Justice: Peri-Urban Pathways in India, Tanzania and Bolivia* (London: UCL Bartlett Development Planning Unit, 2015).

⁴⁷ Abebe, 'Modelling Informal Settlement Growth':

⁴⁸ Woodcraft *et al.*, 'Pathways to the "Good Life"':

2.1 'Maisha bora' – prosperity and the good life in Dar es Salaam

The research focused on the experience of people living in three informal settlements: Mji Mpya, Bonde La Mpunga and Keko Machungwa.⁴⁹ Community researchers examined both what prosperous lives - *maisha bora* in Swahili – mean, and what individuals understand as determinants of and obstacles to prosperity in the short and long-term.

Seven priority themes emerged (Figure 1), the first of which is livelihood security – described as reliable income-generating activity from employment or entrepreneurship that enables people to meet basic needs such as adequate and affordable shelter, food, and nutrition three times a day, safe water, and affordable energy. Public services including childcare, healthcare, education, and transport were also identified as components of livelihood security because of the critical role they play in enabling people to generate income and care for family members.

Housing and secure shelter were identified as a basic need. However, discussions about aspirations for, and pathways toward, *maisha bora* recognise the multiple significances and possibilities afforded by secure land and housing rights, whether ownership or tenancy, in the present and future. Examples included control over housing upgrading and expansion, opportunities for small scale enterprise and industries that additional space allows, including food production and animal rearing which both offer scope to generate additional revenue.

Discussions about health focused on scale and interactions between individual, settlement and city-wide conditions and services. Participants discussed how individual circumstances such as hunger, chronic health conditions and well-being, intersect with conditions in the settlement (clean air, safe water, lack of pests, proximity to polluting industries), and in the city more broadly. While not all necessarily local government responsibilities, city-wide factors shaping and supporting good health include both provision of hospitals, health centres, maternal and child health services, and capacities to access those services (health insurance, able to pay fees, transport

WHAT SUPPORTS MAISHA BORA, A GOOD LIFE, FOR RESIDENTS IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN DAR ES SALAAM? MOST COMMON THEMES DISCUSSED IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH BY REFERENCE COUNT

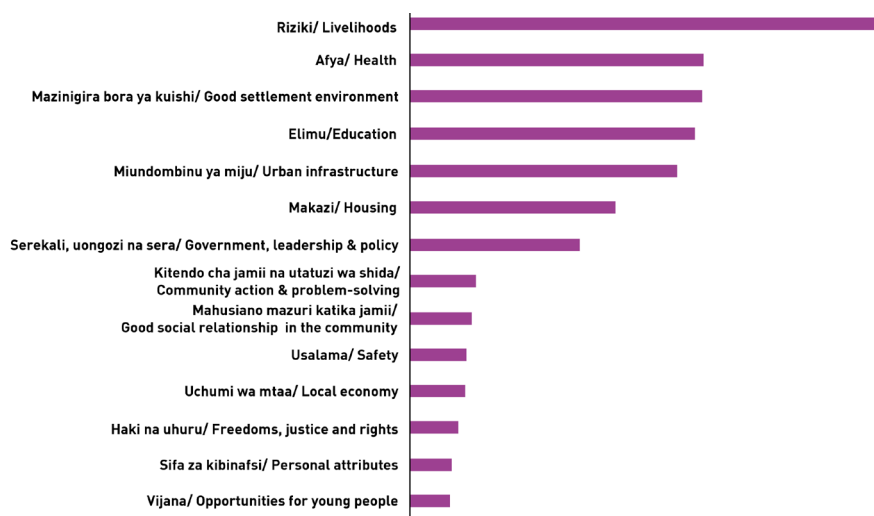


Figure 1. Most common themes in qualitative research in three informal settlements in Dar es Salaam (July-October 2019). Source: Woodcraft et al. 2020.

connections and affordability to reach services, which were particularly challenging for elderly and disabled residents).

Similarly, access to good quality and free childcare and basic education were described as important foundational conditions for a good life, in terms of personal development and attaining secure employment or income-generating activities. Educational provision is a common measure of human development and prosperity, however, research in Dar es Salaam identified the importance of other forms of education for youth and adults specifically relating to capacity-building for business and enterprise, and to enhance capacities to access micro-credit, loans and capital for investments, and household and business financial management to reduce problems associated with debt. Access to these services and resources interact to contribute to one's ability to build a secure livelihood were identified as the first priority theme.⁵⁰

The final priority theme addressed questions of individual agency, space for community action and enterprise, power and local leadership: connecting themes around livelihood security and household living conditions to wider issues of community empowerment, enterprise and settlement improvement.

49. Ibid.

50. Moore and Collins, *Assembling Prosperity*; Saffron Woodcraft, Hannah Collins and Iona McArdle, *Re-thinking Livelihood Security: Why Addressing the Democratic Deficit in Economic Policymaking Opens up New Pathways to Prosperity* (London: Institute for Global Prosperity, UCL, 2021).

The factors shaping prosperity, *maisha bora*, for settlement dwellers in Dar es Salaam encompass material, social, environmental, economic and political spheres and operate at different scales from individual to household to community, city and state.⁵¹ These accounts demonstrate that prosperous lives are determined by more than monetary security, income or wealth. The obstacles to meeting basic needs, living the fulfilling lives that individuals aspire to, context-specific inequalities that urban residents face, including systemic exclusions (e.g. informality, economic marginalisation, insecurity, unequal power relations) and multiple forms of disadvantage, expose the links and dependencies between different domains and scales of economic and social life, for example, land, housing and livelihoods, and gender, education and voice.⁵² Adding to the literature on these features of prosperity, this work, and IGP's research in other contexts, demonstrates that prosperity is multi-dimensional, relational, and has strong temporal characteristics, which are shaped by historical social and economic legacies as well as current conditions and policies.

What differentiates this work however is the source of development of this knowledge which is done in context and in partnership with citizens, rather than taking a concept (such as well-being) and applying it across contexts.⁵³ By analysing the lived experience of local communities within the complex set of interlocking systems and structures that make up the social, economic and political life of specific places, we are able to understand the diverse meanings and practices of a prosperous life, and to situate these in relation to structural conditions that can support or prevent people from living fulfilling lives and the multiple scales at which they operate.



Dar Prosperity research coding workshop
(Source: pictures taken by David Heymann)



Vingunguti focus group July 2019
(Source: pictures taken by David Heymann)

51. Woodcraft *et al.*, 'Pathways to the "Good Life"'.
52. Ibid.

53. Mintchev *et al.*, 'Towards a Shared Prosperity'; Woodcraft and Anderson, *Rethinking Prosperity*; Woodcraft *et al.*, 'Pathways to the "Good Life"'.
54. Ibid.

2.3 Pathways to urban prosperity: livelihood security

Livelihood security is seen as a foundation of citizen-led (re)definitions of prosperity in the urban contexts of Dar es Salaam, East London and Beirut.⁵⁴ For comparison, figures 2-4 show the prosperity models co-designed with local citizens in the three urban contexts. In each context, livelihood security is identified as a foundation to prosperity.⁵⁵ Households draw on a range of assets, depending on context, but often including: secure income and good quality work; affordable, secure and good quality housing; access to key public services; and inclusion in the social, political and economic life of the city. These assets overlap, intersect and display interdependencies with each other as well as with individual identities, and can therefore be conceptualised as an infrastructure for secure livelihoods.⁵⁶ This thinking, based on lived experience, generates a different way of thinking about the economy and how it can contribute to improvements in quality of life.

Secure and good quality work is essential to building a secure livelihood. But this is only one piece of what contributes to secure livelihoods, linked to poverty reduction through income generation. And as the chapter illustrated earlier, poverty reduction based on inclusive growth, as outlined by the World Bank, fails to deliver shared prosperity.⁵⁷ Policy based on a narrow formulation of shared prosperity as income growth for the poorest households obscures the complex interdependencies between individual capacities, settlement and wider city infrastructures, and economic and political conditions in enabling people to live prosperous and fulfilling lives. Examining prosperity through the lens of lived experience begins to illuminate how the conditions that shape prosperity cut across social, economic, cultural and environmental domains and different scales of urban life and governance.

The determination of the five domains within the IGP's prosperity framework allows for the variation of the content of the domains across space and time, as well as the relationship between factors and elements within and across the domains. However, in order to make

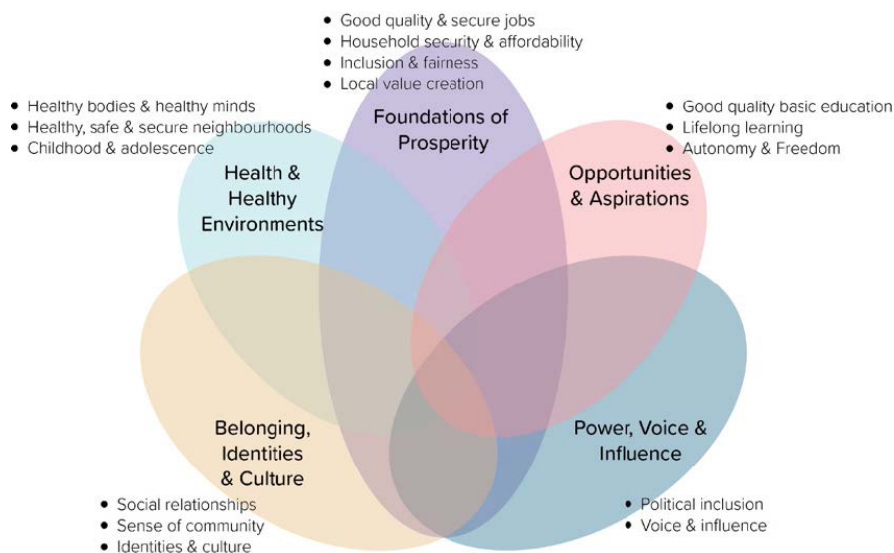


Figure 2. Co-designed Prosperity Model for East London.
Source: Moore and Woodcraft (2019) and Woodcraft and Anderson (2019).



Figure 3. Co-designed Prosperity Model for Hamra, Beirut.
Source: Moore and Mintchev (2021). David Heymann)

54. Mintchev *et al.*, 'Towards a Shared Prosperity'; Moore and Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?*; Woodcraft *et al.*, 'Pathways to the "Good Life"'; Woodcraft, Collins and McArdle, *Rethinking Livelihood Security*; Moore and Woodcraft, 'Understanding Prosperity in East London'.

55. For detail on the development and weighting of the indicators see Woodcraft and Anderson, *Rethinking Prosperity*, and Moore and Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?*

56. Woodcraft, Collins and McArdle, *Rethinking Livelihood Security*.

57. World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016*; World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018*; World Bank Group, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020*.

effective change to the quality of people's lives – where and what change is needed must be determined to shape appropriate policy responses. The IGP has developed a specific framework, drawn from its comparative work between and within national and regional contexts.⁵⁸ From work conducted in the United Kingdom, Kenya, Tanzania and Lebanon it is clear that relationalities between key elements driving quality of life are denser at the meso level, the level at which people live their lives. What constitutes the meso level is a matter of investigation. At times it will be a small time, and at others a specific area within a city; a series of villages or a specific region bounded by natural resources. It is not congruent with names, social class, ethnic or religious groups. It may be best understood as the manifestation of the significance of place and location in human life, which varies depending on context. Structures of governance provide important contours for the meso level because of the way they impact financial flows, investment, infrastructure, education and health provision and policy responses.

Examining what drives quality of life or prosperity at the meso level cannot be determined by looking at the influence of one domain or set of indicators on another (how health influences productivity, for example). The key to well targeted policy initiatives is how to provide better insight into how the domains interrelate in specific contexts and how the elements covary and have import in particular locales while retaining the significance of what matters for individuals and communities as they seek to manage the constraints and challenges and bring about change.⁵⁹

Driving a concerted set of place-based efforts to tackle problems in context – carbon net zero, improved water quality, affordable and green housing, for example – has the potential to create local employment and to provide local institutions with incentives to support the development of community capacities and capabilities.

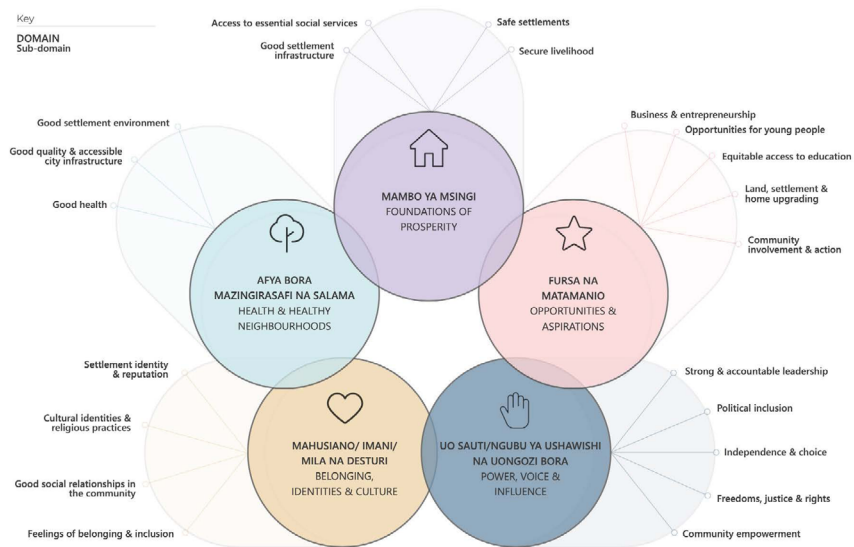
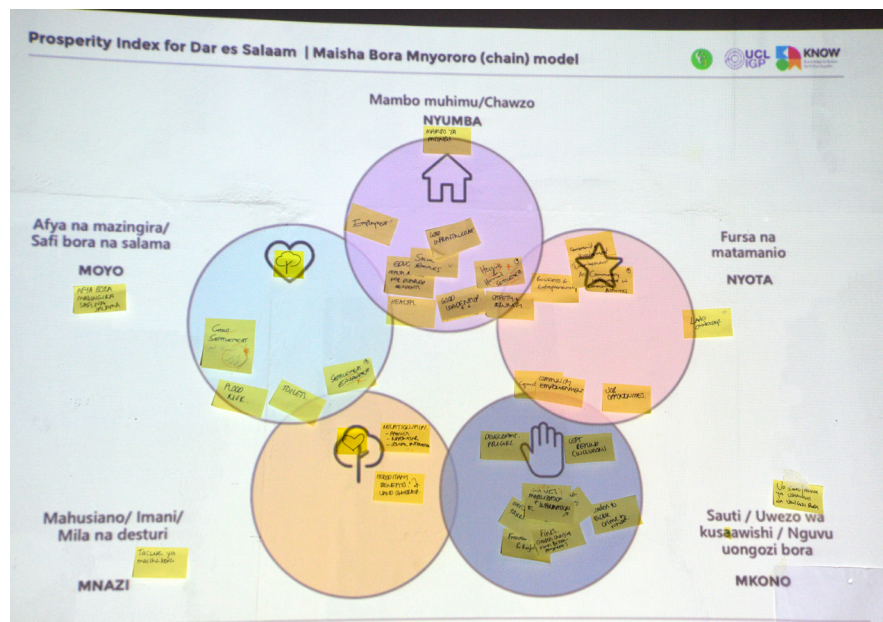


Figure 4. Co-designed Prosperity Model for Dar es Salaam. **Source:** Woodcraft et al. (2020).



Co-designing maisha bora model November 2019 (Source: pictures taken by David Heymann)

⁵⁸ Henrietta Moore, Juan Moreno and George Melios, *Identifying and Understanding Local Priorities for Developing an 'Economy of Belonging': A Case Study of Eight Areas in the UK* (London: Institute for Global Prosperity, UCL, 2020); Moore and Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?*

⁵⁹ See the IGP's L00T framework in Moore, Moreno, and Melios, *'Economy of Belonging'*.

3. Lived experience and complex systems

It can be concluded that the broad brush of prosperity must be about the relationship between individual lives – their quality, aspiration and purpose – and the larger systems and constraints within which they are embedded.⁶⁰ A re-imagined prosperity must account for both lived experience, contextual values and structural constraints. This means moving away from assumptions that economic growth will necessarily benefit all, and that individual well-being measured by individual feelings of happiness, life satisfaction, anxiety and civic purpose, can be an adequate proxy for shared prosperity. Prosperity as redefined here is more than income or wealth; and while it incorporates individual well-being it foregrounds living well together with human and non-human others. On these terms a redefined prosperity is an emergent feature of a whole ecology.⁶¹ **It is about the value created with the wealth we have and much of that value resides in communities and places, but it needs to be repurposed to meet new challenges, improve quality of life in those places, and to address inequalities in novel ways.**⁶²

This recognition has consequences for theories of change, for operationalising prosperity and for policy formation. The most immediate deficit lies in forms of knowledge sharing and collaboration that can build system complexity, as well as community capacities and capabilities to deliver problem solving, shared strategies and solutions, and pathways for implementation. IGP's work on redefining and building pathways to prosperity is part of this broader ecology of initiatives, but its specific value lies in four innovative approaches: the first involves working with local communities to understand what prosperity means for them in the context of lives lived;⁶³ the second entails situating these local understandings within the structural features of the economy, infrastructure, public services provision, and systemic social and political inequalities; the third consists in developing pathways to sustainable prosperity based on novel understandings of how complex systems change;⁶⁴ the fourth situates

the mechanisms for change within new forms of collaboration and governance.⁶⁵ In this context, global policy discourses that emphasise the role of cities, and thereby city and municipal authorities, in driving prosperity require close attention. In the context of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda (NUA), the 'urban' is seen as the "privileged locus of prosperity".⁶⁶ **Cities are identified as vital sites for concrete, transformative and sustained action to enhance prosperity,** based on the hypothesis that cities drive innovation and inclusion, and have greater scope than national governments to generate and distribute prosperity, develop creative collaborations with local stakeholders, and implement new ideas for positive social change.⁶⁷ While this may be the case, the globalization of urban inequality that has accompanied global urbanization shows that prosperous cities are not a guarantee of prosperity or equity for all citizens.⁶⁸ Cities spatialise and intensify inequalities, vulnerabilities, and risks in diverse and complex ways. In this context, the question of how to conceptualise and act for 'urban prosperity' should be at the forefront of urban research and policymaking.



Co-designing *maisha bora* model November 2019
(Source: pictures taken by David Heymann)

60. Moore and Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?*

61. Ibid.

62. Moore and Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?*; Woodcraft *et al.*, 'Pathways to the "Good Life"'.
63. Moore and Woodcraft, 'Understanding Prosperity in East London'; Mintchev *et al.*, 'Towards a Shared Prosperity'; Hannah Sender *et al.*, *Rethinking Prosperity: Perspectives of Young People Living in East London* (London: Institute for Global Prosperity, UCL, 2020); Woodcraft and Anderson, *Rethinking Prosperity*; Woodcraft *et al.*, 'Pathways to the "Good Life"'.
64. Moore and Collins, *Assembling Prosperity*; Moore and Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?*; Woodcraft *et al.*, *Rethinking Livelihood Security*.
65. See the website of the London Prosperity Board, at: <https://londonprosperityboard.org/> [accessed January 25, 2022].
66. UN Habitat III, 'The New Urban Agenda'; UN Habitat, 'State of the World's Cities 2012/2013: Prosperity of Cities', (United Nations Human Settlements Programme: Nairobi, 2012), p. v. Online at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/745habitat.pdf> [accessed January 25, 2022].
67. UN Habitat III, 'The New Urban Agenda'; UN Habitat, 'Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at Subnational Level', (UN Habitat: Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, 2016).
68. According to UN Habitat (2016), 75 per cent of cities have higher levels of income inequalities today than two decades ago.

Delivering shared prosperity, re-imagined on the terms of Agenda 2030 as fulfilling and prosperous lives for people everywhere within planetary constraints, will require new forms of knowledge, new ways of thinking that pay attention to questions of interdependency, and new social institutions and organisational forms. The lives and futures of individuals and communities, in particular in urban centres in the Global South, will depend on the forms of evidence and knowledge that drive policy and action on the SDGs in the next decade. City, municipal and regional governments are well-placed to lead social innovation that focuses on place-based prosperity.

What is needed from local and regional governments to secure rights and further advance urban and regional equality? Understanding how collective prosperous lives and livelihoods might emerge within complex ecologies of systems is crucial and to recognise that prosperity is not an entity in itself or something that simply describes the state of individuals or firms or regions, it is rather an effect of the whole ecology, of the specific assemblage constituted through the specifics of time and place. In such systems change cannot be driven by agents or firms or local governments or institutions working alone or through established mechanisms that are not focused on improving the capabilities and capacities of communities to deliver improvements in quality of life. Working with communities to understand the problems and then envisage solutions is the starting point, but in making this claim there is more to be understood.

Redefining prosperity starts with local co-production of knowledge. Co-production is critical to create new forms of urban knowledge that reflect the diversity of contemporary cities and bring new voices, specifically from the Global South to policymaking. Neither knowledge co-production methods or intersectional analyses are new approaches in urban research and policymaking in the Global South.⁶⁹ However, the unique value of the prosperity framework methodology is that it offers an opportunity for the integration of lived experience into urban policy, bringing alternate views about prosperity to evidence-based

planning in contexts that rarely take account of non-dominant perspectives. It enables the generation of rich contextual understandings of the underlying issues and factors driving inequalities, that require such nuanced 'pathways' out of them.

Thinking about prosperity systematically goes beyond the knowledge-generation realm and proposes a framework for transformative change with the community at the centre. The complexity of envisaging and managing complex systems to drive innovation for change requires a completely different theory of change from those we recognise from most macroeconomic policy initiatives, such as high-end technological innovation or infrastructural investment or co-ordinated regional financing through public/private partnerships. Here we are dealing with multiple forms of agency, materiality, organisational forms and knowledges with dynamic and uncertain outcomes. The emphasis has to be on visualising and testing how these heterogeneous elements can be brought together to create new relationships, new knowledges and new forms of value. **Prosperity requires innovation through new forms of collaboration and this is why redefining prosperity requires not only new theories of change, but a reorientation of policy goals and outcomes towards quality of life and reform of economic value.**

Focusing on the intersections between lived experience and structural forces to develop a redefined prosperity that is less concerned with aggregate economic wealth and growth, and more attentive to the things that people care about and need – secure and good quality livelihoods, good public services, a clean and healthy environment, planetary and ecosystem health, a political system that allows everyone to be heard, and the ability to have rich social and cultural lives. In this sense, **to redefine prosperity is to challenge both the structural features of our economies and the value premises on which they are built.**⁷⁰

69. Vanesa Castán-Broto and Susana Neves Alves, 'Intersectionality challenges for the co-production of urban services: Notes for a theoretical and methodological agenda', *Environment and Urbanization*, 30, no. 2 (2018): 367–386.

70. Moore and Mintchev, *What Is Prosperity?*

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