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Knowledge matters: the potential contribution of the co-production of research to urban transformation

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to share our experiences – as academics and professionals – in co-producing knowledge to improve urban development outcomes in the Global South. The focus of the paper – urban research and practice – is a context in which academic work influences policy and programming, and professional knowledge – validated and certified by academic institutions – forms the basis for urban planning and management. Collaborative research – co-produced with social movement activities – suggests that four issues need to be addressed to establish more equitable relations. First, alternative theories of change about how research leads to social transformation must be recognised, even if they cannot be reconciled. Second, the contribution of social movement leaders to university teaching needs to be institutionalised. Third, the relative status of academics *vis-à-vis* non-academics must be interrogated, and better understood. Fourth, researchers' accountability to the marginalised needs to be established. We argue that academics are insufficiently self-critical about the power dynamics involved in knowledge production with social movements, and that long-term relations enable understandings to be built and some of these tensions to be alleviated. Our conclusion highlights the unequal power relations that lie behind these challenges, and summarises key measures to address inequalities and their negative consequences.

Keywords

1. Introduction

The significance of knowledge is widely recognised. We are said to be living in an information age (Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998; Madden, 2015) and governments (local and national) seek to build a knowledge economy. Within and beyond academic institutions, the potential contribution of multiple types of knowledge has long been recognised, particularly in the context of indigenous knowledge (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). These understandings, combined with motivations to be more relevant to the needs of non-academic communities, have led to a wide range of efforts to co-produce knowledge. Co-production has most commonly been used to describe the joint production of services between state agencies and organised communities (Mitlin, 2008). In the case of research, the 'co-production of knowledge' is a term that recognises the essential contribution of non-academics to generating knowledge.

There has been considerable recent interest in the co-production of knowledge (Simon et al, 2018; Culwick et al, 2019; Osuteye et al, 2019). This reflects recognition of the need to go beyond the participation of non-academics in research processes with an acknowledgement of the significance of alternative ontologies and epistemologies.[1] As academics accept the significance of demands to decolonise and democratise the academy, and to reframe a radical knowledge agenda, the need for more equitable research processes shifts from the periphery to centre stage. The concept of co-production – widely used in the service sector – recognises the significance of multi-agency inputs into the conceptualisation, planning, implementation, resources and evaluation of activities. More substantively it acknowledges the central role of users of services in the production of those services; and hence supports substantive inclusion. The relevance of co-production to research is now more evident, and in this paper we present one long-standing experience with the co-production of knowledge to a wider audience.

The paper provides a platform to share observations about the experiences of academics and urban social movements engaged in the co-production of knowledge to secure justice and equity in towns and cities of the Global South. Our objectives are to explore these relations, and to identify and elaborate on the critical issues that need to be addressed to create more equitable research processes, and hence achieve social justice. Social justice is primarily considered here through a focus on more equitable processes for the co-production of knowledge; however, we believe that more equitable knowledge processes are required for transformative urban outcomes. We are motivated in this endeavour because of our shared experience that insufficient attention is given to significant tensions that need to be shared and discussed for the co-production of knowledge to be achieved.

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[1] Hence the theme of the Development Studies Association conference in 2019 was 'opening up development'. And the theme of the Royal Geographic Society/Institute of British Geographers conference in 2017 was 'decolonising geographical knowledges'.

To date, many of the development studies debates related to social justice and knowledge have focused on indigenous knowledge; our contribution considers the engagement of broadly Western academic knowledge with the realities of excluded and marginalised urban residents. Most of the global population is now living in towns and cities (UN Population Division, 2018), with an estimated 880 million living in unsafe houses and without basic services (UN-Habitat, 2014), with very high percentages of urban employment being in the informal sector with associated precarity (Chen, 2014). Outcomes are increasingly adverse, with low-income residents struggling against displacement and the difficulties of securing essential services at affordable costs, while elites manage urban land and commodity production processes to accumulate wealth and extract profits. Urban-focused research is required to understand the possibilities for, and constraints on, reforms, urban policies and programmes. This is the context in which we engage with the challenges of co-producing relevant knowledge.

This paper draws particularly on our insights as academics and professionals working with SDI, a network of social movements and support NGOs that works in the informal settlements of 33 countries in the Global South and has sought to advance equitable urban development. Professionals working with SDI-affiliated movements are co-authors of this paper.[2] The research processes used for the paper are summarised in Section 2, which elaborates on the contribution that SDI-affiliated federations of shack and slum dwellers has played. The focus on this movement adds depth and enables an interrogation of the issues. However, the findings are relevant to other efforts to co-produce knowledge with multiple agencies.

As elaborated in Section 3, the themes this paper engages with are long-standing. Participatory research and action-research have explored the terrain within which the co-production of knowledge now engages, and all three approaches share key principles related to collaboration between academic and non-academic researchers. These methodologies all engage with academic contributions to social justice through strengthening the voice of disadvantaged populations. This discussion reflects our shared belief that there is no formula to secure the co-production of knowledge. We share perspectives from our collective experiences to help both academics and non-academics build relations that reflect shared aspirations to generate knowledge that advances social justice and an equitable urban future for all. This is – in its present form – an academic working paper. But it has been co-authored by non-academics and we recognise that its themes speak to the interests of non-academics. To widen our reach, we plan further dissemination once our ideas have been refined through this working paper.

Section 4 is structured using four themes. The first is the underlying theory of change used by academics and social movement activists, and how theories of change link to methodologies of knowledge production and use. The second is that of education, and

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[2] The SDI co-authors are working within the professional support agencies. We also quote leaders of grassroots federations to acknowledge the contribution they have made.

the opportunity for collaboration to educate students in the central contribution of low-income community organisations to transforming urban development practice. The third is that of academic status, and the challenges that status hierarchies mean for those making efforts to co-produce knowledge between academics and non-academics. The fourth theme is that of institutional engagements and the development of longer-term relations as a process that changes outcomes. Section 5 concludes with a summary of the discussion and a reflection on knowledge and power.

2. Methodology

Empowerment is, in part, the "exercise of *informed choice* within an expanding framework of information, knowledge and analysis … a process which must enable women to discover new possibilities, new options …. a growing repertoire of choices" (Batliwala, quoted in Rowlands, 1997, p 23, original emphasis).

This paper has been a long time in the making. It draws specifically on the experiences of all the authors through both formal research and experiential engagements that have taken place over the past six years. Its topic – how to co-produce knowledge – is one theme within an ongoing research network which combines academics from the UK and those from Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe, along with SDI affiliates in those three countries. Funded by the Leverhulme Trust to understand how participatory planning in African cities can be scaled, refining the co-production of knowledge is an essential component of the work of this network.

SDI – formally known as Shack/Slum Dwellers International – is a transnational network of women-led savings groups based in informal settlements that come together into city and national federations. SDI affiliates share organising practices, including savings-based organisation, community-to-community (peer) exchanges, and community-led enumeration (mapping and profiling settlements, and household surveys). SDI both develops and recognises its own knowledge production processes, and reaches out to local academic departments to build collaborative alliances in order to change practices. SDI affiliates recognise the significance of academic knowledge, both in defining problems and solutions and, more generally, in conceptualising and theorising urbanisation, urban economic growth and urban development. However, they recognise that research – as defined by academics – may not align with their experiences and goals. Hence, they have sought to develop their own knowledge capabilities around specific strategies and agendas (see, for example, Patel et al, 2012; Appadurai, 2012). SDI's Indian Alliance (SPARC, 2014, p 7) frames its own perspective on both academic and non-academic research thus:

> Clearly, knowledge creation and its ownership and the right to research remain foremost the right to research, to explore, to classify, to analyse, to verify and to extract learning and knowledge from that process remains a critical survival challenge. Many definitions regarding what is poverty, what is chronic

deprivation, and many seminal definitions that drive development investments get formulated on the basis of global discourses that leave the poor, the very subjects of this discussion, outside the process.

This quote highlights the frustration felt by a social movement whose members experience the deprivations that others study and then define. This is manifest in relational tension as activists collaborate with academics who are needed to engage with these debates, but who are embedded in processes that are – by language, place and status – exclusionary. As both academics and non-academics, we recognise the vulnerability of urban social movements towards academics who come and do research on them, rather than with them. SDI, and other civil society organisations, fear academics misrepresent their realities, generate knowledge that adversely affects their work and mission, and are insufficiently respectful of the relations they have with a range of stakeholders. Hence our motivation as academics and professionals in exploring alternative research practices.

The academic authors come from a range of disciplines (architecture, development studies and planning) and are well versed in critical social science, with research experience in a range of geographical contexts. The non-academic authors are professionals working with the NGO support organisations for SDI affiliates. All the academic authors have been involved in research projects that have sought to co-produce knowledge with social movements. The discussion below is informed by the research relations that we have been directly involved in and those we have observed. We have not sought a tight definition of the co-production of knowledge that would restrict the research relations that we explore. Rather, we consider relations that have used the language of knowledge co-production, participation and partnership.

The discussion uses information obtained through semi-structured interviews about the co-production of knowledge and academic and social movement relations,[3] through participation in academic engagements by SDI (and other social movements), through informal consultations about how to resolve tensions in SDI and academic relations (partially captured through email exchanges), and through participation (sometimes jointly between authors) in research projects with SDI. While the focus on SDI is limiting, as it is only one example of a transnational social movement, this is mitigated by the fact that concentration on these experiences offers depth to our analysis. As we argue below, it is the longevity of an engagement that offers insights into research processes.

Particularly notable exchanges took place with SDI's Indian affiliate in 2012, and during a network meeting with SDI participants at the World Urban Forum in 2014 (preceded by interviews with both Zambian and Zimbabwean SDI participants in the Forum). A workshop on impact at the Global Development Institute in Manchester (2017) brought together civil society scholars (including SDI professionals) and academics to explore

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[3] While most interviewees have been federation leaders, we have also drawn on the experiences of a small number of local government officials.

relevant issues. Three research team reflections took place in Uganda in 2016 (Kampala, Mbale and Kabale) between academics, NGO professionals and community activists involved in co-producing knowledge about one national-level urban development programme. Two recent group discussions, one with a Nairobi-based team of three (academic, professional, community leader) in March 2017 and the second involving a larger combined team from four cities (three academics, four professionals, three community activists) in March 2018 added experiences and analysis. Conference panels that have focused on this and related themes include two sessions at the RC21 conference in Leeds (2017); a double panel on participation in towns and cities of the Global South at the Development Studies Association in Bradford (2017); and a special session on the co-production of knowledge with academic and SDI presentations at the Royal Geographic Society/Institute of British Geographers conference in 2014. A first draft of this paper was prepared in September 2018 and was shared with all the authors, who added and edited text.

Before beginning with the review of the literature and discussion of challenges, we acknowledge the benefits of collaboration. While the focus on challenges is necessary to move forward this methodological field, our findings are not overwhelmingly negative. SDI activists recognise that academics have given them useful tools and skills, and represented local realities in ways that have helped to legitimate support from government agencies. Before beginning on the literature review and analysis of tensions, we illustrate some of these benefits for one of SDI's affiliates, the Muungano Alliance in Kenya (Box 1).

Box 1: The benefits of academic collaboration for the Muungano Alliance

The Muungano Alliance in Kenya has acknowledged expertise on Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Staff at SDI Kenya (the support NGO for the Muungano Alliance) explain that they learned many skills from university students. Skills around settlement profiles, enumerations and mapping using GIS have drawn on academic expertise and produced community cadres with critical skills that contribute to settlement upgrading processes. Besides building local capacity in informal settlement neighbourhoods, this process has also helped – across the SDI network – to challenge the 'expertisation' of urban planning.

SDI Kenya recognises the benefits of academic support on the zonal plan for Mathare informal settlement; academics helped to conceptualise forms of neighbourhood development and understand how to connect local infrastructure into city networks. At that time, residents and Muungano members felt that tenure issues were too sensitive to be discussed within the settlement. Working on infrastructure led to strategic links with utilities and local government and, with academic help, the Muungano Alliance built successfully on existing practices to advance access to essential services. Most recently, with support from the Strathmore Business School, they have been able to articulate the 'poverty penalty', or the additional cost paid due to the inaccessibility of formal services. Hence SDI-Kenya recognises the role of academics in building skills (GIS), changing an understanding of what is required within the Alliance (city-wide infrastructure connections), and external representation of local realities (organic and inorganic settlement forms and the 'poverty penalty').

Analysing the co-production of knowledge is inherently difficult (Anderson et al, 2013). Relations inevitably involve complex interactions between those involved, and are influenced by the external context. As opportunities open and close, and as outcomes change and understandings deepen, the fallacy of measuring success and failure at any moment it time through 'snapshots' is exposed. We seek to elucidate issues, share experiences and suggest ways forward based on long-standing engagements. The section below shares ideas from the broader literature before our findings are presented in Section 4.

3. Methodology

Understanding academic and community knowledge relations: what the literature contributes

> There is a politics of urban knowledge because urban knowledge is political. (Madden, 2015, p 300)

> Knowledge democracy is about intentionally linking values of justice, fairness and action to the process of creating and using knowledge. (Tandon et al, 2016, p 23)

The co-production of knowledge has a substantive heritage linked to debates about participation and research (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2015; Tandon et al, 2016; Kara, 2017). There is a strong overlap between earlier traditions of both action research and participatory research, and evolving practices of the co-production of knowledge. Participatory research has been motivated by academics committed to processes of inclusion; it has also been catalysed by social movement activists and academics who recognise that action is a catalyst for learning and that securing social justice requires rigorous learning and knowledge building (Burns et al, 2012; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2015). These practices have gone beyond drawing disadvantaged communities into academic research processes and have recognised the insights provided by alternative forms of knowledge and the potential, particularly of indigenous knowledge, to advance understandings of the natural world and of human–nature interaction (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Traditions of action research and participatory research share with the co-production of knowledge the commitment to move beyond the academy and to challenge and reform research practices (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2015). This is particularly aligned with the academic discipline of development studies, which takes a normative standpoint and is motivated by values of social justice, equity, equality, empowerment and associated resource redistribution. In summary, these research approaches directly address social justice by providing more equitable spaces for knowledge generation, they offer the potential for new knowledge (methodological, theoretical, conceptual, empirical) about social justice, and promote the development of

new capabilities among all participants in the process (Gaventa & Tandon, 2010; Oldfield, 2015).

The co-production of knowledge builds on shared research traditions to advance our understanding about how disadvantaged groups can be active partners in understanding the city (Van Ewijk & Baud, 2009; Beebeejaun et al, 2015; Jacobs et al, 2015; Openjuru et al, 2015). For us, the co-production of research begins with a recognition of the value of different forms of knowledge and the right of disadvantaged groups to be centrally involved in research on urban poverty and inequality. Knowledge that is co-produced engages with alternative understandings, builds new research capabilities, jointly tests different explanations, and negotiates research processes. We recognise that knowledge generation has the potential to exacerbate as well as address inequalities and injustices.

The uneven power relations between types of knowledge producers are immediately apparent from any engagement with this literature. Freire (2000) gained a global audience with his volume, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in which he sought to define a learning space that challenged exclusionary knowledge institutions, and realised a pedagogy for liberation. Academics have responded to these critical reflections by developing new relations and methodological approaches that challenge their own dominance (Tandon et al, 2016; Bell & Pahl, 2018). Recently, in the context of the need to 'decolonise knowledge', they have critiqued the dominance of academic knowledge (Baldwin, 2017) and recognised the need to ensure that multiple forms of knowledge are acknowledged within universities (Noxolo, 2017) as well as beyond. There are therefore now multiple and long-standing efforts to secure alternative knowledge production processes. Gaventa and Cornwall (2015, p 465) argue that "understandings of the relationship of knowledge and power in the participatory research process have become more nuanced, taking into account the complexity and contingency of power relations". However, this appears optimistic. Whatever the quality of understanding about issues of power, outcomes are acknowledged to be mixed (Openjuru et al, 2015), with academics and their institutions dominating processes of knowledge generation (Standing & Taylor, 2016; Tandon et al, 2016).

Gaventa and Cornwall (2015, p 466) and McFarlane (2006) suggest tensions are grounded in debates between a positivist social science methodology seeking to establish objective universal fact, and methodologies that value multiple perspectives and voices. That is, the power of academics to dominate is based on specific research methodologies. This conclusion is challenged from two directions. Holland (2013) argues that those generating participatory statistics need to meet the challenge laid down by positivist quantitative academic researchers and adopt principles of standardisation and comparability. While recognising the tension between breadth and depth, Holland argues that participatory statistics can work within the boundaries of the 'representative sample', by implication avoiding marginalisation. The second challenge is that, as discussed below, methodological approaches such as interpretive sociology and anthropology, while recognising the significance of alternative perspectives, may

not necessarily be participative in any meaningful way (Jacobs et al, 2015). The alternative nature of social movement – and specifically SDI – knowledge has been recognised but, as McFarlane (2006, p 289) notes, little attention has been paid to "the ontological and epistemological basis of [alternative forms of] knowledge".

In summary, the inequalities in power relations have been raised but not resolved. While such inequalities may be in part related to an implicit hierarchy of research methodologies, they go beyond this distinction.

Participatory research appears to be the route through which community knowledge is valued as equal to academic knowledge. However, SDI's Indian-affiliated NGO, the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) (2014), argues that even the label of participatory research is misused and that frequently the right of all groups in society to be involved in, and set the terms for, joint knowledge generation is not realised. While participatory research implies the involvement of those on whom the research is focused, as a term it says little about how substantive the involvement is (Brown-Luthango, 2013; Bell & Pahl, 2017; Simon et al, 2018). SPARC (2014, p 7) elaborates on its experience:

> Informing the poor that a research is being 'conducted' for 'their good' by others is often called 'participatory' research. We clearly have to move towards being proactive and leading the process based on defining our own needs. We continue to have to constantly defend the rights of the poor to 'the right to research for change', for assessment of what is being done and for these rights to not be treated as objects of research by others…. The interpretation of participatory research for us accompanies the right to research where the poor define, own and execute the research, test its findings and create knowledge that gets embedded in their development processes.

Appadurai (2012), writing on the experiences of SDI's Indian Alliance, highlights the potential of its data collection to address exploitation and dispossession, empowering communities by enhancing self-knowledge and therefore conscious identity. A tool for organisation as well as documentation, community-led data collection takes 'power away from external agencies such as the state and puts it back where it truly belongs, which is within the community itself' (p 640). What is also notable about Appadurai's discussion is the absence of academic relations and academic knowledge. The co-production of knowledge – with its explicit recognition that multiple parts of the research process have to include non-academics on an equal basis, appears to be a useful advance on practices of participatory research.

Bell and Pahl (2017, p 105) argue that the co-production of knowledge both advances social justice and 'destabilizes academia as a privileged site for the production and dissemination of knowledge'. However, their optimism about the radical nature of knowledge co-production is not evident in other experiences. For example, Brown-Luthango (2015, p 316), describing a collaboration in Cape Town between academics and informal settlement communities, argues that the process was 'a university

conceived and driven process'. The experience of being peripheral regularly emerges from social movement activist accounts of participation in academic activities.[4]

The nature of urban development and its relations with academia and professional training is relevant here. Urban development is highly professionalised, with architects, planners and engineers setting standards for urban development and influencing outcomes, frequently with negative impacts (Songsore & McGranahan, 1998; Myers, 2003). Traditional academic roles are to advance understanding – through research – and to train, accredit and legitimate these professional cadres. The rule-based, regulation-driven nature of urban development under capitalism (Escobar, 1992) is motivated both to manage the agglomeration of economic activities taking place in urban areas and to control exploited and disadvantaged urban populations. This professionalised control over urban space means that social movements have to navigate the 'expertise' when negotiating for improved access to tenure security and basic services (Mitlin, 2013; Oldfield, 2015). The urban context is deeply political and that includes the ways in which contractions and exclusions are understood, and how interventions are designed and implemented (Oldfield, 2015). Upgrading, for example, involves changes in land allocations and potentially leads to the allocation of significant assets to at least some households. Urban social movements are significantly disadvantaged when excluded from research and knowledge generation processes that set standards (SPARC, 2014). In this context, community participation in project implementation (for example, informal settlement upgrading) will not secure more just outcomes; rather, new models of urban development are required, and if these new models are to be relevant to low-income informal communities, the latter's involvement in programme design is essential (Jacobs et al, 2015; Burra et al, 2018). Research partnerships need to take both the difficulties in and opportunities for transformative outcomes into account. Drawing from the experiences of one network of academics and non-academics in Kenya, South Africa, Sweden and the UK, Simon et al (2018) argue that their outcomes were limited by a lack of influence over local political processes, and the difficulties of institutionalising progress towards transformative cities. But movement involved in research – in co-producing knowledge – is intended to challenge political processes and outcomes, and to enable new approaches to urban development that disturb and contest present exclusionary outcome (King & Kasaija 2018; Burra et al, 2018).

To improve academic contributions to transformative knowledge, critical theorists such as Escobar (1992, 2018) have challenged academics to reflect on the ways in which knowledge about development reinforces existing power hierarchies and excludes low-income and disadvantaged groups from being able to develop and legitimate their own options. Chambers (1995, p 199), a leading protagonist in rural participatory research, argues that professionals should be enlightened such that they give up their power and

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[4] http://www.rioonwatch.org/?p=46223. In a conference in Rio de Janeiro, only eight favela residents were invited to take part. One of the movement leaders explained that the lack of collective participation reinforces their understanding that grassroots knowledge is not valued by academic institutions.

create space for less powerful community knowledge providers with new and better means of research. Anderson et al (2013) analyse one recent experience with the co-production of knowledge, the *CityLab* process in Cape Town that sought to "broker inter-disciplinary engagement, both across academic disciplines and between the academy and broader society" (p 2). They conclude that "success is reliant on the development of mutual respect, trust and reciprocity" (p 8), emphasising the significance of the personal qualities of those involved. Personal commitment may not be enough, however; Chambers (1995, p 203) himself notes the importance of downward accountability and the need for systemic reform, as well as improved personal orientation.

Despite the significance of individuals, it is an institutional response that is required. Co-producing knowledge must move beyond an engagement between committed individuals to sustained relations between agencies (departments, movements) (see, for example, Oswald et al, 2016) and a change in institutions of knowledge production (defined as norms and practices of behaviour). Universities need to change their objectives and the expectations and incentives placed on staff to engage more equitably with local communities (Brown-Luthango, 2013), and deal with issues of accountability (Oldfield, 2015). Relatively little attention has been given to the nature of that institutional response in the context of urban development in the Global South (Tandon et al, 2016).[5] SDI's Indian Alliance works with an NGO called Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA).

PRIA's director, Rajesh Tandon, acknowledges that Indian higher education has not supported processes of participatory knowledge generation (Openjuru et al, 2015), and argues that universities need to engage with disadvantaged communities in research, teaching and service (Tandon et al, 2016). As social movement activists engage more with the academy, the potential contribution of such alliances becomes more evident.

Moving from research into collaboration in teaching identifies new complementarities, although academic needs may dominate here also. Tensions may be particularly acute when the teaching programme is designed to fulfil the requirements of professions. Winkler (2013) discusses tensions between the objectives of academics and community members through 'service learning' in South Africa,[6] while Brown-Luthango (2013) references similar difficulties. Tensions in relations also emerge through an analysis of dissemination practices. These need to move beyond peer-reviewed publications and be jointly determined by those involved in the research. Researchers concerned to co-produce knowledge need to be sensitive to accessibility of meeting locations and publication outlets, and need to choose venues that encourage debate (Burns et al, 2016; Bell and Pahl 2017). A second issue is that of authorship: the contribution of non-academics must be recognised (Openjuru et al, 2015). Agreements

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[5] Although the planning community has reflected on this in the context of the Global North. See, for example, Baum (2001).
[6] Service learning requires university students to participate in community projects in exchange for course credits (Brown Luthango, 2015, p 314).

about who is credited and how they are credited are critical (Oswald et al, 2016). Despite these challenges, such activities offer the potential for locally grounded engagement with non-academic knowledge production, and for the contribution of more place-based and collaborative approaches put forward by social movements and community-based organisations (Escobar, 2018).

While recognising the significance of institutionalisation, we acknowledge that academics may have their own experiences as movement activists. Academics may also have their own experiences of marginalisation and exclusion. They may be involved in other struggles (such as gender or the environment) in which they have activist roles. Equally, social movement activists may be, or aspire to be, scholars and/or professionals themselves. Moreover, irrespective of the 'starting point', individuals – activist and academic – change through the processes of co-producing research (Oldfield, 2015). As noted by Gillian and Pickerill (2012), this can make an understanding of positionality more complex for both researchers and activists, but it offers the opportunity to strengthen processes of knowledge co-production as personal capabilities and understandings change.

The broader context can also be significant. In the UK, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council have responded to requests from the research community with programmes to support the integration of non-academics into research, while the recent reorganisation of the Research Councils itself reflects the government's objective for research to be useful beyond the academic field. The UK Research Council recognises the potential significance of the co-production of knowledge, but it is not evident that the grant-making process is fit for purpose (Bell & Pahl, 2017).[7] The emphasis – at least in UK academia – on impact has encouraged academics to take the co-production of knowledge more seriously and has incentivised these efforts (Green, 2017).[8] Alongside these changes, greater emphasis is being placed (at least in the Global North) on ethical research. While some associated measures have been focused on risk mitigation and compliance with the demands of insurers, these debates raise questions about ethical frameworks that are appropriate for a range of research collaborations (Gillian & Pickerill, 2012).

Underlying the co-production of knowledge is a conceptualisation of knowledge democracy in which knowledge is acknowledged "as a shared resource, jointly generated and publicly owned" (Miller et al, 2006, p 14). However, despite academic commitment, there are multiple challenges to the realisation of this goal, ranging from the fundamental (theories of how individuals and agencies catalyse change, deeply stratified urban relations), to the operational (how the remuneration and authorship are decided).

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[7] Bell and Pahl (2017) suggest that funding bodies need to give greater attention to the quality of established relationships when assessing bids.
[8] Funders of development research increasingly want to see and are willing to fund 'uptake' activities to maximise the chances of projects achieving impact. This does tend to incentivise that project-focused impact, which may undermine the prospects for broader, transformative change in the longer term. See Jordan (2017).

4. Co-production and its realisation in urban research

> The university – they have no impact – they just do their own. The university does research; it is of no use to us.[9]

These words were spoken by Felitza, community leader from Nairobi, when she was asked about her experience of working with academics. Felitza went on to identify positive benefits emerging from collaboration, but in her eyes this collaboration was different from academic research. Building on this and other interviews, this section explores the practice of co-production.

4.1. Knowledge and activism: the theory of change

> The goal of research is not the interpretation of the world, but the organisation of transformation.[10]

Most of the academics who engage with SDI and other social movements do so because they wish to support more equitable and inclusive cities that are more effective in addressing the needs of low-income and disadvantaged residents. They believe, for the most part, that their research contribution is to promote change through research projects and associated documentation, including learned papers, policy briefs, etc. That is, their theory of change is that rigorous evidence of established quality will change adverse outcomes, either by identifying contradictions (that potentially catalyse action), and/or by elaborating problems (and solutions to those problems) that politicians and/or officials have not previously accepted, because of the lack of such evidence. This requires that the methodology be adequate for the purpose according to academic criteria, which leads to their findings being accepted as an accurate summary of conditions and/or needs in these neighbourhoods and urban areas. Academics both work with social movements to produce these knowledge findings, and build the capability of movement activists to participate in this research.

This theory of change is very different from that of social movements (including when they engage with data collection and analysis). Social movements secure change by building mass organisations that gain influence because of the implicit or explicit threat of disruption and/or electoral opportunity. Knowledge is an important legitimator of the redistribution of resources, and of development models that address poverty and inequality. While SDI movements have placed a considerable emphasis on the co-production of models to secure tenure and deliver basic services with local government, this strategy does not assume that the state is committed to pro-poor development. Rather, it is premised on the understanding that low-income groups gain little from confrontation, because they have limited protection from the worst abuses of power, and/or because negative representations of informal settlement dwellers have

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[9] Felitza, April 2017
[10] Antonio Conti, quoted in Castree et al (2009).

been used to undermine their claims to resources by de-legitimatising their right to entitlements (Patel & Mitlin, 2009; Mitlin, 2018). Co-production helps to build positive relations with individuals in government who are willing to support more inclusive urban development; however, the need to mobilise large numbers of disadvantaged citizens to engage with solutions remains key (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015; Lines & Makau, 2018; SDI, 2018). Hence knowledge generation is focused on citizen mobilisation.

Academics may, of course, subscribe to the significance of mass mobilisation and be cautious about their capacity to advance change through their intellectual contribution. It is not unusual for academics to be a part of social movements – for example, those concerned with gender and environmental justice – alongside their academic employment. They may seek to elaborate the contradictions of urban development processes or to support mobilisers with facts that support their position. But their contribution – at least in terms of social justice for informal settlement residents – is not that of being a mobiliser. Irrespective of which underlying theory of change is applied, academics may build the understanding of movement activists with respect to current government policy and programming perspectives, and hence enable them to position their issues and better organise to amplify their voice. And they may build their technical skills to collect data, develop projects and undertake other development activities (Bennett, 2018a).

Note this distinction is not between positivist 'rational' scientific knowledge and more qualitative and interpretive social science and/or community knowledge (see Section 3 above). Academics may argue that qualitative methods, such as life histories, are needed to strengthen the voice of activists. However, engagements with SDI identify the difficulties with such assumptions. Life histories are not necessarily part of a co-produced research project. Indeed, life histories may reinforce the role of the movement activist as a research object, whose history is to be extracted and presented. Methodologies and methods are less significant than the shared research processes, and the shared understanding of how knowledge changes outcomes.

The alternative theories of change underpinning academic and non-academic perspectives on research can be seen in their comparative approaches to data collection and sampling. Academics use sampling, both in terms of quantitative and qualitative analysis, to ensure that resources are used to best effect. They draw on probability theory (in the case of quantitative work) and alternative techniques, such as snowballing (for qualitative studies), to ensure that research funding is well allocated. For SDI, the objective of data collection is both to inform a significant number of citizens about the situation and to use that knowledge to mobilise them into the movement, ie to encourage them to become actively engaged in pushing for political change. Sampling is anathema to mobilisation. By excluding some citizens from interviews, sampling perpetuates externally determined divisions within communities and potentially leads to mistrust. SDI data-collection processes involve meetings alongside data collection, sharing findings about the lack of tenure and services in the locality, and engaging residents in action. They are designed to address a context in

which, in the words of one SDI community leader, "People living in informal settlement [are] misrepresented – voiceless and faceless. For us – the question is how to use data to transform, and how to bring that transformation into their lives and settlements."[11] We are not arguing that all knowledge co-produced between academics and social movements must involve surveys with 100% coverage. Rather, we are highlighting differences in understanding as to which knowledge processes catalyse change. In a context of unequal power, the perspectives of social movements are not considered equally. Acknowledging that research activities have implications for social movement mobilisation is a step towards inclusion and recognition.

Further tensions that highlight the centrality of interactions between information and mobilisation are illustrated by three recent Kenyan experiences. All three examples involve academics who consider themselves to be co-producing research with the social movements. The first example concerns a discussion about land sharing for an SDI Federation group in Kenya seeking secure tenure of the land they occupy. An academic proposed that the whole group move onto half the land, selling the other half to finance the development. While this appeared a clever way forward for the academic, the Federation cancelled a community meeting to discuss this option. The Federation did this because the tenants within the settlement were not yet strong enough to negotiate their inclusion; they needed more time to strengthen their local organisations and ensure that their claim for inclusion would be successful.

The second example involves a proposal for a research project to take soil samples within a Nairobi neighbourhood to demonstrate the health risks and possible toxic contamination from adjacent factories. The local Muungano Alliance feared that evidence of contamination would strengthen the position of those wanting to evict the local community. Given that the residents did not wish to move, but were not yet strong enough to secure a clean-up, the social movement suggested that the research be postponed.

The third example concerns academic research in one neighbourhood, which reported that only 4% of residents were interested in upgrading. The Alliance wanted to delay sharing this information because, they argued, it reflected a context of extreme insecurity. Once the community was strengthened – they argued – then it would be more confident of its ability to negotiate access to land and would report to interviewers that it intended to stay. Tabling this information now would simply increase pressure for displacement.

In all three cases, the Muungano Alliance negotiated with the academics involved to change their perspective. These examples point to the significance of the timing of research, presentation of knowledge and the development on new options that respond to the needs of informal settlement residents. Research needs to be sensitive to the possibility of adverse information and the requirement that movements defend the

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[11] Joseph Muturi, SDI Core Group member and leader of Muungano wa Wanavijiji, speaking at 'Leaving no-one behind: how can we better monitor progress in "slum" areas?'. Overseas Development Institute networking event at the World Urban Forum, 8 April 2014.

needs and interests of their members. If the goal of research is to organise the transformation of society, then the co-production of knowledge requires attention to the relative contributions of, and interactions between, knowledge and mobilisation. Close engagement between movement activists and academics helps to reconcile alternative perspectives about the contribution of knowledge generation to pro-poor change. We discuss modalities of long-term collaboration in the sub-section on institutional solutions to accountabilities below.

Alternative perspectives on how pro-poor change can be achieved are partially addressed through joint identification of research objectives and other parts of the research process. As elaborated below, academic involvement in community-led data collection helps to legitimate the work of SDI affiliates. Working with academics helps SDI affiliates to engage with local and national governments, who consider academic validation of community-led data to be significant. When technical skills are required, academics (staff and students) may offer these skills at relatively low cost and/or with a sensitivity to the communities' contribution. Co-learning about government policies and programmes offers a way to extend the understanding of Federation leaders and NGO professionals. And this points to the importance of structured collaboration between academics and movements, and clearer accountabilities within these relationships. We return to these themes after discussing collaboration through teaching and the unequal social status of academics and activists.

4.2.   Improving education: redefining professionalism

One of the major challenges for SDI affiliates as urban movements is the entrenched way in which professionals guide urban development processes. Professional visions and practices influence state programmes, regulations and standards and frequently lead to unequal and anti-poor outcomes. Hence a major motivation for SDI engagement with academics is the chance to influence the teaching programmes that train urban professionals. As a strategy for change, such activities influence future generations of professionals and academics to make contributions that they would not otherwise have done with respect to participation, inclusion and poverty reduction.[12] As SPARC (2014, p 10) states: "With academics and research agencies, the main purpose … is to embed knowledge that works for the poor into mainstream education processes." Engaging with universities and colleges offers SDI affiliates the opportunity to add to students' skill sets and prepare them to work with communities in the future.[13] The value that SDI affiliates place on their contributions to education is evidenced by their partnership with the African Association of Planning Schools (AAPS).[14] Teaching-based partnerships are also a way in which academics seek to influence urban

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[12] Kanbur (2012) describes the use of exposure programmes to educate development professionals.
[13] Sekai Chirembe, Medellin, 10 April 2014.
[14] SDI blog, by Peoples Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia (PPHPZ) and the University of Zambia (UNZ), 'Shaping human settlements through partnerships between slum dwellers and academia', 2 May 2014. .

transformation; some academics build partnerships with social movements to validate their work to advance social justice and tackle inequality, and to educate students in this regard. Box 2 illustrates some immediate benefits in terms of generating useful knowledge.

Box 2: The benefits of engaging in teaching

The SDI Alliance in Zimbabwe began to expose students to their work many years ago. They recognise that there are immediate benefits. Students began to generate dissertations topics that address gaps in the academic literature emanating from limited academic understanding of the realities faced by low-income urban residents. These dissertations also documented the key role of the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation in transforming urban environments.

In addition to achieving the dual goals of changing the understanding of students about what needs to happen in urban development, and capacitating them to work with communities, such engagements can potentially lead to new ventures. In South Africa, the inception of 1to1 (now a social enterprise) developed from a student project to support the grassroots development of South African cities.

SDI affiliates have seen students whom they have taught go on to take up significant positions in government. Students keep in touch and SDI affiliates are confident that many have developed a good understanding of, and support for, a community-led approach. For example, a senior official in planning within Nakuru County, who worked with SDI Kenya as a student at the University of Nairobi, waives inspection and approval fees for Federation-led greenfield developments. More generally, federation leaders appreciate being recognised for their expertise and are positive about these experiences.

However, SDI's experiences in educating students raises challenging issues. Studios and exposure visits may not be part of the formal learning process and hence may not be accredited; this immediately downgrades them in the eyes of both staff and students, making them optional extras. On some occasions, planned AAPS studios did not run because of a lack of finance.[15] This is a further indication that their value is not recognised by departments, although it may be recognised by individual academics. In terms of student contributions to community planning needs, academics may determine the timing according to the academic programme; hence the contribution may have limited value. If not appropriately facilitated, students may appear as experts and unduly influence local processes, and/or may exhibit inappropriate attitudes and struggle to deal with issues related to their own position of social privilege (Bennett, 2018a). When professional training requires some level of 'practical' work and/or an optional component that may be selected by interested students, it is particularly difficult to ensure that local organisations and their members benefit. The problem is

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[15] Notes from exchange with Gobabis, May 2017; prepared by Guillermo Delgado.

not simply one of timing; academic needs may dominate the design of the engagement (Bennett, 2018a; also see Winkler, 2013). The temporary nature of student inputs raises challenges for the staff managing this process (Bennett, 2018a). At the same time, the emphasis of service learning on accreditation may prevent a holistic response to local needs (Bennett, 2018b). This points to the need for more radical redesign of teaching and an emphasis on 'un-learning' negative practices, as well as developing more positive approaches.

Reflections in the literature reflect experiences in South Africa, where high levels of professionalisation combine with the commitment of some scholars to engage with the needs of low-income communities and, in the context of decolonisation debates, with radical critiques of academic contributions. There is a need to bring critical social science into other disciplines, including those that focus on spatial development (architecture, planning, spatial design) (Bennett, 2018a). The significance of long-term relations to enable engagement with community priorities is also noted (Bennett, 2018a).

Experiences in Manchester identified a deficit in vision and developed an alternative approach.

Box 3. Community-led postgraduate teaching in Manchester

Since 2010, community leaders from SDI affiliates have visited the Global Development Institute (GDI) at the University of Manchester for a week-long contribution to a Masters class in Citizen Led Development. Community leaders deliver 60% of the lectures. The class begins with the students being introduced to academic literature on urban poverty and informal settlement upgrading. Then the community educators arrive. Several days of lectures elaborating the SDI local process expose students to the realities of urban poverty and the work of SDI activists. After developing the course unit with the SDI Alliance in Zimbabwe, community leaders from South Africa and Kenya (plus video-conferencing with Ugandan and Kenyan leaders, as a result of visa refusals) were willing to share their expertise.

GDI staff consider these contributions essential for a Masters education in development studies, and beneficial to the co-production of knowledge. As community members and academics engage to share perspectives from experience in the context of the academic literature, theories and conceptual frameworks are challenged and unpicked. This demonstrates the potential to align teaching and knowledge generation. Students are exposed to the mismatch between abstract theories and grounded realities, and the gap between academic generalisation and local specificities. Such an exposure challenges students and academic staff alike. Students become active participants in the co-production of knowledge as they share their own reflections. As tensions in the literature are exposed, community leaders contribute their own experiences and in so doing demonstrate their capability to contribute further to advancing knowledge.

SDI affiliates recognise that planning education in many African universities is not fit for purpose, with little attention paid to the challenges of informal settlements. This implies curriculum change.[16] However, the affiliates' experience is that academics are not be willing or able to take on their university's institutional process and change the curriculum to accord recognition to community lecturers as knowledge providers (see also SPARC, 2014).[17] In Zimbabwe, building on the experience with the University of Manchester, the SDI Alliance has sought to advance this agenda and replicate this course unit. Efforts with the University of Bulawayo have exposed challenges. While the name was kept when a new course unit was set up, there was no platform for community activists and educators; some academics have been reluctant to give up their role at the front of the classroom. Further engagements have been successful and have resulted in plans to set up a new degree programme. Efforts with the University of Nairobi have highlighted that curriculum change needs to be a priority for senior staff members. This points once more to the importance of longer-term established relations that extend beyond individual academics.

4.3. Knowledge and status: the siren call

> The thing is that it is not that they do anything special. It is … like putting powder on someone's face. Does not change who we are, but changes the look of it.[18]

SDI Federation members are clear that one of their key motivations for collaborating with academics is their status as acknowledged 'experts'; this is considered to enhance the legitimacy of SDI Federation data and the knowledge generation process. The contribution of academics to their data collection – according to one community leader from Zimbabwe – "gives a punch".[19] The circles in which academics operate– particularly with local government – open "an avenue to the city that was different from the traditional ways that we spoke to the city".[20] Unequal status in the context of academia also reflects itself through micro-level engagements. One of the community lecturers visiting Manchester in 2011 spoke about her mother cleaning at the University of Harare to indicate her own pride in lecturing at Manchester. This first cohort of community lecturers asked for certificates of their contribution from the university; they later spoke about having these framed on their walls, and telling the City of Harare council members and officials of this experience.

However, status inequalities can be problematic. And in many engagements (both public meetings and private interaction), status is reinforced by the particular use of language, personal title and familiarity with technologies. A community leader from the informal settlement of Denver (Johannesburg) identified some of the negative consequences: "Sometimes as communities – we are waiting for someone to come to

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[16] See note 13.
[17] Interview with Beth Chitekwe-Biti, Harare, 2018.
[18] Nelson Ncube, Medellin, 9 April 2014.
[19] Sekai Chirembe, Medellin, 10 April 2014.
[20] SDI focus group, World Urban Forum, Medellin, 10 April 2014.

the settlement to bring something … When you behave like a professional or intellectual – then you give them this impression – that this person must be right on those points."[21] For him, the solution was to invest in a different kind of relationship that ensures that community leaders and residents recognise that academics do not come with answers. If this complementary relationship is identified, then knowledge co-production is possible. He feared that academics may hold up processes of learning, because local leaders believe that they come with solutions. The example highlights the need for the 'unlearning' of some professional practices (Bennett, 2018b).

One example of the complexities of what are often multi-scalar research relationships within academic–social movement partnerships is explored in Box 4.

Box 4. Urban development research in Uganda: fostering complementary relationships?

An attempt to engage with status inequalities was made during a research partnership in 2016 between the Ugandan SDI Alliance, academics at The University of Manchester and a local postgraduate consultant linked to Makerere University. This partnership sought to co-produce knowledge about the Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor programme in Uganda (TSUPU). The research aimed to generate academic knowledge about the political effects of basic services

Co-production in Kabale and Mbale municipalities, while enabling NGO professionals and national and local Federation leaders to generate useful knowledge about outcomes for community mobilisation, poverty reduction and the development of more inclusive urban governance.

During research design discussions, reflective conversations took place about how to ensure that the research built confidence and capacity among local research teams and Federation memberships, rather than reinforcing status inequalities. It was agreed that mixed research teams would be formed in each locality, made up of two academics, two NGO professionals and locally nominated members of regional Federation executives. One national leader also joined the research team in Kabale. Before fieldwork began, research planning meetings were held with the Federation executive committees, then reflective discussions were held with the newly formed local research teams. These discussions focused on identifying the different skills and knowledges that each member of the team brought to the research, as well as the challenges the team might encounter based on its make-up.[22] These different facets included the rich diversity in perspectives brought by the involvement of people who had played different roles in the programme under investigation at both national and local levels, local cultural awareness and language expertise, and the view from an 'external' lens.

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[21] Dominsani, group discussion, Nairobi, March 2018.
[22] See also 'Co-producing knowledge about government vision, commitment and capacity to reduce urban poverty in Uganda'. ESID blog, 28 June 2016. Available at http://www.effective-states.org/co-producing-knowledge-about-government-vision-commitment-and-capacity-to-reduce-urban-poverty-in-uganda/. Accessed 13th March 2019

The reality of time and workload pressures and all the complexities of in-depth qualitative research meant that little reflection took place on questions of status within the first field site. During the second period of fieldwork in Kabale, a final reflection was held by team members, who analysed their respective roles within the research process. This approach contributed to positive and supportive working relations within the local research teams, and deeper learning from the process for future engagements; however, it had a limited effect on the perceptions of the research team held by wider members of the local Federations and in some ways reinforced status hierarchies between local leaders (inevitably those with stronger English language skills), and the wider Federation membership. Conversely, and rather uncomfortably, the act of Federation members interviewing government officials side-by-side with a British researcher from a respected university increased the legitimacy of the Federation among local government staff, and resulted in stronger relationships between the Federations locally and the municipality. Co-produced individual and group interviews with Federation members and local community stakeholders and final reflections with regional Federation executives also resulted in status hierarchies being revealed, and disjunctures between different layers of the local Federation structure encouraging stronger reflection on questions of inclusivity within the local movements.

These experiences in Uganda reflect discussions within multiple SDI alliances on questions of expertise, status and movement capability development internal to the Alliances and Federations. Recognising that academic engagement with social movements may undermine the growth of movement learning and capability development led us to a deeper exploration of unequal status, and the stratification of status based on expertise. Discussions with community leaders highlighted the way these power dynamics go beyond those involving the academics and communities and are internal to SDI Alliances and Federations. A professional in the Zimbabwe Alliance described how power based on expertise is such a potent form of social stratification that it permeates internal Federation processes and the relations between the Federation and NGO, as well as those between the SDI alliances and academics:

> You have teams that are super good with profiles. Enumerators coming from outside can end up taking over a process in a given slum community. That is where most of the challenges are located. We need tools and processes that do not take away power from the community that we want to support.[23]

Experiences in Zimbabwe suggest that the solution to over-dependence on those seen as 'experts' lies in SDI modalities and, particularly, in community exchanges that build the confidence of community residents that everyone – including them – can be teachers, with relevant experiences to share. But regular reminders are also required. A Federation leader from Bulawayo emphasised the importance of allowing the local

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[23] Team group discussion, Nairobi, March 2018.

community – the residents of the settlement – to "own the data collection and knowledge generation process".[24] She suggested that "external people – other Federation members or academics – should wait to be asked to come and help – then the tensions are much less". The sequencing of local ownership and invitations for external contributors is what makes the difference, in her experience.

A second challenge related to unequal status is that of unequal power when determining the allocation of financial and reputational resources. One of the key challenges faced by SDI affiliates is that academics draw them into research projects as 'case studies'; acknowledgement of the significant of the co-production of knowledge requires an engagement beyond such case studies. The financial resources allocated to such studies tend to be small and there is a poor process of co-planning and budgeting. One SDI professional wrote to a colleague after one such invitation: 'This is appropriation not partnership. There is no role here for the community except to be research objects for the university. I do not know what to propose … There is no time to generate a counter-proposal that – at the very least – incorporates action-based learning, drawing extensively on Federation capacities and knowledge."[25] Less than 5% of the research budget was allocated to the SDI Alliance for the case study; moreover, the Federation did not believe the planned outputs would address their needs. The SDI Alliance sought the central participation of the Federation in the design and management of the content of the research (questionnaire, data collection and data analysis) and 20% of the research budget. The eventual outcome was that their share doubled to 10%, with no evident shift in the research process. The academic researchers themselves identified this research project to be about the co-production of knowledge with local communities.[26] But this approach is not consistent with the understanding of co-production of knowledge discussed here. Such an outcome highlights the power inequalities.

A third challenge facing SDI affiliates is their own considerable data resource collected by volunteers and capacitated community researchers. Academic researchers frequently ask for access to this data with little evident consideration being given to the scale of investment. While academic researchers generally receive salaries, community members typically receive minimal amounts for transport and food. When academics request access to their data this needs to be considered. A related issue is ensuring that community ownership is respected. Community members were shocked to turn up to one consultation with a local authority only to find that the consultant involved in the urban development was an academic (with whom they had previously collaborated) who had offered their data to the local authority as a part of the commercial services that the consultant was providing. Their own data was presented back to them without acknowledgement. Affiliates are now thinking about how they can protect their data.

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[24] Sazini Ndlovu, team group discussion, Johannesburg, March 2017.
[25] Email correspondence with NGO professional, 29 June 2015.
[26] The relevant website is not referenced here, because this is seen as a systemic problem; it does not appear fair to pinpoint a problem case.

Resource issues are also related to authorship and attribution. Authorship is a choice determined according to multiple factors, which are frequently neither discussed nor agreed during the research process. This silence both reflects and exacerbates power imbalances. The ability of academics to claim authorship is a testament to their more powerful position within these relations. The denial of authorship to non-academics fails to legitimate their contribution and may add to their own uncertainty about their value to knowledge production. SDI affiliates wish to emphasise the community researchers who are the closest – in a social sense – to disadvantaged communities. Being listed as authors emphasises the legitimacy of the community researchers as equal partners in the process. Academics, educated in other attribution traditions, typically list authors alphabetically or by the order in which they have contributed to the written documentation. But community researchers' expertise may not be explicitly related to the conceptual framework or theoretical insights, and they are unlikely to have drafted much of the academic text. Their contribution is their understanding of their own experiences of poverty, inequality and other forms of disadvantage.

In our experience, agreements about resources must be negotiated. Open dialogue about what is required is helpful here. The better the understanding about different objectives, the more easily this can be reconciled. The more open the discussion about available resources, about how the resources are shared and about how outputs and outcomes are identified, achieved and tested, the easier the processes of accountability. Such discussions open new possibilities for resource acquisition and use. In South Africa, this led to innovations in research dissemination with students developing a handbook that could be read like a diary to share findings with community members. IIED, for a further example, uses its ownership of the journal *Environment and Urbanization* to enable grassroots activists to author papers alongside academic contributions. Discussions between the Uganda Federation and academic researchers led to the understanding that authorship may not be wanted when information is sensitive and the status of the individual sharing their knowledge is weak relative to that of others (King with Goretti, Kasaija & Owere, 2016).

Negotiations about research plans may be seen by some academics to be a threat to the 'objectivity' of research processes. However, recognising that objective facts are always subjectively observed and recorded, and that engagement with local activists and residents results in greater information and new perspectives that can be triangulated and jointly tested, helps to resolve such tensions.

4.4. Institutional solutions to accountabilities

> You will come and do your research, but when you have gone, it is we who will remain.[27]

> You can stay as long as you like; my only problem is if you don't spend much time with us. Not enough time to understand our work.[28]

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[27] See note 23.

Relations between academic departments, universities and social movements may benefit from being institutionalised. This may help social movements respond to academics who come promising processes of knowledge co-production and who perceive themselves as being supportive of movement processes, but whose actions have consequences that concern movements. Several of the examples of tensions noted above could be prevented through greater accountability over, for example, the ways in which resources are allocated, the timing of research (and teaching) activities and the use of research findings. We explore one further example that highlights the way in which methodology is used by academics to manage activist challenges about the orientation of academic research. We then reflect on the value of longer-term relations to provide a platform for greater accountability and ethical engagement.

One Masters student from a European university studied SDI data collection processes and explored the hypothesis that data collection would lead to formal tenure and hence financial investment. The research concluded that this was not the case. A professional associated with the affiliate asked the university not to publish the thesis, because of its potential to undermine community data collection. The professional argued that the student's critique was based on unrealistic expectations about what the specific process could achieve, and that these expectations were not those held by those developing the process. This was not explained in the thesis. Furthermore, the research was a 'snapshot' of the process at a specific point in time; at no point did the researcher discuss this shortcoming. Third, the research oversimplified the complexities of issues such as land tenure and did not engage with relevant expertise. University staff argued that, as the methodology met academic standards, the thesis met the standard for publication. The SDI professional commented to the academic involved:

> We observe that a premium is placed on the methodology that the researcher used and that the research is further presumed to be ethical. We see that the research question [is] completely misplaced …. the contribution of research is deeply important to the endeavours of slum dwellers, and we hope to steer this in a positive way …. [However] our partners and friends take advantage of, and undermine the efforts of, poor communities. And do so purely for the purposes of academic pursuit. The damage this does is very real for us.

SDI's solution, both in terms of student interest and academic relations, has been to deepen engagements and so secure greater accountability. Box 5 describes how the SDI affiliate in Zimbabwe is managing increasing levels of student interest to avoid the problem discussed above; this exemplifies greater institutionalisation of collaborative relations.

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[28] Perween Rahman, then director of the Orangi Pilot Project.

Box 5: SDI Zimbabwe: managing student engagement

In Zimbabwe, the SDI Alliance has responded to this interest with a requirement that students engage the community when setting their research objectives. This is to ensure that the process adds value to the work of Federation activists and to minimise potential tensions that might arise. The NGO staff and Federation leadership recognise that this can be a tricky process, as they do not want to influence the research process itself. Rather, they want to make sure the orientation of the research reflects issues that are priorities for local groups, and they want to ensure that the research is possible in that local context.

Over time, this has evolved into a structured process. The students now have meetings with the SDI Zimbabwe Alliance to explain what they are interested in, and then they agree the research process prior to beginning their work. This dialogue also helps to diversify the ways in which findings are shared, as the Federation explains how students can reach their members with the research findings, which would otherwise just remain in a thesis.

Federation leaders believe that student researchers "should be referred by the academics we are working with. We cannot just take any students from anywhere".[29] Working with staff and students from a university with which they have a formal relationship ensures that research processes and potential outcomes are discussed, and the different interests of all parties considered.

While the term 'co-production of knowledge' is widely used to describe academic–movement knowledge relations, in practice there is a continuum of engagements. At one end of that continuum is Federation engagement in academic research for reasons of income generation; at the other are projects that are jointly developed and which emerge from shared values. Close relations – built over long periods and with considerable trust – enable projects to begin, even when it is unclear where they are placed on this continuum. Hence long-term relations emerge as a solution to resolving some of these tensions, enabling relations to move from an exploratory stage, in which beliefs and principles are shared and tested, through to shared research projects with common goals and jointly identified roles (see also SPARC, 2014). It is deeper long-standing institutional relations that change the potential of the co-production of knowledge. Over time, partners better understand their own motivations and those of others, and hence what joint activities are possible and how tensions can be

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[29] Sazini Ndlovu, Bulawayo, 29 August 2018.

managed.[30] The confidence that comes with such relations produces many benefits. Shared values open up new possibilities for engagement. However, there is an insufficient acknowledgement of this reality in many academic departments. A workshop with academics and leading civil society activists from the Global South, including those from SDI, highlighted that "most universities are woefully under resourced to identify and support the longer-term research agendas that have the most transformative potential – and yet this is their comparative advantage over think tanks or consultants" (Jordan, 2017).

Our discussion on the period required to build relations of trust suggested at least five years is needed to build effective relations with an institutional commitment in place.[31] But this metric-driven approach may be misleading, because it conflates time and formality with a value-based alignment and the acknowledgement of interdependency required for partnership. Agencies such as the Institute for Development Studies (Oswald et al, 2016) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) have developed long-term relations with a range of civil society groups interested in knowledge generation. In the case of IIED, three decades of collaboration with SDI affiliates has deepened and broadened to include formal research programmes, action-research projects, advocacy, documentation and dissemination, and meetings that bring together new groupings of agencies and activists. This work has included IIED acting as a conduit financier for $30 million from US and UK trusts and foundations, while the confidence of Northern donors in the ability of Southern social movements to manage large grants was established.

There is a lack of demonstrable examples of what such practices of engagement look like for academic departments, and how ethical principles can be embedded into academic practices. 1to1 – Agency of Engagement, an NGO working in South Africa that emerged from student fieldwork – sees a principled code as a way of engaging communities living in low-income neighbourhoods, ensuring good practice and clarity of expectations (Bennett, 2018a). Such a code may be a useful starting point for discussions between professionals and community organisations; however, there are also evident limits (Bennett, 2018a; Banks et al, 2013) A code cannot be adapted to cover the breadth of professionals and the malleability of urban development practice: rather than a 'silver bullet', it has to be understood as a contribution. A further approach may be a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to define the terms of engagement between social movement organisations and academic institutions (see Bennett, 2018a for a South African example). SDI's Zimbabwe Alliance explored such an MOU with the University of Zimbabwe. An immediate challenge was that their academic MOU, in its existing form, only recognises formally registered organisations such as NGOs, thereby

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[30] One benefit of long-term relations is that Federation members learn how to deal with unexpected academics coming to research in informal settlements without engaging them from the outset. Federation leaders are concerned that many of the initial contacts these academics establish are with individuals seeking personal benefits, but who may be vulnerable, because of their lack of understanding. With a better understanding of academia, Federation leaders believe they respond more effectively to these situations.
[31] Group discussion, Nairobi, March 2018.

excluding informal communities. The Zimbabwe Alliance has delayed the signing of the MOU until the urban poor are recognised as equal parties and signatories. The Alliance did sign an MOU (in October 2014) with the National University of Science and Technology in Bulawayo, as this university was prepared to meet that condition.

Rather than place reliance on ethical codes, MOUs or other mechanisms, we need to see these as tools that help issues to be explored and ethical problems to be resolved. Long-term engagement with an effort to create space for grassroots activists to share their opinion and amplify their voice builds and deepens understanding. It is the quality of engagement that is critical to the efficacy of the research and the ethical standards that are followed – rather than any specific tool (see also Gillian & Pickerill, 2012, p 136). Our experience is that, over time and in differing contexts, perspectives (positive and negative) reveal themselves. Longer-term commitment means that academics invest time to engage with the realities of urban social movements. It is not just a question of how much time is spent, but the quality of that time. Staying overnight in informal settlements is invaluable, as it offers time for discussion outside of formal meetings, and opportunities for everyone to relax and chat. Familiarity enables mutual learning, including sensitivity about what knowledge is placed in the public arena and when it is placed.

As participants get to know each other, there are new opportunities. As the contribution of community activists is validated through positive engagements, there are progressive gains that accrue. Departmentally institutionalised academic–movement relations enable regular diverse interactions that build iteratively to greater understanding. Opportunistic engagements become more strategic with this familiarity, which is why there is a need for institutional processes that maintain an engagement, with room for exploration. The visits of community leaders to teach the Masters-level course unit at The University of Manchester led to the sharing of SDI modalities with local communities in Manchester from the first teaching programme in 2010 (see Box 3). When Sophie King, an academic working on issues of exclusion in both the UK and Uganda, learned more about SDI, these exposure visits became an opportunity to develop a sustained exploration. Sophie's knowledge built on her research with the Ugandan Alliance in 2016 (a project made possible through the same departmental links). From 2015, there has been a more consistent and therefore deepening engagement between South African and Kenyan affiliates and low-income women's groups in Manchester and Salford. These exposure visits developed a three-year action research programme supported by the University of Sheffield. Manchester groups are now emulating SDI modalities, now including contributing themselves to teaching on other courses within the department.

In the experience of SDI, academic participation in community exchanges is a significant opportunity to improve mutual understanding of the perspectives of all stakeholders. Such exchanges – generally taking place over a week and based in an informal settlement – provide a platform for mutual learning, shared observations of new realities for the guests, and joint presentations about work 'at home'. The value of

community-to-community exchanges in building the confidence of grassroots residents has been recognised (Patel & Mitlin 2002; ACHR 2000). These exchanges challenge assumptions about the flows and uses of knowledge. The very informal locations in which exchanges take place disrupt power relations between academics and the residents of low-income communities, as participants sit on the floor in large rooms or outside under trees. As more community members begin to talk – in settings that are more familiar to them – then the balance of the discussion shifts. Thinking about the setting within which dialogue and then the co-production of knowledge can take place most effectively has been a key consideration when SDI affiliates design interactions with local academics. While long-term engagements change the relational context within which negotiations take place, the everyday encounters also need to change for activists to be empowered and share their perspectives.

5. Conclusion

Power is money and knowledge.[32]

Historically, universities have not only produced knowledge but have also been the arbiters of which knowledge is 'good' and 'valid', establishing the very frameworks by which such assessments are made. Tautologically, universities have long considered knowledge produced by universities as the best and most legitimate. (Tandon et al, 2016, p 29)

Efforts to bridge the gap between academic and non-academic forms of knowledge generation are long-standing, and there is a continuing interest by academics in a substantive engagement with non-academic stakeholders. The co-production of knowledges renews interest in the inter-dependency between academics and non-academics to achieve joint values of social justice and equity, with specific objectives related to inclusive and equitable urban development. The collaboration offers opportunities to secure redistribution, negotiation reform, and to build relations that acknowledge the substantive contribution of non-academics to knowledge generation, knowledge democracy and the potential of long-term relations. These efforts are driven by shared values and a belief in the potential of knowledge generation orientated towards social justice, as well as the belief that the inclusion of low-income and disadvantaged groups in research is itself an issue of social justice, as well as producing outcomes that advance that goal.

However, as discussed above, whatever the written commitment to this approach, considerable effort is needed to overcome tensions which, for the most part, stem from unequal power differentials. While this reality is recognised, it is rarely fully explored. The need to reconstruct knowledge generation and professional education is acute in an urban context in which academic experts and/or academically certified professionals determine urban regulations (planning, environmental health, construction), welfare

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[32] SA Federation slogan.

services (poverty programming, social provision), security (criminology, planning), infrastructural investments (engineering, planning), governance systems (politics, government administration) and employment opportunities (economics, business studies, planning).

Investing more time in the relationship offers better communication and potentially greater accountability. Greater familiarity with and awareness of the benefits of collaboration have led to an expanded range of joint activities. Longer-term engagements enable interactions to deal more explicitly with the ways in which activities are influenced by the underlying unequal distribution of power. They also recognise the interdependency between academics and social movements seeking to transform urban outcomes. While longer-term engagements may be assisted by formal arrangements such as MOUs and codes of practice, it is the improved dialogue and enhanced understanding that makes the difference. Familiarity builds trust in values and the ability to address issues of power that lie at the centre of many of the tensions discussed above. It is fitting, therefore, that we close this paper with a reflection on power and the co-production of knowledge.

Power is manifest through one group – academics in this case – having more options and using their options to exclude or not sufficiently include social movements. Power is recognised to be manifest explicitly, implicitly or to be invisible (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2015). In all three forms, it may reinforce, or undermine, hierarchies through relations and associated interactions. Miller et al (2006, p 6) argue that 'power is dynamic, relational and multidimensional, changing according to the context, circumstance and interest'. However, inequalities in power are not infinitely or easily malleable. As shown above, alongside efforts to undermine the existing distribution of power within and through the co-production of knowledge, are forces that reinforce existing inequalities. How can individuals and collectives assert themselves through such interactions and change outcomes?

Power is realised through relations. Rowlands (1997) elaborates alternative forms of relational power in the context of gendered experiences of disadvantage, suggesting that while power over – ie one individual or group being able to dominate – is inherently limited in its transformative potential, other forms of power – power with (the power of coalitions), power from within (the power of a self-believing individual) and power to (the power that a capacitated group or individual can achieve) – may create and reflect new potentialities. Rowlands emphasises that empowerment must be "more than participation in decision making; *it must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions"* (Rowlands 1997, p 14, original emphasis). That conclusion resonates with the experiences discussed here. Engagement with academia legitimates knowledge outputs of communities (data), building the confidence of social movement activists alongside building capabilities and changing the way in which movement activists are perceived by universities and governments. While Appadurai (2001) describes how Federations build a capacity to aspire to development goals within their membership, the discussion in Section 4

shows that successful efforts to co-produce knowledge build the capability to manage relations by identifying shared values and complementarity of actions towards shared goals. However, that requires a joint commitment to overcoming practices that reinforce relational inequalities. Specifically, there needs to be joint reflection on the purpose of knowledge production and the reconciliation of alternative theories of change. This reflects on the purpose of collaboration and what each group wishes to achieve, and how different kinds of activities – specifically research and teaching – can support the deepening of collaboration. It also requires a specific reflection on issues of power – particularly the way in which status validates some voices and diminishes others – and how the contribution of the most disadvantaged and marginalised can be valued.

Table 1 summarises the issues discussed above, identifying the significant dimensions of power associated with each issue and drawing on a four-fold categorisation of dimensions of power: power over, power with, power to, power in (Rowlands, 1997; Miller et al, 2006). While 'power over' is viewed negatively, because of the underlying conception of hierarchies of control, other forms of power are considered to have more potential (Miller et al, 2006). However, this should not be assumed. 'Power with' requires relationships that may, as noted above, involve inequalities in power. Also significant appears to be 'power through', by which is meant the power gained as capabilities to do tasks that could not previously be achieved are developed. These capabilities involve managing relations – in this case with academics – and gaining analytical and conceptual skills through such engagements. Table 1 also suggests ways in which the challenges might be addressed.

Table 1: Challenging relational inequalities through the co-production of knowledge

	Power realigned	Potential solutions
Negotiating theories of change	Need to recognise differences in how influence is achieved and align strategies where possible, maximise complementarities and minimise watering down. Maximising *power with* new alliances, but also *power through* building new capabilities for action and working together.	Better discussion of alternative theories of change, ensuring good understanding of the nature of each theory of change, and identifying tensions and complementarities. *Quality of dialogue is essential*: learn about each other, and how joint action can achieve shared goals. The time invested is indicative of the commitment to understanding. There may be discomfort as individuals participate in new social situations.
From knowledge generation to education	While academics tend to place greater emphasis on new knowledge, urban social movements tend to place greater emphasis on using existing knowledge to change outcomes by educating professionals. Movement activists recognise the *power within* after having taken on a public role as teacher, and the *power to* validate ideas and approaches from a position with this status.	As partnerships are more longstanding and have greater depth, there are more possibilities to *develop new activities*. There are opportunities for social movements to take on roles in teaching, *legitimating their knowledge and contribution* to multiple activities. Students may be informed through engagement with marginalised and disadvantaged populations and may develop new understandings supported by academics. Officials realise through joint teaching activities that citizens also have important knowledge to share.
Greater equality of	Status is a very significant from of power. Aspirations and confidence are inculcated	Co-production of knowledge must recognise the contribution of grassroots leaders and community

status	into high-status individuals. *Power within new identities emerges through positive experiences: teaching as well as research can be important here. Academics and professionals with high status may use this status to authenticate low-status knowledge generators.* Most research funders expect academic scholars to lead research bids. Unequal and non-negotiated resources distributions mean that academics and professionals have *power over* grassroots leaders. Resolving these resourcing issues opens up new approaches to knowledge generation.	groups to addressing urban problems and strengthen public recognition of their value. Activities need to be designed to achieve this. Individual and collective capabilities need to be recognised through public presentations, joint authorship, video blogs (as well as written work), and other ways that authenticate the knowledge contribution of movement activists. A more equal share of both resources and attribution is needed. This challenge cannot be solved by research partners alone. *Greater awareness and action by donors is needed*, including requirements for long-standing relationships, sharing of financial details, and enhanced processes to ensure that resource issues have been discussed and agreed.
Sharing accountabilities	Accountabilities involve shared information about commitments. The ability to hold individuals and agencies to account requires such information. Such information creates *mutual 'power over'*. All parties can see issues as they emerge and engage with the others to resolve them. In a context in which urban social movements may have their perspectives, actions and resources misrepresented and their contribution inaccurately attributed, such information is essential to ensure that they are not disadvantaged.	For urban social movements, what appears important is that academics make an *investment in a relationship*. That investment offers them leverage and/or protection; there is both a commitment and cost to academics who build such a relationship. The *investment is a demonstration of commitment*. This commitment opens the potential to build understanding – and invites the movement to articulate the frustrations they experience. It invites them to be honest about what is required to make the relationship work for that social movement, with the understanding that the relationship is significant for the academics.

Co-producing knowledge can be empowering for social movements; through such empowerment and associated alliances many things are possible. This working paper has highlighted the importance of collaborations between academics and urban social movements to achieve justice both in knowledge generation and in urban outcomes. It highlights the potential that can emerge as movement activists are supported – through long-term relations – to be aware of their own contributions and to amplify their voices for academics who wish to understand and engage with their perspectives. However, this discussion also highlights the need for much greater awareness about the obstacles that must be overcome. It is not enough to build relations and understanding. Consciousness about the unequal distribution of power has to be 'centre-stage'. Objectives and methodologies need to be determined collaboratively. Academics have to be willing to use – rather than benefit from – their status, even if it reduces their own public role. It is through a focus on interdependency and complementarity that academics and movements can best advance their shared goal of an equitable urban future.

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Sophie King's research and practice has focused on modes of community organising among marginalised social groups and understanding how collaborative approaches to local governance and service delivery can contribute to reducing poverty and inequality. Her experience of knowledge co-production includes the co-production of research into collaborative service provision and inclusive governance in Ugandan municipalities with ACTogether and the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda. Sophie is currently working with residents' groups in low income neighbourhoods of Greater Manchester to co-produce knowledge and action in response to learning exchanges with Kenyan and South African affiliates of Slum/Shack Dwellers International.

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George Masimba is Director of Programme for Dialogue on Shelter (Zimbabwe), the support NGO for the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation, an affiliate of Shack/Slum Dwellers International. George has managed slum upgrading projects in informal settlements where participatory strategies such as community-led enumerations and mapping have been employed as a tool for enabling the upgrading processes. He has actively contributed towards the formulation of the Harare Slum Upgrading Strategy and the Harare Slum Upgrading Finance Facility through his affiliation with Dialogue on Shelter. He has extensive experience of collaboration with academics, both through his PhD studies and through research programmes with Dialogue on Shelter and the Zimbabwe Federation.

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