Rethinking urban development processes
From resources to capabilities

Janssen, Céline

Important note
To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable).
Please check the document version above.

Rethinking urban development processes: from resources to capabilities

Transforming governance processes in urban development projects to expand residents' capabilities for social sustainability

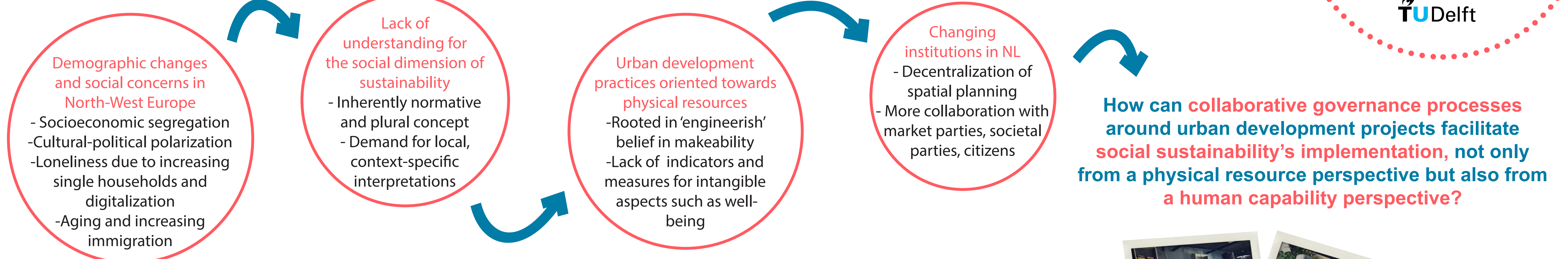HDCA Conference 19-22 Sept 2022 Capabilities and Transformative Institutions - Antwerp

Céline Janssen

PhD researcher Urban Development Management

Delft University of Technology
The Netherlands
Celine.Janssen@tudelft.nl

TU Delft

Problem definition: growing concerns in cities despite years of social urban policies in North-West Europe

Demographic changes and social concerns in North-West Europe
- Socioeconomic segregation
- Cultural-political polarization
- Loneliness due to increasing single households and digitalization
- Aging and increasing immigration

Lack of understanding for the social dimension of sustainability
- Inherently normative and plural concept
- Demand for local, context-specific interpretations

Urban development practices oriented towards physical resources
- Rooted in 'engineerish' belief in makeability
- Lack of indicators and measures for intangible aspects such as well-being

Changing institutions in NL
- Decentralization of spatial planning
- More collaboration with market parties, societal parties, citizens

How can collaborative governance processes around urban development projects facilitate social sustainability's implementation, not only from a physical resource perspective but also from a human capability perspective?

Method: qualitative cross-case comparison

Cases: two urban development projects in Amsterdam and Rotterdam
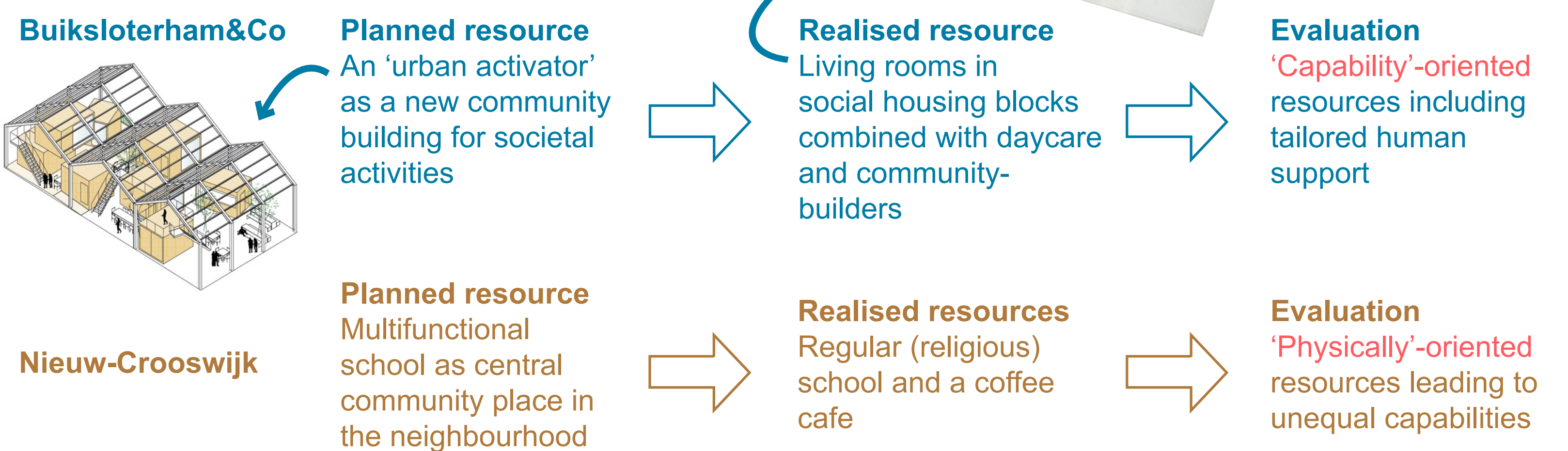**61 semi-structured interviews** with both professionals and residents

Buiksloterham&Co (Amsterdam)
Brownfield development 2,9 hectare
2009-current

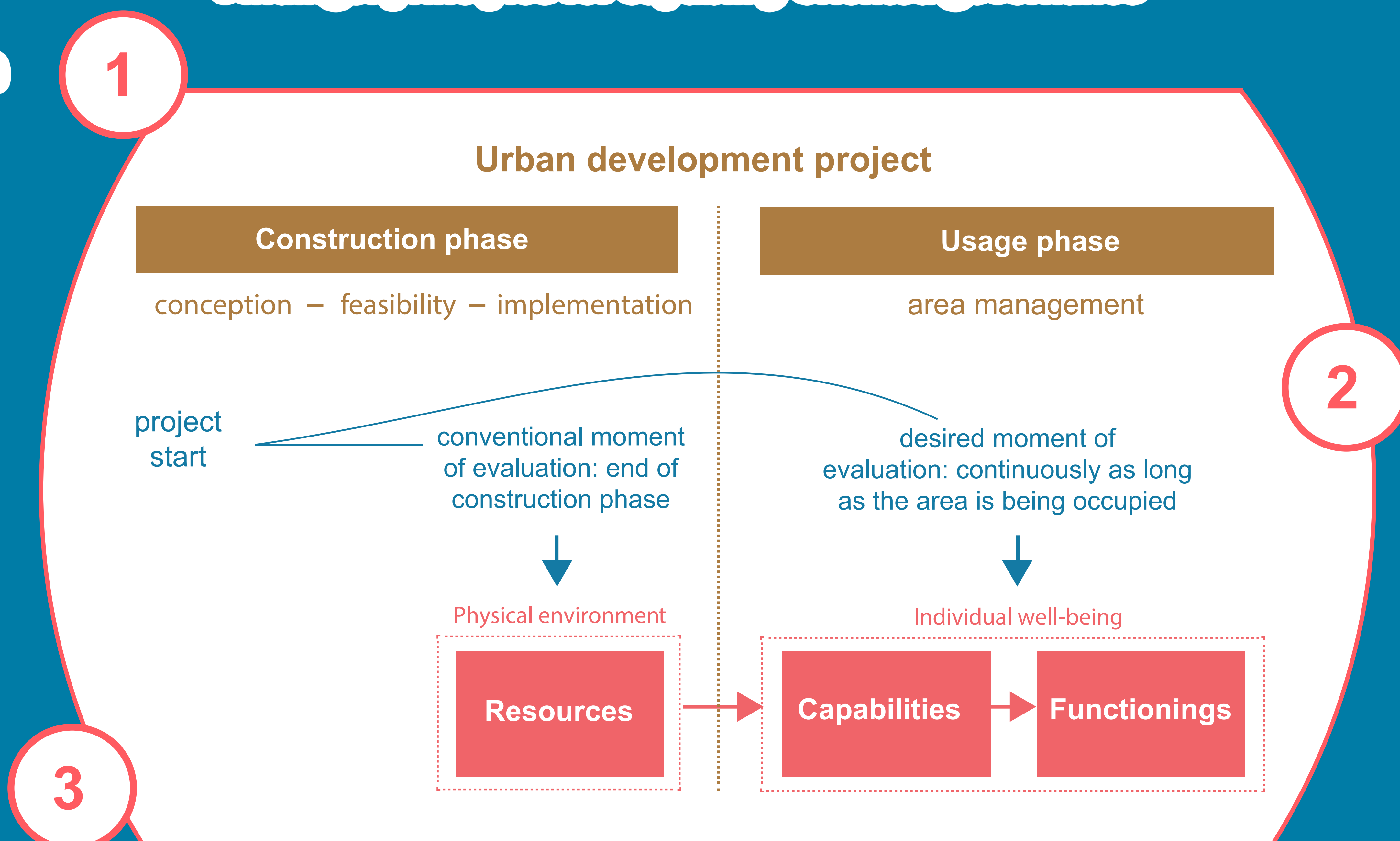**Nieuw-Crooswijk (Rotterdam)**
Urban regeneration 4 hectare
2006-2021

Analysis of implementation process

Buiksloterham&Co

Planned resource
An 'urban activato... as a new commun... building for societa... activities

Realised resource
...iving rooms in ...cial housing blocks ...mbined with daycare ...d community-...lders

...ented
...luding
...an

Nieuw-Crooswijk

Planned resource
Multifunctional school as central community place in the neighbourhood

Realised resources
Regular (religious) school and a coffee cafe

...ion
...ally'-oriented resources leading to unequal capabilities

Findings: principles for capability-oriented governance

1 **Connecting project and human temporalities through local area management**

Good example: a negotiation took place between the real estate developer (constructing actor), responsible for construction of collective living rooms, and the healthcare professional (managing actor), responsible for maintenance and community management.

2 **Balancing between strong goal commitment and flexible operationalization**

Good example: a general manifest with ambitions was signed in the conception phase of the project by 21 actors on a high administrative level (among others local government, water company, energy company, housing developer).

Urban development project

Construction phase	**Usage phase**
conception – feasibility – implementation	area management

project start

conventional moment of evaluation: end of construction phase

desired moment of evaluation: continuously as long as the area is being occupied

Physical environment

Individual well-being

Resources → **Capabilities** → **Functionings**

3 **Institutionalizing social sustainability goals in policy implementation process**

Learning example: different from "technical" sustainability goals, the social goals were not translated into a formal operationalization document. The collective living rooms were realised "under the radar" by a few motivated employees, but therefore stayed rather small and had a limited scope of impact.

Conclusion

The Capabilities Approach offers a reconceptualization of the collaborative actor-constellations in urban development projects, not only as collectively directed towards the urban area's transformation, but essentially aimed at the improvement of human lives.

Key references
Anand, P.B. (2018) Cities and the Capability Approach. In: Comim, F. et al. (Eds). New Frontiers of the Capability Approach. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press: 519-548.
Basta, C. (2016). From justice in planning toward planning for justice: A capability approach. Planning Theory, 15(2), 190-212.
Deneulin, S. (2014). Creating more just cities: The right to the city and capability approach combined. Bath Papers in International Development and Wellbeing No. 31. University of Bath, Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Bath.
Frediani, A. A. (2021). Cities for Human Development: A Capability Approach to City-Making. Practical Action Publishing.
Sen, A. (2009). The idea of justice. Harvard University Press.