



RE-IMAGINING INCLUSIVE URBAN FUTURES FOR TRANSFORMATION

An Agenda for Engaged Research and
Informed Public Dialogue

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1. Introduction: Re-imagining Inclusive Urban Futures for Transformation (RIUFT)

The Re-imagining Inclusive Urban Futures for Transformation (RIUFT) partnership aims to create a new research and teaching agenda based on the experience of the global South, that is grounded in theory and methods, and that is able to influence informed public dialogue. The partnership is founded on a conviction that engaged research can influence transformative change by generating evidence, creating policy arguments and opening public dialogue space.

The role of critical social science in identifying and shaping such transformative pathways has been extremely limited. At the same time, there is increasing global attention directed to the role that cities and urbanization will play in addressing global environmental challenges, and the role in shaping a new development future. There are growing arguments for the need for fundamental change of development pathways that are in line with the constraints of planetary boundaries and the emerging threats of climate change. However, there are also critical questions around the overall purpose of such transformations – according to whose interests and for whose benefit such futures will be pursued.

The timing of this partnership is of particular significance. The world is going through the most dramatic period of urbanization in human history. During 2015 global policy negotiations will lead to agreement on a number of influential urban agendas. The Sustainable Development Goals will be agreed in 2015 and will include a commitment to making ‘human cities and settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’. Habitat III in Quito 2016 is scheduled to be a milestone in moving from the approval of the SDG goals to implementation. In addition 2015 is critical from the perspective of global climate negotiations, with a growing recognition of the importance of the urban arena for both addressing adaptation and for forging a future that avoids climate catastrophe.

Unfortunately, the evidence coming from climate science suggests that the window of opportunity for making these transformations in the urban arena is extremely limited. Current trajectories of urbanization in Africa, South and Southeast Asia suggest that these global environmental concerns are not being addressed and that cities are embarking on a new round of investments that will lock us in to climate futures that are calamitous both for people and planet.

While generating wealth and contributing to economic development, urbanization in Africa and Asia is also increasingly associated with inequality in wealth and access to services, and in the creation and distribution of climate related risks. Yet urbanization can also act as a crucible of innovation that is capable of catalyzing social and political transformation. The density and diversity of interacting agents, organizations, cultures, communities, forms of knowledge, and worldviews can generate novel social networks, technologies and governance structures that challenge and transform existing relationships. Urbanization opens up arenas of agency, often enabling people to step away from

the social, economic and cultural constraints that have limited their options in rural areas, often opening access to education, new social relationships, and new forms of livelihood. It is therefore critical to shape the economic, social, technological and the spatial aspects of urbanization in ways that promote human wellbeing, equity and that are climate compatible.

1.a Urban dimensions of transformation

This partnership fills a gap in theory and practice of social transformation by focusing on a context of global significance. Much of the current academic literature on which calls for transformations are based, are themselves grounded in theory around resilience that advocates multi-scale, polycentric, adaptive approaches to governance. Much of the literature and the experience from resilience and complex systems theory is based on non-urban or of limited scale actions focused at the scale of household or community. It has often been critiqued for limited appreciation of the dynamics of politics and power. The bulk of this literature draws from natural resource management experience (Folke et al., 2005), clearly defined geographical territories and social groupings, or relatively accountable political systems. So far this body of theory has not drawn on history of the global South, or on the specific challenges of urbanization.

Putting such calls for transformation into practice given existing political realities underpinning urbanization, and associated administrative structures and institutional processes has rarely been addressed. Even so, different models, discourses and narratives of how to shape urban change and of urban resilience are gaining ground in global debates and practice. At present, often inconsistent or contradictory conceptual models of urban governance transformation guide such efforts. These models are largely based on assumptions that have rarely been tested empirically. These include notions of “policy champions”, creating networks of city leaders and provision of access to investment finance, cities that are ‘resilient’, ‘green’ or ‘smart’, and of transformative partnerships in which the private sector plays the role of both investor and innovator. Such approaches have been critiqued for lack of consideration of the political dimensions of urbanization and application of managerial approaches to urban governance, often emphasizing urban system resilience over issues of rights and justice (Friend and Moench, 2013).

Alternative models are framed around citizen empowerment and promotion of informed public dialogue and multi-stakeholder processes as key elements of urban governance (Tyler and Moench, 2013). These recognize the fundamental role of politics and the importance of processes that engage diverse stakeholders in achieving change, and socially just outcomes. Other models for promoting transformative governance are more closely focused on the agency of poor and marginalized people and actions at neighbourhood, community and household levels, often in the face of exploitative social relations.

The practical successes identified so far have tended to be more inclined towards securing limited but important access to services, adaptation to shocks, and

disaster risk reduction, rather than governance transformation and long-term solutions to issues of wellbeing, poverty and social justice. Both theories and solutions are partial and context dependent, and all are challenged by their limited scale and reach, and depth of political influence. Those who argue for strengthening formal governance mechanisms have limited ability to identify how questions of poverty or equity might be addressed. At the same time, those arguing for socially equitable approaches often do not consider complex system dynamics or response to questions of planetary boundaries. Neither engages with the diverse nature of urbanization and cities in a manner that points toward widely applicable realistic transformative strategies.

Given today's fiercely contested urban landscape, the need for grounded theory to shape global environmental and development commitments and local-level action is all the more pertinent.

1.b Urban transformation – a governance challenge

Achieving urban transformations is first and foremost a challenge of governance; of reconfiguring state-society relations, and of ensuring wellbeing, social justice and equity for an ecologically viable future. It is a matter not just of ensuring that people can live well, as individuals, but ensuring that we can live well together in complex and potentially contentious physical and social contexts. Not all transformations will be socially or ecologically desirable; each transformative pathway will have its own distributional implications. In many ways the emphasis on planetary boundaries and natural systems can shift attention from the social and political forces that have created both the current ecological crisis, and current social structures and relations. There is an urgent need to consider the thorny dimensions of how the problem of transformation is framed, and how actions influence the distribution of benefits, risks and vulnerabilities.

To respond to the above combination of ideas, challenges and opportunities, it is essential to understand processes of change from within the everyday reality of urban governance; the ways in which systems, institutions and organizations interact, and the relations between state and non-state actors. Understanding this in turn requires considering the agency of different people (men, women and children), households and communities as rights holders and the ways that autonomous actions can influence broader governance processes. Equally it requires understanding the ways in which bureaucratic organizations and institutions operate, and again the agency of actors within such institutions, and of the interface between institutions and actors. Such understanding would enable identification of points of entry for catalyzing transformative change toward more equitable, sustainable and effective forms of urban governance.

The RIUFT partnership is founded on the need to identify an urban future that is fundamentally different from past and current trajectories of urbanization. We must embrace the specifics of history and the experience of globalization from the perspective of the South while also recognizing the ways in which urbanization across the globe is interlinked. Different theoretical and historical perspectives must be integrated: rather than drawing exclusively on historical

experience from the north, transformative urban futures will need to be grounded in the processes of urbanization in the global South as they are unfolding. We must consider, too, the distinctive role that cities play in both generating economic development and in recreating poverty and inequality both in the South and across the globe.

Our approach to reimagining inclusive urban futures is shaped by an understanding that such an effort is itself inherently political; that the urban world is so contested and differentiated that any attempts to open space for imagining alternative futures inevitably confronts entrenched structures, values and interests. We also believe that urbanization and core development pathways with which it is associated have failed to recognize ecological values and constraints. Urbanization has transformed ecological landscapes, creating patterns of resource extraction and degradation, and increasingly levels of pollution that now have global ramifications. Part of the research challenge is to address the ways in which such global tensions are manifest in different geographies.

Re-imagining urban futures that are inclusive is, at heart, a process of political negotiation, it is the process of finding ways to live well together, but the possibility of bringing to the table the interests of poor, politically and socially marginalized people is severely constrained and unavoidably linked to broad political structures and processes at the global, national and city levels. Indeed, the extent of current inequalities and the historical processes and systems on which they are based is such that re-imagining a future that will be fundamentally more just and equitable remains a monumental challenge.

1.c The RIUFT Partnership

The RIUFT partnership brings together academics, practitioners and citizens in Thailand, India, Nepal, Pakistan and South Africa. Each of these countries represents both contrasting and overlapping dimensions of global challenges around urbanization and climate change, with different economic status but high degrees of inequality, and shifting patterns of migration, that also oblige us to reconsider such categories as “the global South”.

A critical feature of RIUFT is the way in which research and research partners are situated within dynamic institutional processes and governance structures in specific urban locations being directly involved within local government agencies, but also linked directly with citizens’ groups. It is this practical grounding that ensures research is shaped by and able to influence local policy processes, and that through the adoption of participatory research processes will be owned by local actors as well as network partners.

The partnership operates across key areas of work:

- Learning and cross-fertilization between and among partners
- Embedded, grounded, contextualized research in specific urbanizing areas of Asia and Africa

- Critical reflection and informed public dialogue between actors at different scales – local/city level, national policy level, global development partners
- Capacity building for early career scientists, researchers and practitioners
- Co-produced, innovative documentation and targeted dissemination

2. Addressing urban transformations

RIUFT addresses the core question of how to reconfigure state-society relations to enable governance and institutional processes that can lead to transformative change that respond to global environmental challenges in ways that are equitable and socially just and promote human wellbeing.

Much of the transformation that is required to address global climate change and development objectives of poverty reduction and equity will be centred on urbanising areas. The partnership addresses this challenge of urban governance through a multi-faceted, politically nuanced approach to governance and social transformation as being shaped by contested knowledge, discourse and power relations within increasingly complex inter-linked systems of infrastructure and technology. It is an approach to governance that is able to balance concerns for global ecological change, with the need to put people's ability to live well centre stage. The urban experience is an essentially collective endeavour that creates complex and intensified patterns of association and interaction. Viewing urbanization in this way, as a collective social experience, that is, brings to the fore the need for living well individually but also collectively, and in doing so, draws attention to opportunities for collective action as well as to patterns of differentiation according to wealth, class, gender, age, and ethnicity. The governance challenge of 'living well together' in rapidly urbanizing world is compounded by the influences of global ecological change and more localised environmental degradation and pollution. Also prominent are the characteristics of urbanization in the global South - density and insecurity of settlement, inequalities of wealth and rights, informality, exploitative patterns of migration and labour, conflict and violence, and desperations of vulnerability and extreme hardship (McGregor, 2008, Deneulin and McGregor, 2010). From this perspective, the challenge of governance is of bringing together human wellbeing and concepts of the right to the city, and forging an ecologically viable urban future.

The partnership brings together broad bodies of work grounded in the experience of the urbanizing global South around;

- i) complex social-ecological-technological systems, planetary boundaries and global climate change;
- ii) wellbeing, poverty, vulnerability and the right to the city;
- iii) governance and public administration; and
- iv) political economy, political ecology and actor-oriented approaches.

In doing so, the partnership draws on a wide range of disciplines and theoretical approaches – complex social-ecological systems and resilience theories; urban political ecology, critical urban geography and urban studies; anthropology of

public policy and actor-oriented approaches; schools of wellbeing, poverty and vulnerability. Cutting across all of these schools of thought is the need to reconcile complex systems that shape social relations with questions around agency in how such systems can be reshaped.

The challenge as we see it is not necessarily to come up with radically new forms of governance. Instead the challenge is to be able to understand processes of change within patterns of urban governance, the ways in which institutions and organizations operate, and the relations between state, citizens and non-state actors, in order to identify points of entry for catalyzing transformative change within highly differentiated, complex and rapidly changing urban environments.

The partnership is grounded in the political and historical experience of the global South, drawing on theoretical approaches around social change, agency and structure, and an understanding of governance as constituting fiercely contested political and institutional processes, with competing knowledge, discourse and power played out through the relations between state and non-state actors, in how decisions are made and actions implemented.

3. Urbanization from the perspective of Complex Social Ecological Systems

There is an established literature grounded in resilience, complex systems and climate change that advocate different approaches to transformative governance. Climate change itself is argued to be a wicked problem (Rayner, 2012) requiring clumsy rather than linear policy solutions (Verweij et al., 2006). For some commentators climate change is itself a result of market failures requiring greater role for the state (Giddens, 2009). Both the resilience and climate change literature support the need for new forms of politics and governance (Giddens, 2009; Jackson, 2009) and of new development pathways (Jackson), emphasizing the local (Agrawal, 2010), as well as multi-scale, polycentric and participatory forms of governance (Ostrom, 1990; Leach et al., 2005; Galaz et al., 2012; Lebel, 2005), but also questions about appropriate scale (Rijke et al., 2003). The inherent uncertainty and risk of future climate change is argued to require flexible, adaptive, learning oriented institutions and processes that are informed, deliberative and alliance based (Munton, 2003; Leach et al., 2005).

Urbanization reshapes ecological landscapes, converting land into new patterns of settlement and production, from agricultural to industrial, according to varying degrees of intensity, altering resource flows across broader ecological landscapes creating complex flows and linkages between geographies. The scale and intensity of such reshaping of ecological landscapes, and of course the long-term implications, is unprecedented in human history.

A critical feature of contemporary urbanization that sets current history apart from earlier urban experience, is the dependence on complex systems of infrastructure and technology to create key systems for water, food, energy, transport and waste and the similarly complex institutions that manage, and shape access to the services and benefits that systems generate (Graham and Marvin, 2001; Tyler and Moench, 2012). Increasingly these complex systems

transcend specific geographies or territories, becoming networked, interlinked and interdependent, across regional and global scales. Fragilities and vulnerabilities within such systems become nested, with impacts cascading from one location to another, often in unimaginable ways (Friend et al., 2015). From this systems perspective, urbanism is a global phenomenon – what Moris (2014) calls a ‘pan-urbanism’ – that links urban centres across the globe, but that also links urban and rural locations. Indeed for some scholars, this previously clear conceptual distinction between urban and rural is rapidly evaporating.

The dependence of cities on complex systems and the historical patterns of politics, economics and technology that have shaped them create a tendency towards path dependency, a characteristic manifest in different forms. The location of urban centers and subsequent investment and migration, it is argued will be shaped by existing transport networks of roads and railways. Dependence on fossil fuel-based transport and road networks and the economic importance of mobility, creates patterns of shelter and urban sprawl that then generate a need and demand for further road development to deal with the resultant congestion.

From this systems and path-dependency perspective, a transformative urbanism will need to make a break with existing historically-shaped dependencies and the consequences of confronting the various political and economic interests that such path dependencies have created. This is thus both a technological, and political challenge.

The critical dependence on complex systems of infrastructure and institutions shape access to services, influencing not just wellbeing but also patterns of poverty and vulnerability. The reshaping of urban futures will need to function through the complex, inter-linked systems on which they depend rather than employ territorial approaches alone (Asprone et al., 2013). Understanding how these systems operate, are accessed, controlled, and managed will emerge by investigating the ways in which actors engage with those systems.

Some approaches have attempted to give concrete form to the interaction between the complex systems relating to the physical and socio-economic aspects, especially in the context of disasters and resilience. Drawing from Holling's (2001) definition of ecological resilience, the Hybrid Social Physical Network Approach (Asprone et al, 2013), attempts to define the resilience of such hybrid systems by overlaying the infrastructural network onto the socio-spatial aspects of a settlement's demographic character. Economic impacts of extreme events have been sought to be calculated using regional input-output analysis as in the case of Mumbai (Ranger et al, 2011) and earthquake impacts in Japan. While undoubtedly partial, such studies are significant in linking the complex systems aspect of the urban to its social and economic character.

Socio-ecological and hybrid socio-physical network theorizing needs to reflect the profound uncertainties associated with both ecological and socio-economic systems without falling into the trap of anticipating deterministic outcomes. Dealing with uncertainties requires new theories about the nature of decision-

making under uncertainty, such as those Dupuy et al. offer (2005). In particular, the idea of “ongoing normative assessment” as the overarching principle of dealing with uncertainty deserves to be operationalized in specific contexts as it is in this proposed study. This type of assessment especially deserves consideration in view of the fact that development and resilience (or sustainability in general) are moving targets, meaning that their state is constantly evolving in directions we may speculate on but never predict with certainty.

Dealing with the inherent uncertainty of climate change is argued to require “ongoing normative assessment” (Dupuy & Grinbaum, 2005) and flexible, adaptive, learning-oriented institutions and processes that are deliberative and alliance-based (Munton, 2002). Like the climate, urbanization is a moving target with boundaries and trajectories that are murky and unclear, a target whose development will require constant tweaking by proactive and sensitive actors.

The focus of this research proposal is not the city, but the processes whereby people building a city as it is urbanization itself which constitutes a major transformative process, perhaps the most significant transformation of the contemporary world, in fact. We must go beyond notions of the city as a geographically, territorially bounded entity and embrace urbanization as a process. We must see the people in urban spaces as not just being defined by a territory distinct from “the country” but as active human agents that have relationships that transcend physical boundaries and which interact in complex social-ecological-technological systems that shape and are shaped by political, economic and social relations and values.

4. Drivers and Implications of Urbanization

The story of contemporary urbanization is dominated by the pace and scale of change in the global South. Yet this is a story that has its own specific characteristics across the diverse geographies and histories of the South, as well as the increasingly globalized nature of urbanization. The conceptual challenge is to combine both these specialized and undifferentiated dimensions in a more nuanced theoretical approach.

Urbanization is closely linked to historical and emerging patterns of economic and political interest and investment (Pelling, 2011; Inderberg et al., 2015; Pelling and Manuel-Navarrete, 2011; Scott, 2008; Harvey, 2008), requiring a theoretical approach grounded in political economy. For the global South this is a political history that must take into account the experience of colonialism, and post-colonialism across Asia and Africa, and emerging patterns of globalization and a mixed industrial and post-Fordist global economy. Additionally, political ecology approaches cities as the collection of human efforts to shape and build an environment and our relationship with the natural world, mediated by political and economic power relations, that build social and economic structures and relations (Simon, 2007; Sandercock, 2003). These structures and relations are also shaped by broader ecological constraints, that distribute access to benefits and risks within urban areas, among different urban actors, and

between urban and rural areas. Cities can also be seen as totems of power. For example, in the way that they are physically laid out cities often reflect an underlying cosmology of power and hierarchy, in which roads and buildings stand as monuments or symbols for some social value and architecture recreates social values, relations and structures (Harvey, 2008).

The experience of urbanization in the global South requires a nuanced theoretical approach that can embrace both those dimensions of urbanization that are little differentiated across geographies as well as a relational understanding of the specifics of experience of the global South. Despite the long history of urbanization as a field of research and theorizing, in the global South the scope and scale of urbanization is not always obvious. This blurring of understanding is partly a matter of terminology and classification: recognition of the pace and scale of urbanization is often undermined by out-of-date classifications based on population and settlement density, classifications themselves undermined by statistics on populations based on house registration, statistics that do not reflect the highly mobile nature of labor and remittances characteristic of contemporary urbanization. In the case of India, while the census of 2011 recorded for the first time a greater increase in urban population than rural population (Kundu, 2011), 30% of the identified urban growth came from so-called “census” towns, whose number rose from 1,362 to 3,894. While these urban settlements do meet the census classification of a town, they are often not acknowledged as such by regional governments while determining their statutory urban governance status. In short, the dynamics of their growth is relegated to “unacknowledged” urbanization (Pradhan, 2013) despite the fact that the interesting dynamics in India are, in fact, in “census town” and related provincial urbanization (Upadhyaya, 2012) rather than in cities at the upper end of the hierarchy. Similarly Thailand, despite having been an industrialized country for over a quarter, has an urban population of just 34%, which ranks it at 155th in the world, one place behind Lao PDR and one place ahead of Sudan.

The research problem of urbanization is not merely one of classification, but also of what the experience of urbanization means, and how it is driven and shaped. Another set of questions relate to the drivers of urbanization and its significance for marginalised groups located in the context of the limited development of industrial capital and the rapid transition to a service sector dominated economy. Despite the skewed and highly speculative nature of urban land markets in India and other parts of the world (Vasavi, 2012), nevertheless limited material gains and social mobility may obtain for the marginalised groups (Sanyal, 2011). The colonial experience is significant in Africa and Asia. In India, colonial tutelage of legal, administrative institutional and planning systems in a bygone era, perhaps still has residual effects in important ways (Kidambi, 2007; Dossal 2010). This legacy influences the partial acknowledgement of citizenship and large scale alienation of many urban residents, and the constant interplay between granting protection to informality with the expansion of a techno-legal regime that reflects elite interests (Nair, 2012).

Urbanization is unfolding as a multi-directional, non-linear process. Especially in South Asia, in the context of an incomplete agrarian transition, urbanization and even large urban settlements (including megacities) will have embedded in them many elements and aspects that can be recreate agrarian and rural life.

Illustrations can be found in the social, economic and cultural patterns of urban life and in the patterns of migration including the interplay of seasonal and long-term migration that link rural and urban geographies. Increasingly, urban centres are characterised by patterns of migration and ethnic diversity alongside informal and insecure labour markets. It is through patterns of migration and labour, the social relations that they create, and the ways in which urban people access to systems of infrastructure and technology on which urban centres depend, that much of the fabric of contemporary urban experience can be revealed.

Urbanization is founded on the driving necessity of capitalism to concentrate the factors of production (labour and capital) in specific locations. It is thus both a characteristic of and dependent on capitalist modes of production, capital accumulation, and spatial fix (Harvey, 2001). The importance of urbanization and the associated industrialization of national economies is a well-established feature of orthodox economic development theory, which argues that urbanization contributes to economic growth, poverty reduction, and improved wellbeing. Failure to urbanize rapidly has been identified as a constraint on economic development as urbanization creates a whole new set of consumers and demands that spurs economic activity.

At the same time the regulation of investment capital in Asia is weak while public spheres including those of public policy making and planning are privatised (Shatkin, 2007, McGregor, Salagrama and Bahadur, 2013), with local government veering closer to its entrepreneurial rather than managerial role (Harvey, 2008). Investment in and conversion of land on which urbanization depends must also be seen from an ecological perspective. Patterns of urbanization transform ecological landscapes of both the urban and non-urban space, that in turn create and distribute a range of climate vulnerabilities and risks. Much of the most rapid urbanisation across the globe is occurring in locations that are hazardous; along coasts, deltas and floodplains that regularly experience storms, floods and droughts. These patterns of investment target low value land that has greatest potential for capital accumulation; but much of this land is low-value because of its climate exposure. Current investment is rarely influenced by calculations of climate risk.

The experience of the global south demonstrates the diverse trajectories of urbanization. From a resilience perspective, urbanization in Asia and Africa can be seen as a transformation of an agriculture-based system, through a “restructuring of components and relationships” (Nelson 2006, p. 116). The drivers of this transformation are many, as are the ways in which it can be understood. Urbanization does not necessarily occur because such a transformation is desired: at least partly it is the outcome of the collapse of the pre-existing agricultural system, which is itself driven by many factors, including the globalization of agriculture and the lack of state investment in small-scale

agriculture and rural service provision. Many analysts also argue that this transformation of agriculture is also being driven by the impacts of climate change on natural resource- and agriculture-based livelihoods and that migration, or at least moving out of agriculture, is a climate-adaptation strategy. Many of these features do not fit smoothly into existing conceptual perspectives of urban theory evolved in Northern contexts or with the emerging global discourse around cities of the future. While this may not confirm the need for alternate epistemologies (Santos, 2012), the development of urban theories evolved from the experience of the global South within contemporary patterns of globalization and global environmental change remains an unfulfilled need.

A key element of such a challenge is to pull together schools of thought around interlinked, networked global cities, from both the perspective of infrastructure and technology systems and from the perspective of political-economic systems. The global nature of urbanization patterns and the linkages between urban locations and resource flows, creates new centres and peripheries of development and dependency, that are shaped by class as much as location. Drawing on earlier concepts of dependency and world systems theory (Wallerstein, 2004) allows us to consider the need for multiple scales of action – local, regional and global – to influence global transformation as well as the ways in which patterns of globalization and interlinked systems are reshaping these territorial scales beyond boundaries of location. Increasingly, urban centers are emerging in what was previously labeled the “periphery” and the “periphery” is very much in evidence in the “center”. At the same time, such linkages and dependences are increasingly shaped and mediated by globally networked systems of infrastructure and technology. Urban transformations will need to be both place- and systems-based.

5. Models of Transformation

Global environmental change – and the rapidly approaching planetary boundaries and systemic tipping points – presents a conceptual and practical crisis of governance, with the failure of international negotiation processes and institutions, tensions between the authority of national governments and the pervasive influence of global business and market forces. This has led some critics to argue that cities will be the locus of future action, leading to growing interest in city governance as the basis of transformative change. Yet even the focus on the scale of the city is not free from broader debates around the relative roles and merits of state, market, individual and community, and competing arguments of the market versus the state.

Climate change is argued to be an outcome of market failure, by failing to adequately cost environmental externalities in ways that would limit GHG emissions. Giddens (2009), for example, argues that state planning needs to be put back to the center stage, and that the state should emerge as a key actor in addressing climate change. Such a call can itself be seen as a response to neo-liberal policies of rolling back the state that have come to dominate international development theory, discourse and practice.

Despite this trend, approaches to the role of the state continue to be inconsistent, and often contradictory. Much of donor-led development interventions highlight the important of policy and planning processes, and arguments for mainstreaming climate considerations into existing institutional mechanisms, even while recognizing the political dimensions of planning, and critical gaps in implementation, transparency and accountability. At some level there is a notion that addressing climate change requires good governance, and that this requires the state (Giddens, 2009). However the state is often weak, particularly in the global South, and that it lacks the resources of capital and innovation that transformation requires.

In the urban context, this concern with the role of the state takes several distinct forms. From a political economy perspective, urbanization is seen as a product of historical and political forces that go beyond the state. Formal planning is less significant than the influences of business, capital and power, and global modes of production and exchange. There is a growing disaffection with the cornerstones of traditional urban planning - land use, zoning and design - as all have been seen to fail.

Others see a need to renegotiate social contracts among states, citizens, and businesses so that they outline roles and responsibilities around core environmental values and the principles of justice and equity. This line of argument can then steer us towards market-led solutions, with the emerging discourse around the role of the private sector as leaders of innovation and transformation, despite the historical experience of climate change and market failures.

Alternatively a narrative that champions non-state modes of action is emerging. Typically this is framed around notions of community, and grassroots action. This can be both part of a radical (and sometimes revolutionary) ideology, but equally can appear in more conservative political discourse. Often this narrative overlooks the complexity of 'community structure, the distribution of power and the diversity of interests. Notions of community are especially problematic in urbanizing areas, where the sense of shared interest as implied by "*the community*" is not easily structured around neighbourhoods and residence, but more shaped by interests of class, wealth, and ethnicity.

In contrast to notions of collective action, a line of argument has emerged within the field of climate change around 'autonomous adaptation' that presupposes the agency of individuals, households and communities to make necessary transformations in order to deal with changing risk and vulnerability profiles. This line of argument is partly predicated on the concern that the state and formal planning processes is incapable of delivering the requirements for change. Its detractors argue that it gives little consideration of the diversity of adaptive capacity, and the ways in which the ability to act or not is socially created, with little thought to those who might be excluded from such actions, or how such actions can recreate social relations in ways that are not always positive, or indeed, in ways that further strengthen entrenched power structures and relations.

The global dimensions of climate change, which are most clearly articulated in concepts of planetary boundaries and complex social-ecological systems, have increasingly lead to arguments for multi-scalar, polycentric, and participatory governance processes. Such processes need to be multi-scalar because of the global dimensions of climate change, which straddles ecological as well as administrative boundaries and require action at both the macro and micro levels. They bring together global and local action, but at the same time highlight the need for appropriate linkages and feedback loops among various scales and avoid giving precedence to either top-down or bottom-up approaches alone.

Theories of transformative governance grounded in global climate change and resilience theory take a slightly different approach, one which highlights the inherent uncertainty and long-term consequences of climate change, and the need to establish adaptive, flexible, learning oriented institutions and processes. This literature is also informed by interests in public dialogue processes that themselves rest on notions that bringing different stakeholders together to address shared problems can foster collaboration, learning and innovation. Critics argue that these approaches need also consider issues of power and how multi-stakeholder processes can be steered according to established interests and power relations. From this perspective, innovation requires empowering disadvantaged stakeholders, even opening the possibility that confrontation and conflict might be necessary and desirable features of such processes if they are to be truly transformative, and able to reshape unjust social structures.

Despite the need to apply theories of resilience at a global scale, the empirical basis for such theories is at the scale of communities in tightly defined (shared) ecological landscapes. They draw on theories of collective action, the (environmental) commons around specific natural resource systems (fisheries, coasts, forests) and communities that have a sense of traditional values and identity and tend to be dependent on natural resource-based economies and livelihoods. These theories are largely grounded in communities and have little connection with the complex, dynamic and fiercely contested social structures and processes that characterize today's cities. In addition, they are based on idealized notions or crude assumptions of what communities are and how they operate and therefore need refinement in and of themselves.

6. Urban Governance and public administration – creating room for maneuver

A critical question for the RIUFT partnership is around how the kinds of calls emerging from the literature of resilience and transformation for multi-scalar, reflexive, adaptive governance mechanisms and institutional structures can be realized in practice. RIUFT approaches these sets of questions through actor-oriented approaches embedded within local government processes, and in citizen led efforts to influence change.

Definitions of what constitutes the urban differ across the partnership countries, yet they are largely determined by size and density of population. Such territorial approaches do not consider ecological boundaries or the scale and

complexity of urban systems of infrastructure and technology that stretch across territories.

However there is a wave of change across all the partnership countries of reshaping administrative boundaries, and roles and responsibilities. Such administrative reforms, while framed in terms of decentralisation, are rarely designed to create structures that fit with ecological landscapes, or the multi-scale nature of complex urban systems. Equally the transformations of rural societies, and the changing patterns of inter-linkage between rural and urban are rarely reflected in administrative structures. They are however influenced by considerations for generating revenue and concepts of administrative efficiencies in service delivery, often placing greater strains on already stretched local governments.

The pace and extent of local governance reform needs to be set within the broader context of a shifts in national politics. However this is not always a clear pattern. In some cases, there is a shift from authoritarian regimes to seemingly “progressive”, democratic urban governments or those that are more responsive to state, provincial, city and regional jurisdictions, and seek to empower communities in processes of governmental decision-making that affect lives and livelihoods of ordinary and ethnically diverse citizens. This shift signals a new chapter in the contemporary history of urbanization in Asia and Africa. Local governments across these continents exhibit vastly different capacities in their ability to generate revenue and investment, or to take on board the regulatory responsibilities that would allow them to reshape the process of urbanization. The promotion of entities of local governance in status, from that of village to town and subsequently to municipal councils for instance can also bring in its wake increased flow of resources that may not have been available earlier. At the same time, these additional resources, without the political intervention of various stakeholders, especially the poor and marginalized, will not be used in ways that promote broad and desirable social equality and sustainability goals. Instead, the status quo—the rich getting richer, the poor becoming poorer, and nature being ignored if not exploited—will prevail. In some cases, the expected shift from authoritarian regimes has not occurred, or even reversed, with new alliances of military, bureaucratic and private capital dominating the political and urban landscape.

In addition to the challenges of applying principles of governance emerging from resilience theory to the realities of administrative boundaries, there is also a question as to how these kinds of resilience based approaches are in line with core principles of Weberian bureaucratic rationality and notions of legal certainty (Ebbesson, 2010) that underpin public administration and concepts of ‘good governance’. Resilience theory framings of climate change as a ‘wicked problem’ that requires plural solutions, clumsy governance and flexible, learning oriented and adaptive institutions (Verweij et al., 2006) stand in direct contrast to the core foundations of public administration theory and practice that require efficiency, transparency and accountability. There is thus an inherent tension between the conventional framing of good governance, urban policy and

planning, and thus the ways in which government bureaucracies operate, and the needs emerging from the study of complex systems and resilience theory.

The more overtly contested aspects of urban governance are hugely significant. Urbanization is increasingly characterised in terms of informality of governance mechanisms, access to resources and in employment patterns, and a high degree of agency that manifests itself in terms of urban insurgency. The concept of informality has in turn opened up interest in corruption, violence and 'urban insurgency' in the way that different actors manoeuvre within, and reshape, governance and political processes. These additional tensions among current theoretical approaches need to be reconciled.

The challenge of introducing good governance is exacerbated by the fact that while the number of poor and vulnerable urban people is growing, local governments are facing ever-increasing budgetary constraints on welfare provisions for them. Emerging models of both development and of promoting resilience, increasingly emphasize the role of private sector finance in provision of public infrastructure and delivery of services, and the privatisation of critical aspects of urban life, such as water; or to the privatization of public policy and planning (Shatkin, 2007). The emphasis on the city as a system, lends itself to the exclusion of issues of equity, social justice and wellbeing. Durban local government in post-apartheid South Africa succeeded in responding to liberation demands for universal access to water and sanitation, but now faces critical challenges around sustainable finance; Kathmandu witnesses high urbanization guided by historical political processes. The dynamics of both cities are influenced by economically active migrant populations and rural to urban migration. Both present major challenges to governance, equity and sustainable futures.

Important elements of urbanization, such as the development of urban transport networks, that in its initial stages serves the town as a link to a larger regional transport network, can be interesting points of intervention. Road building, provision of water, sewage and solid waste management services can all be very viable points of intervention. Housing, as a specific concern, often emerges much later in the urbanization process, when the earlier long period of unplanned growth of housing in an anarchic fashion, has already created lock-ins that will be hard to break out of later. How early can progressive and pro-equity interventions in housing take place and what forms should it take are interesting areas of enquiry for further active intervention.

Transformative change needs to be grounded in the institutional, bureaucratic and administrative realities of local governments and requires an understanding of agency in reshaping institutional structures and processes. Developing such an understanding requires a deep understanding of what different local governments in diverse contexts are doing, particularly with respect to their populist platforms, political coalitions, budgetary concerns, administrative redrawing of boundaries to pursue objectives of redistribution, inclusion, and engagement. Such an analysis of a local government will be situated within the context of an increasingly diverse, and, often, an increasingly unequal citizenry.

Since urbanization processes are underpinned by interactions among state-capital-social movement politics, transformation will require a reconfiguring of these interactions and relations.

In this context, a study of the resources available to local institutions of governance and of the flow of resources from regional and central institutions is critical as these factors constitute important constraints on what can or cannot be achieved by local, decentralized initiatives. An important constraint on an equitable pattern of urbanization, or even one that is just partially so, can arise from the constraints that the overall political economy imposes on the local. At the same time, given the absence of local-level technical expertise (both in technological and social scientific terms), it is also possible that local initiatives will constitute, in effect, the elite capture of local institutions and create lock-ins that have long-term impacts. How, precisely, this dialectic has evolved over time will be an important aspect of the studies that comprise this larger partnership.

7. Wellbeing and the Right to the City

Numerous models of and assumptions about change in urban governance are being taken up in policy and practice. All need to be placed under closer critical scrutiny. The imperative for this research partnership is to identify social transformation pathways that strengthen human wellbeing and deliver socially just and equitable outcomes. The complexity of urbanization requires us to draw on critical analysis of poverty and vulnerability and concepts of the 'right to the city' (Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre).

While across the globe poverty has generally been considered a largely rural phenomenon, as people become increasingly urbanized and as populations continue to grow, poverty will itself become an increasingly urban phenomenon. Recent reviews conclude that current methods and data for assessing urban poverty are incomplete (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2013). This has shifted focus from purely income/expenditure measurements to broader assets-based measurements that also include elements of rights and voice, entitlements (Sen, 1999) and incorporation of people's wellbeing (McGregor, 2007). A critical, yet often overlooked element of poverty and marginalisation, is the feature of violence and exploitation that cuts across class, gender and ethnicity.

Urbanization, especially in the context of developing countries, is often viewed as an inherently inequitable process. While this perception undoubtedly reflects a significant aspect of contemporary reality, it is essential that we capture the dialectic of urbanization. Unless we appreciate the many diverse and even contradicting facets of urbanization, we cannot understand the multiplicity of opportunities for intervention. Urbanization should not be seen solely as a narrative of loss, in which independent livelihoods embedded in an agrarian setting are lost to the dependency of the urban migrant relying on others for often fitful employment. The romanticisation of the "sustainable" life of a farmer in contrast with the "unsustainable" life of a city dweller is neither accurate nor helpful.

Moreover, as many authors argue, poverty, and particularly urban poverty, is created and reinforced by social, political and economic forces that are manifest in what have been described as “structural inequalities inherent in formal and informal governance processes at the local, municipal and national level” (Banks et al., 2011 p. 58). Wealth and political power of some is directly related to investments in and control over urban land and labour that is so critical for urban expansion and development (Harvey, 2008). Such inequalities are also manifest in the informality of urbanization, and the influential role of exploitative patronage networks related to corruption and gangsterism, that themselves shape access to employment, but also to critical urban systems and services. Poor, inadequate or fragile infrastructure serves as a potential driver of violence, and the competition between different groups in gaining access to infrastructure and services (Anwar, 2014).

A critical element of shaping an urban vision for the future is therefore of rights – whose voice counts in shaping such a vision, and who benefits – and in collective rights of access to and control over urban space and systems. While principles of citizen participation have long appeared in urban planning theory (Arnstein, 1969), the degree to which such participation has influenced urban planning in meaningful ways has tended to be rather limited in Asia and Africa. Contemporary urbanization has created new patterns of wealth and power that are distributed unevenly. Participation, too, shaped as it is by highly charged political environments, is not equal. The challenge is not merely one of reducing vulnerability and alleviating poverty, but of living well; of enhancing wellbeing, freedoms and capabilities (Boarini et al., 2014; Gough and McGregor 2007; Sen 2001). Wellbeing frameworks provide a conceptual basis for assessing individual, household and community dimensions, while also considering interpersonal dimensions of power, equity and justice (Boarini et al., 2014). By considering wellbeing, the partnership is able to consider transformative change that promotes positive freedoms, rather than merely reducing vulnerability or alleviating poverty.

The concept of the ‘right to the city’ has also been a mobilizing principle in struggles over access to urban space and political processes. The right to the city reaffirms the principle of the city as a collective endeavour, that all city residents share the collective right of access to and control over public space, to urban systems (water, food, energy, shelter, mobility, waste) and to the role of the urban in creating social and cultural freedoms and capabilities. Despite its long history in political struggles of the urban, the concept of the right to the city has been remarkably absent in more recent global discourse around urban futures, or urban climate resilience. This neglect is itself hugely significant of the ways in which global discourse is unfolding.

8. Research Methodologies – Addressing agency and structure through actor-oriented approaches

The overall approach across the partnership is to co-develop rigorous critical reviews of theory, combined with macro-level analysis drawing on secondary

data and literature reviews, and focused case-studies at the level of urbanising areas

A core element of our overall approach is to study urbanization from within contested urban spaces and processes; both within state bureaucracies and within citizen-led efforts for change. Studying the process of urbanization from within opens the many possibilities of intervention to shape more resilient, sustainable and transformative futures. The conceptual frameworks appropriate to understanding this process need to grasp both the underlying economic drivers as well as the overt and manifest social and spatial forms of urbanization. Integrating the two dimensions is a continuing challenge for urban studies and for theories of social change.

Refining theories of social transformations within the context of both urbanization and planetary boundaries, also requires drawing on theoretical approaches grounded in agency and actor-oriented methodologies (eg. Long and Long, 1992); to governance and public administration; to how organizations, policy and institutions operate (Douglas, 1986) and how actors can influence broader social and ecological processes through collective action (Ostrom, 1990) and collaborative learning (Goldstein, 2012). The research will draw on actor-oriented sociology (Long and Long 1992; Lloyd, 1979) to examine how organizations and institutional processes operate in design and implementation of policy, how bureaucrats, politicians, business actors, scientists and citizens at critical system and social interfaces, create room for manoeuvre (Lipsky, 1971; Clay and Schaeffer, 1984; Latour, 1987) and how politically and economically marginalized individuals (such as slum dwellers and migrants), households and groups are able to exercise agency in order to reshape urban systems, services and spaces (Lloyd, 1979). We will also draw on bodies of literature grounded in the anthropology of development policy that addresses how policy problems are framed and the ways in which discourse, knowledge and power shape policy responses, legitimizing certain actors and actions, while excluding others. This approach draws attention to the role of knowledge, and in particular scientific knowledge in creating legitimacy and generating specific policy narratives. We regard these approaches as critical for being able to provide the critical deconstruction of completing policy narratives and actions that are being constructed around notions of planetary boundaries, systems resilience, and equity.

9. RIUFT Partner Countries and Case Studies

Thailand stands out as the only country in the partnership that was never fully colonized, but whose development history has been tightly interwoven with global and regional conflicts. Despite having achieved the status of Newly Industrialised Country (NIC) in 1988 there is no clear national strategy, policy or legal framework for managing urbanization and industrialization, contributing to a history of conflict around urban expansion, land and labour rights, and environmental degradation that is also manifest in current political tensions. According to official statistics the country is less urbanized than its Mekong region neighbours, and there are policy calls for more rapid and intensive

urbanization, with a continued high degree of dependence on fossil fuel economy. Thailand is a major market for regional labour, creating a new urban underclass. With the establishment of the ASEAN Economy Community in 2015, processes of regionalization are set to accelerate these trends, with Thai capital and investment expanding across the region. Thailand hosts one of the largest petrochemical and industrial towns in Asia – Map Tha Put – an area that has grown against land use plans and that has been mired in conflict around serious environmental and health impacts. Urbanisation is now accelerating in parts of the country that had previously been predominantly rural – particularly in the North East region. Across the country serious challenges remain around the strategic direction of urban growth, and the how urbanization occurs.

India

The Government of India has given renewed thrust on “proper urbanization” by recently initiating the concept of “Smart Cities” for 100 cities. With increasing contribution of urban areas to GDP of India they are referred to as “engines of economic growth”. Out of the four cities selected in India (Gorakhpur, Vishakapatnam, Madurai and Kochi) Vishakapatnam is one of cities proposed by Government of India to develop as a smart city. The four cities capture the entire spectrum of nature of economic activities (industry/ trade and commerce, retail, small industries) in India significantly, while still facing the challenges of meeting the needs of the poor and marginalized. As with other cities even these cities still have high level of urban poverty where primary services of water supply, sanitation, healthcare and solid waste management infrastructure are far from satisfactory. These cities also cover the range of governance issues. With Kochi as a fairly well governed city and the rest as not being up to the mark. The environmental and climate issues of groundwater quality, water pollution, extreme precipitation events, sea level rise and associated manifestation for “urban life” in these cities compound the problem further especially for the marginalized and the poor. The select cities will offer invaluable insights into assessing opportunities and institutional structures from the social science perspective for an equitable and just urban development in India.

Nepal

Situated in the Mahabharat hills of the Himalayan mountain system Kathmandu Valley faces many challenges spawned by haphazard urbanization. Disorderly urban growth has encroached upon agricultural land and wetlands, interfering with their provision of ecological services to urban residents. It has also resulted in high rates of land, water and air pollution, an product that has lowered the overall wellbeing of valley residents. Haphazard urban expansion has overwhelmed the city’s rich heritage, too. When Nepal was unified in 1734, Kathmandu emerged as the powerful centre of the kingdom. The valuation of centralism lingers despite the official declaration that Nepal is now a federal republic. Kathmandu continues to remain centre of education, air connectivity, bureaucracy, army, diplomacy, and medical services as well as the site of Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimages. Such extreme centralization has fuelled the rapid inflow of the rural population into the city, especially between 1996 and 2006, when the civil conflict left the rest of Nepal in a state of great insecurity. Today, the city has an annual growth rate of 4.63%. It serves as a transit point for

labour migrants going abroad and is highly dynamic with its large working-class migrant population living with little or no access to basic service systems. It is dependent on imports of food, energy and other commodities and faces the ever-present possibility of yet another high-intensity earthquake, maybe even within months of the April 2015 disaster. The current state of Kathmandu is unsustainable and new approaches are needed if the city is to be liveable.

Pakistan

Pakistan has the highest rates of urbanization in South Asia, with a projected population of 335 million by 2050, and an annual urbanization rate of 3.06%. In the provinces of Sindh and Punjab almost half the populations are already urbanized, while in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Baluchistan provinces the level is significantly lower (16.87% and 23.89%, respectively), but catching up. More than half of the total urban population of the country lived in 2005 in eight urban agglomerations: Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Multan, Hyderabad, Gujranwala, and Peshawar. Pakistan is undergoing a demographic transition to a youthful country and is experiencing the growth of rapidly expanding primary (megacities like Karachi) and secondary (smaller towns) urban centers as a result of rural–urban migrations. While Pakistan’s largest cities like Karachi continue growing, an interesting development in recent years has been the growth of smaller cities of between half to one million inhabitants. These towns are expected to more than double in size between 2000 and 2025. Pakistan’s total urban population is around 35%, with projections at 50% for 2030 (UNDP 2012). Around 70 million people are living below the poverty line and extensive concerns have been raised about the country’s ability to cope with population growth. New challenges are emerging for government in terms of service delivery, particularly in urban areas. With an estimated population of 21 million, Karachi is considered one of Asia’s fastest growing cities. Karachi’s unrelenting expansion is fueled by natural growth and particularly by rural–urban, inter-provincial, and transnational migrations. The constant dynamics of displacement, settlement and movement incessantly reshape the city’s geography and socio-economic landscape. In Karachi, the supply and management of basic services like water and sanitation remain fragmented. These critical issues pose new challenges of infrastructural vulnerabilities for low-income populations. The involvement in this RIUFT partnership will contribute to learning how municipalities are functioning in an era of increasing municipal disconnect and rapid urbanization.

South Africa

Durban, South Africa is a fast growing African city facing challenges associated with underdevelopment, poverty, the HIV/Aids epidemic, environmental degradation and the legacies of Apartheid. These challenges have spurred high levels of innovation by the local government (referred to as the municipality) in sectors such as water management, biodiversity planning and climate change adaptation. This innovation has highlighted the importance of sustaining integrated socio-ecological systems in improving human well-being and ensuring environmental sustainability. This local innovation has not only produced local developmental benefits, but has also informed the development of national norms, standards and policies and has been recognized through the receipt of a

number of international awards. As a result of its expertise, the municipality is also a contributor to key international processes such as the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report, the UNFCCC negotiations, the development of the urban SDG and the Future Earth global research initiative. The municipality has well established research links with the University of Kwazulu-Natal, and this partnership will be further developed through the contribution to, and implementation of, this research proposal. Currently the municipality is working towards the development of its first resilience strategy, a process that has highlighted the need for the transformation of aspects of prevailing social, political and economic systems. As a result involvement in this research process will contribute to social learning (or knowledge production) across multiple actors within the municipality and mainstream policy development and implementation at the city level.

10. RIUFT Partners

RIUFT brings together academic, research, civil society and local government agencies in a unique partnership. For all of these government actors, this partnership provides space for critical reflection based on academic theory and grounded research. The direct involvement of these government partners is a mechanism for co-learning and co-production of knowledge, ensuring that knowledge generated is grounded and well placed to shape the outcomes of academic research. This partnership between government agencies, universities and civil society organisations provides the basis for engagement in public dialogue directly linked to local policy and decision-making processes, and providing mechanisms for uptake of research insights. As such the partnership responds to specific needs as identified by government partners for advice and facilitation that is grounded in global theory and empirical evidence drawn from different contexts.

ISET-International is a non-profit research and capacity building organization that was established in 1998. The RIUFT partnership has been coordinated by the ISET Regional Office in Bangkok, along with ISET India and the ISET headquarters in Boulder USA. ISET collaborates with local partners to build resilience and catalyze adaptation to social and environmental change, with a particular focus on strategies that address the fundamental challenges change poses for marginalized populations and those who lack the resources to adapt. ISET brings together theoretical and scientific insights with social engagement, local knowledge, and shared learning to identify practical strategies at the local level and to foster the growth of applied knowledge.

ISET-Nepal is recognized as one of the top twenty-five independent think tanks in Asia, it is the only recipient of the prestigious Think Tank Initiative Grant in Nepal. It operates as a network for influence hosting ISET platform lectures. ISET-Nepal is part of influential international networks, for example under the IDRC-supported Think Tank Initiative (TTI) that brings together 43 think tanks in Latin America, Sub-saharan Africa and South Asia.

ISET-Pakistan is the newest member of the ISET network being established in 2007. It is an independent Pakistan-based non-profit research institute that focuses on adaptation to climate change and generates evidence and knowledge to bridge the gap between research and practice. It is a part of an ISET network of independent sister organizations and researchers that work across South and South East Asia through South-South and North-South partnerships.

ActionAid is an anti-poverty agency, standing with people in their struggle towards a world free of poverty, exclusion, patriarchy and injustice. CiRiC is a policy -advocacy hub in India, set up by ActionAid Association working on issues of urban poverty, and the building of sustainable and equitable cities across the country. Meena R. Menon is Leader of CiRiC (Citizens Rights Collective) and Senior Consultant, at Action Aid.

Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) is recognized as a centre of excellence, with 3 campuses across the country, and supports a network of universities across the Himalaya region, and networked with social sciences with other universities across the globe. Prof Jayaraman and TISS have played an important role in advising the government of India in international climate negotiations, and in providing science-based policy advice on a range of socio-economic development issues and policy concerns.

Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG) is an NGO that undertakes development initiatives to impact positively the lives of the poor, deprived and marginalized sections of the society through a people-centred approach focusing on their participation, awareness and empowerment for sustainable development. Established in 1975, GEAG has been addressing issues of sustainable agriculture and livelihoods, rights and interests of small and marginal and woman farmers, community health, training and capacity building. Given the realities of climate change and the fact that it adversely impacts the poor, vulnerable and marginalised sections of society, GEAG started gearing up its efforts towards climate change adaptation and helping communities to build resilience against its impacts, both in the rural and urban settings. While GEAG believes in the power of community engagement in all these processes and have been working through community institutions by developing capacities of the people, we have also been engaging with the government largely to advocate our success and support the government in adopting such people-led models of development

The University of Kwazulu Natal (UKZN) is one of the premier universities of African Scholarship. A truly South African university, UKZN is academically excellent, innovative in research, critically engaged with society and demographically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past.

Established in 1955, the **Institute of Business Administration (IBA)** is a leading academic institution based in Karachi, Pakistan. The IBA's research agenda and output focus on diverse issues ranging from migration and climate change to economic growth, poverty alleviation and conflict resolution and

security. Its full-time faculty engage in policy-relevant research that endeavors to advance knowledge for policy-makers in both public and private sector institutions, for instance the Government of Sindh, Ministry of Labour, the regulatory body State Bank of Pakistan, the South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE). The IBA continually engages with and supports policy makers to help disseminate research findings. In 2011, the IBA hosted an extensive presentation by representatives of South Asia Forum for Educational Development (SAFED) who launched the ASER-Sindh 2010 report about the status of primary education in Sindh. In January 2015, the IBA hosted an event to share research findings with civil society organizations on the linkages between gender, violence and infrastructure in urban Pakistan.

The partnership brings together international academic institutions. The Centre for Integrated Research on Risk and Resilience at Kings College London (KCL) is a recognized centre of excellence that is currently implementing two Belmont Forum research projects on urban transformation and risk governance, as well as the DFID-SERC project – Urban Africa, Risk Knowledge. The partnership also includes the Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield which has researchers that have been leading on global efforts for the incorporation of human wellbeing thinking and measurement into development policy and practice. It also includes the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), which is one of the world's leading independent development think tanks. The recently established Cities Cluster at IDS brings together well-established work on wellbeing frameworks within the context of rapidly urbanizing world. KCL the University of Sheffield and IDS provide important linkages to established bodies of work and ongoing research projects that provide mechanisms for cross-fertilization, and dissemination of findings. Moreover KCL, Sheffield and IDS play an advisory and convening role in international policy forum, providing direct access to DFID, EU and UNISDR, among others. The programme of Environmental Design and Environmental Studies within the Institute of Behavioural Science at the University of Colorado (Boulder) provides support to a process of critical reflection and learning as core elements of the research process.

The partnership brings together four universities in Thailand with a track record of engaged research, and providing advice to local and national government. The King Mongkut Institute of Technology – Lat Krabang, hosts one of the leading centres for urban planning in the country, that also provides post-graduate training to local government officials, increasingly addressing issues of rapid urbanization and climate change. Khon Kaen University and Mahasarakham University are the largest universities in the North East of Thailand, increasingly providing degree training and research support to neighbouring countries in the Mekong region. The Research Group on Wellbeing and Sustainable Development at KKU is the leading centre for wellbeing research in the region. The Regional Centre for Sustainable Development (RCSD) at Chiang Mai University is a leading social science research centre, attracting graduate students from the region and internationally.

RIUFT is unique in the way that it brings in local government partners with a direct responsibility for administering key urban areas. The Kathmandu Valley Development Authority (KVDA) is a planning, monitoring and regulatory body for the whole Kathmandu valley with a role in reconceptualising the urban future of the valley. The Municipality of Durban (eThekweni Municipality) has been active in providing basic service to citizens in the post-Apartheid era, and in implementing practical actions to strengthen environmental protection and climate change adaptation. Their successes in these areas have been recognized internationally, and the Municipality has been a leading actor in international dialogues on both policy and research. As a result of its expertise, the municipality is also a contributor to key international processes such as the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report, the UNFCCC negotiations, the development of the urban SDG and Future Earth. Through Thai universities, there are close relationships with local governments in key areas of the country.

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