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Final Conference Vijayawada

06. – 09. February 2019

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Conference and inauguration

Written by: Amanda Elgh and Ebba Brink, LUCSUS

The final conference of the BINUCOM project took place in the second week of February 2019 at the School of Planning and Architecture Vijayawada (SPAV) in their beautiful, newly constructed campus in central Vijayawada. Participants from all four Indian project partners and all three European partners joined the event, most of which also presented at the conference. External experts, researchers and practitioners were also present, including Dr Balvinder Singh, Prof Presanna Desai, Mr Ashok Lal, Mrs Sheema Fatima, Prof Jit Kumar Gupta, Mrs Anurima Mukharjee and Dr Panner Selvam who had key roles in the conference schedule.

The scholarly event kicked off on the 6th of February with an inauguration and conference dinner. Representatives of all seven higher education institutes were invited up on stage and form a panel: Mr Ravi Sannabhadti from CEPT, Ahmedabad, Dr Javier Martinez from University of Twente,

Netherlands, Dr Ebba Brink from Lund University, Sweden, Dr Tania Berger from Danube University Krems, Austria, Dr Minakshi Jain, director of SPAV, Ms Hiranmayi Shankavaram from KAHE, Coimbatore, Mr Ainsley Lewis from KRVIA, Mumbai, and Mr Nagaraju Kaja from SPAV, Vijayawada. A traditional lamp was lighted by the joint effort of the panel members, and these were thanked with flowers and framed gold plated certificates.

After introduction and welcome address by project coordinator Tania Berger and SPAV director Minakshi Jain, all panel members were invited to share their perspective on what BINUCOM had meant to them and their institution. The Indian project partners related how the three years in the project had allowed them to address the issue of informality and inclusion in a multitude of ways, including the time for teaching faculty to do empirical research and learn new theories and methods, engaging with community representatives, the development and in some cases implementation of new courses at the department, and engaging

students in both classroom discussions and field-based activities around the topics of informality, sustainability, liveability and disaster risk reduction. Meanwhile, the European partners highlighted the two-way learning process, how the project's meetings, site visits and review process has enriched their pre-existing disciplinary knowledge with new insights about the planning and architecture fields and the Indian context. In several cases they also had the opportunity to engage directly with Indian students in the different cities. They further emphasised how the detailed and diverse case studies which they have seen developed by the Indian teaching faculty during these years also form a rich material that they will be sure to use in their future teaching in Europe in disciplines such as sustainability and resilience.

The evening's programme was enlivened by the cultural programme prepared by SPAV students, including traditional Indian song and dance.



SPAV students showcase traditional Indian dance at conference inauguration



Traditional song by SPAV student at conference inauguration



Inauguration dinner

Reflections on a technical session

Written by: Amanda Elgh and Ebba Brink, LUCSUS

This is a reflection on the first technical session of the conference took place on the morning of 7th February on the theme of Resilience and Liveability.

The session took off with a presentation by Kimaya Keluskar from KRVIA Mumbai on her BINUCOM case study on liveability in informal settlements. The study included both technical aspects of liveability, such as the impact of building design on natural ventilation, and social aspects, such as vulnerability to heat stress of elderly and disabled citizens resettled into high-rise buildings. A key lesson for her was the idea of comfort and liveability, of “what is a good neighbourhood”, in the informal settlement was quite different than the usual target group. She also emphasised the role that ecosystem services and green infrastructure can play in planning interventions.

Next, Dr Karin Steen from Lund University, Sweden presented about the various ways in which gender influences notions of resilience and vulnerability. A feminist lens on the research process goes beyond counting the number of women versus men in knowledge and decision-making processes: it entails questioning “who can know, and what can be known?”. As a practical example, relevant to the issue of heat waves, she referred to an example from a settlement in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where women tended to spend their time in the (hotter) interior of the house, while men more often frequented the (cooler) semi-public areas in the exterior, leading not only to that women were more exposed to heat stress, but also that the men’s experience did not lead them to question the building design and the problem of heat.

Further presentations followed by Srinivas Daketi from SPAV, Vijayawada, who presented his case study on government interventions on hill slope

settlements in Vijayawada, and Dr Balvinder Singh, an invited expert with a background in sociology who shared insights from his ample experience of working with informal settlements. The session was chaired by Prof Presanna Desai and Dr Ebba Brink.

Taking stock of the session, a few reflections can be made with regard to resilience, vulnerability and liveability in informal settlements. It is clear that climate change will lead to a warmer and more unpredictable climate, with increased occurrence of extreme events such as heat waves, flooding, landslides, water scarcity, and heightened sea levels.

As we have seen in the presentations, informal settlements are particularly exposed to these hazards, for various reasons:

Lack of affordable housing forces people to settle in hazardous land such as hillslopes, close to water bodies, dumpsites or factories. ...
(cont’d on next page)

Reflections of a technical session (cont'd)

... The dense housing patterns in many settlements mean that natural ventilation is limited, fire can spread easily from one house to another, and when hazards strike, the limited access makes it difficult for residents to evacuate as well as for emergency vehicles to enter.

There are also political reasons that relate to the low priority and lack of services in informal settlement, for instance proper sanitation, and water provision - when water is scarce in the city, it is even scarcer in the slum.

Moreover, as Kimaya's and Karin's presentations have demonstrated, there also are differences *within* informal settlements, and even within single households, as to how people are affected by and how they act upon such calamities, based on categories such as gender, age, mobility, etc.

Two key messages stand out for the continued integration of issues of resilience to climate-related events and liveability of informal settlements into planning and architecture research and education:

First, as eloquently demonstrated by Dr Singh, the importance of mixing in social science and sociology, in order to not only *describe* problems at the superficial level, but to get to their *root causes*. While quantitative methods are useful for describing patterns and correlations ("what?" and "to what extent?"), qualitative and ethnographic methods such as interviews are useful for uncovering causal mechanisms ("how?" and "why?").

Second, is the importance of researchers and professionals to not only focus on the level of heat, thermal comfort or flooding that we can observe *today*, but to look to projections of what our climate will look like in 20, 50 or 100 years,

and combine those with people's everyday experiences from living in these areas, using the spaces and dealing with present hazards. Only by the *integration* of people's situated knowledge, and our expert knowledge as researchers and practitioners, will we be able to create relevant scenarios for the kind of future problems we urgently need to address in today's planning.




Kimaya Keluskar presentation





INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
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FEBRUARY 6, 7 & 8, 2019

School of Planning
and
Architecture

Vijayawada

Karin Steen presentation

Ex. 1 Gendering Climate Change

- The effects of climate change **is unevenly distributed** – **intersectional** perspective
- Different groups have different...
 - Understandings of the effects
 - Responses
 - Coping ability
- Examples of **water related** situations from Asian patriarchal societies in Sultana 2013
 - Both too much and too little water



Sultana 2011. *Suffering for water, suffering from water: Emotional geographies of resource access, control and conflict.* *Geoforum*, 42:163-172.

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Karin Steen presentation

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Balvinder Singh presentation



Panel discussion of first technical session