**NEW URBANISMS IN INDIA: URBAN LIVING, SUSTAINABILITY, EVERYDAY LIFE**

ES/K00932X/2

DR. SOPHIE HADFIELD-HILL AND DR. CRISTIANA ZARA

25.01.2017

**BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT**

The *New Urbanisms in India: Urban living, sustainability and everyday life* research project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (Reference: ES/K00932X/2), investigated the everyday lives of children, young people and their families living in a site of urban change in India (2013-2016). Three hundred and fifty people from diverse backgrounds took part in this research which set to explore interactions, issues and experiences of urban transformation. Three core thematic areas were pursued: i) everyday routines, mobility and access; ii) experience and access to nature and green space in a new urban development and iii) everyday experiences of internationalising principles of urban design. The project was led by Dr. Sophie Hadfield-Hill (PI) and Dr. Cristiana Zara both from the University of Birmingham, UK and was affiliated with Symbiosis International University, Pune.

India’s economic growth has been matched by rapid urban development in recent years – from visions to large scale urban infrastructures, India’s cities are undergoing change. This project was a unique opportunity to gather empirical evidence of the experiences, issues and needs of children, young people and their families, living in and moving through new urban spaces.

Lavasa, a new urban development currently under construction in the Indian state of Maharashtra, was the focus of the research. Located in the western Ghats, approximately 130 miles from Mumbai and 40 miles from Pune, this is a site of urban transformation, 1/5th the size of greater Mumbai (10,000 hectares of land). Conceived by the Hindustan Construction Company (HCC) and managed by Lavasa Corporation (a subsidiary) this is a private sector urban development initiative. According to the plans, upon completion, key features will include: i) ‘five self-sustaining towns with a permanent population of 300,000 residents,’ diverse accommodation types including ‘studio apartments, villas, affordable starter homes, rental … and workforce [housing]’; ii) an ‘integrated development [where people can] … live, work, learn and play in complete harmony with nature’; iii) a ‘dedicated City Management Services team’; and iv) award winning urban design ‘developed on the principles of New Urbanism’ (Lavasa, 2016).

At the time of research, Dasve the first of the five planned towns was near completion with construction work underway in Mugaon. The development since its conception and initiation of the build has been marred in controversy surrounding environmental land clearances (Datta, 2012) and an uncertain extended period of financial turmoil – having significant impact on people and place. At a time of significant urban change in India, this was an opportune moment to be investigating such a landscape, researching the lives of those who were living in, interacting with, moving through and negotiating a new urban life.

**METHODOLOGIES**

The methodological approach for this project was qualitative, collating a diverse range of data about the everyday lives of young people (aged 5-23) and their families living in a site of urban change. As Children’s Geographers, our approach enables children and young people to be key informants in retelling their experiences of urban change – through their voice, mobilities and everyday interactions. Grounded in ethnography, for an eleven-month period the researchers lived in the case study site (January 2015 – November 2015), getting to know what life is like for children and their families. Project methodologies included: individual in-depth interviews, guided walks, drawings, focus groups, community based workshops and the use of a research mobile app ‘Map my Community.’ Forty core families from a diverse range of social backgrounds participated in the project – the team conducted 170 interviews and engaged with 350 children, young people and their families.

**DIVERSE FAMILIES**

One of the primary aims of the project was to gather data on a diversity of experiences of urban transformation. Forty core families participated from diverse social backgrounds. Examples of this diversity included: i) families who lived on the land prior to the development, with ancestral links to the land and its past; ii) migrant workers and their families, who were contracted to work on the build; iii) students who had moved to the area for Higher Education; iv) families who had bought a villa or a flat; and v) families who were supporting the tourism industry, from hotel workers to restaurateurs and shop keepers.

**DRAWINGS**

Young participants (under the age of 10) were asked to draw a picture – ‘*Draw a picture to show a child in another country where you live.’* This method was used to introduce the young participants to the research project and to be used as a prompt in the first interview ‘*Getting to know you*’ – where the researcher and the participant would talk through the drawing to glean further information about their life and experiences of urban change. These drawings and narratives formed a key part of the data collection. 72 anonymised drawings are included in the archive.

**INTERVIEWS**

Core families took part in a series of interviews about various aspects of their everyday lives. The first interview focused on ‘*Getting to know you*’ and the second was in relation to mobility, going through the data collated from the mobile app ‘Map my Community’. During this interview, participants would be asked a series of questions about their data (tracks from the GPS) and using Google Earth they navigated around their tracks and spoke to the data. Interview three focused on access and experiences of nature and green space. 164 anonymised interview transcripts are included in the archive.

**GUIDED WALKS**

Participant-led guided walks were used to further gather data on mobility and everyday interactions with the natural and built environment. The guided walks were arranged with young people, either individually or in peer groups and they guided the researcher around their local area, prompted with questions. Typically, guided walks would last over an hour and would involve walking through the forest, taking familiar journeys and highlighting areas of the development participants liked or thought needed improving. During the monsoon guided walks were extremely difficult to organise, thus, these became ‘Google guided walks’ (using a laptop and Google Earth to navigate through and around where they live). This method had many benefits, including the ability to show the researchers other spaces of importance to them, which were often out of reach on a traditional guided walk (i.e. where the family collects water or an area of the forest used to collect berries).

**‘MAP MY COMMUNITY’ MOBILE APP**

The app, ‘Map my Community’ was designed as an innovative mapping tool to capture data on young people and their families’ mobilities, their access to services and everyday experiences of their local environment. Mobile technologies are being increasingly used as tools to support social research (Hesse-Bieber 2011; Ergler *et al.* 2016; Hadfield-Hill and Horton 2014), indeed the mobile app and the data collected was seen as part of the broader suite of qualitative methodologies. The use of the app builds on previous ESRC funded research (New Urbanisms, New Citizens: RES-062-23-1549) which used GPS devices to collect and visualise participant data. The use of a mobile app in this research was particularly innovative given the direct insight into social and spatial practices which the data yielded. The data gave extraordinary insight into everyday mobilities, marginal spaces and temporalities of life in a new urban development. The data revealed insight into everyday interior and private spaces and moments which are normally difficult to access in social science research, favourite spaces, family routines and habits. The app participants took part in a follow up interview about their mobility (Interview B). The mobile tracks are not stored in the data archive as these are Geo-tagged locations of young people and their families homes and routines. The app photographs are not shared in the archive due to anonymity.

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Photographs from the fieldwork (all those without people) are uploaded to the archive (117 photographs).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS** | **NUMBER OF TRANSCRIPTS IN THE ARCHIVE**  | **NOTES**  |
| INTERVIEW A – GETTING TO KNOW YOU | 61 | ONE REMOVED AS PERMISSION NOT GRANTED FOR ARCHIVING |
| INTERVIEW A+C – GETTING TO KNOW YOU AND INTERACTIONS WITH NATURE | 27 | ONE REMOVED AS PERMISSON NOT GRANTED FOR ARCHIVING |
| INTERVIEW B – MOBILITY AND FOLLOW UP APP INTERVIEW | 28 |  |
| INTERVIEW C – INTERACTIONS WITH NATURE  | 30 | THREE REMOVED AS PERMISSION NOT GRANTED FOR ARCHIVING |
| GUIDED WALKS / GOOGLE GUIDED WALKS | 18  | TWO REMOVED AS PERMISSION NOT GRANTED FOR ARCHIVING |
| **TOTAL** | **164** | OUT OF 170 CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **DRAWINGS** | **NUMBER OF DRAWINGS IN THE ARCHIVE**  |  |
| SCHOOL 1 | 20 |  |
| SCHOOL 2 – CLASS A | 18 |  |
| SCHOOL 2 – CLASS B | 11 |  |
| SCHOOL 2 – CLASS C | 9 |  |
| SCHOOL 3 | 14 |  |
| **TOTAL** | **72** |  |

**GUIDE TO ANONOMISATION OF THE INTERVIEWS**

All identifying information has been removed from the transcripts for confidentiality purposes. The following table shows the text which has been inserted in place of identifiable locations, school names and other confidential information.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [NAME OF SCHOOL] | Has been used for any school within the Lavasa catchment  |
| [NAME OF PLACE] | Has been used to remove locally identifying features – specific areas or regions within Lavasa |
| [IDENTIFIER] | Has been used to conceal specific identifying information |
| [NAME OF HOTEL / SHOP] | Has been used to remove identifiable shops / hotels / public places which would tie a person to a specific place |
| [NAME OF SIBLING] | To conceal the identity of another person |
| [NAME OF FRIEND] | To conceal the identity of another person |
| [NAME OF TEACHER] | To conceal the identity of another person |
| [INFORMATION REMOVED DUE TO ANONYMITY]  | Where a section of the data / discussion revealed identifying information |