

ISULabaNtu

Community-led Upgrading for Self-Reliance in South Africa

Integrated Construction and Environmental Management Systems in Informal Settlements

Newsletter – December 2016

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Project Summary

Across Africa, informal settlements struggle with poor housing, limited services and environmental hazards. Despite an increasing emphasis on participatory upgrading, communities are often constrained by lack of resources or technical knowledge to lead these processes, particularly when urban policies are designed and implemented without a clear understanding of local conditions. [ISULabaNtu](#) seeks to support communities by strengthening their capacity to guide urban development themselves. With a focus on Durban Metropolitan Area, South Africa, [ISULabaNtu](#) will undertake research, capacity building and community mapping, in collaboration with residents, to feed into the creation of an integrated environmental and construction management toolkit. The project will also explore how findings can be applied elsewhere. These activities will not only build the capacity of residents on community-led approaches to construction management and service provision, but also promote the creation of partnerships with other stakeholders such as local businesses, policy makers and academics.



Case studies: Piesang River (L) and Namibia Stop 8 (R) in Durban

The team is led by Dr Maria Christina Georgiadou from the [Department of Property and Construction](#), University of Westminster, together with Dr Isis Nunez Ferrera, Ben Fagan-Watson and Dr Pete Barbrook-Johnson from the [Policy Studies Institute](#) and Dr Priti Parikh from UCL [Civil Environmental and Geomatic Engineering](#). Colleagues from the [School of Built Environment and Development Studies](#) and the [Pollution Research Group](#) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal are led by Dr Claudia Loggia, Prof Chris Buckley and Dr Alfred Odindo. Collaborators from [uTshani Fund](#), a local South African NGO, are also part of the team and advisory services are provided by [EcoLtd](#), an independent consultancy focusing on international development.



What we've been doing in 2016...

Phase 1: Assessing the Local Context

As part of our first phase, our team at the University of KwaZulu-Natal conducted a range of scoping activities in Durban to assess the policy landscape and build a picture of key stakeholders. Initial fieldwork was also conducted in our case study sites.

Visits to Case Studies

In June 2016, the team visited each of the three case study sites - Piesang River, Namibia Stop 8 and Havelock – to meet the communities and learn more about their experiences. These visits were vital in planning later fieldwork visits.



Training with Community Researchers

In both June and November, the team held training sessions with community researchers in Durban. These community members are taking an active role in the project, supporting fieldwork and building new transferable skills.



Interview with Urban Transformations

In September, Dr Maria Christina Georgiadou (Westminster) was interviewed by [Urban Transformations](#) about our work. Read the interview [here](#).

Training on Participatory Action Research

We have delivered training on participatory action research methodologies to researchers in both London UK, and Durban, South Africa.



Event at Habitat III

We were delighted to hold a side event at the United Nations Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador in October.



At the event we presented some preliminary findings and held a panel discussion on upgrading challenges with experts including: Teddy Gounden (eThekweni Municipality), Dr Claudia Loggia (UKZN), Dr Isis Nunez Ferrera (Westminster), Beryl Mphakathi (Head of Human Settlements in eThekweni), Prof Marie Huchzermeyer (University of the Witwatersrand), Emily Mohohlo (SDI), Dr Maria Christina Georgiadou (Westminster), Dr Chris Buckley (UKZN), Dr Graham Alabaster (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Geneva Office), and Dr Zoleka Sokopo (South African National Department of Human Settlements).

Cont'd...What we've been doing in 2016...



Presented at ISOCARP congress

In September, Claudia Loggia, Judith Ojo-Aromokudu and Maria Christina Georgiadou attended and presented two papers at the 52nd International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) congress in Durban, titled: "An overview of top-down vs bottom-up models of informal settlement upgrading in South Africa" and "'Normal' informal living spaces in low-income human settlements in South Africa".

Community researchers of Namibia Stop 8 successfully complete their 1st Isulabantu training programme

As part of the coproduction and skills development approach of the project, the Isulabantu team delivered a training programme for 8 community researchers in Namibia Stop 8.



The training included class-room and learning-by-doing formats to build capacity around communication, negotiation and advocacy skills, as well as managing conflict and diversity, for urban development and neighbourhood improvement. This is the first of a series of community training programmes that will run throughout the project in three different neighbourhoods across Durban.

Phase 2 officially commenced in November

Dr Isis Nunez Ferrera and Ben Fagan-Watson from the Policy Studies Institute at University of Westminster began the Phase 2 fieldwork in Namibia Stop 8, one of the case studies of the project.



During 13 days, the team worked with 8 community researchers to co-produce knowledge with the residents on the drivers and challenges for community-led approaches for informal settlement upgrading. These activities included household interviews, interactive community events, focus groups and mapping exercises with residents, as well as meetings with local stakeholders. The findings from this fieldwork will provide key guidance for the coproduction strategy that will be implemented throughout the rest of the phases.





Plans for 2017 and 2018...

Continuing Phase 2 Fieldwork with Communities

In February 2017, the team from the University of Westminster will return to Durban to conduct fieldwork in the case study sites at Piesang River and Havelock.



Phase 3: Integrated Closed-Loop Environmental Management Systems

In May 2017, Dr Priti Parikh with Prof Chris Buckley and Dr Alfred Odindo will focus on the processes, partnerships and business models required to promote user-centric and resilient infrastructure provision in informal settlements.



Engaging with wider stakeholders

In May 2017, the team will work with local and national government representatives, and NGOs, to reflect on the experiences of communities emerging from fieldwork.



Phase 4: Construction skills enhancement

In May 2017, Dr Maria Christina Georgiadou will map the tasks and outputs required to build and manage each construction phase and the hard and soft skills required to meet specific project requirements within in-situ participatory upgrading processes.



Phase 5: Developing and Testing a Collaborative and Integrated Upgrading Toolkit

By 2018, the team will have brought together findings from earlier stages and use these to develop and test a novel [Collaborative Toolkit](#).



More information at...