



Settlement and Struggle on the
Buckingham Canal:
Working Class Histories of the City

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Case Brief

Settlement and Struggle on Chennai's Buckingham Canal: Working Class Histories of the City

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Case No 1-0005

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Reframing Urban Inclusion

The opening set of cases produced by IIHS represents a focus central to our institutional mission, its teaching and its practice: urban inclusion. Through an on-going collaborative, multi-year research project titled 'Reframing Urban Inclusion', the 30 cases available on the website, www.cases.iihs.co.in include original teaching and learning cases commissioned and produced at IIHS through support from the Ford Foundation.

The cases were curated to address a particular set of challenges. The first is pedagogical. IIHS' stated aim is to be part of a global moment to re-think urban theory and practice from India, South Asia and the Global South. These cases are a key curricular and pedagogical intervention within that effort. Distributed through open access modes to encourage widespread, public and diverse forms of use, the cases seek to give scholars and educators in the Global South a new canon to teach with, that begins from and is responsive to place.

The second is more outward facing. India is at a critical moment in its urbanisation. The urban agenda has begun to emerge strongly on the national political register, and questions of how to shape policy agendas from housing to employment, planning to service delivery, are more pressing than ever before. It is our hope that these cases will therefore equally be used by and inform an evidence-based, empirically rich, conceptually grounded and reflexive practice and interface with policy.

Since 2013, the project has brought together leading academics and practitioners from different disciplines to identify and contextualise social and economic realities of Indian cities through the case method. We hope that they will provide new evidence of the possible opportunities and mechanisms for urban integration as well as build a conceptual and empirical foundation for politically, socially, and economically inclusive cities.

The project has three thematic foci:

1. Conceptualising Pro-Poor Planning

Urban planning processes determine access to basic resources such as land, shelter and housing, livelihoods, mobility, and security. Inclusive urban planning is aimed at serving all the citizens of the city, reducing vulnerability and addressing exclusion from access to these basic resources.

Cases in this theme (1) untangle the current state of urban planning and its effects on vulnerability and exclusion, (2) explore how meaningful participation can be more effective in pro-poor planning, and (3) highlight opportunities for, and instances of successful integration across agencies and organisations involved in urban planning.

2. Re-visiting Settlement Upgrading

This theme seeks to expand and re-articulate debates on slums in India. The 'slum' is a form of an urban settlement that is situated at the intersection of land markets, new urban political economies, the efficacy of the state as a provider of housing to the poor, differentiated state-citizen relations, splintered urban infrastructure, questions of law, legality and planning, as well as conceptions of urban citizenship.

Cases in this theme (1) explore the processes of settlement and resettlement, paying attention to the market and political forces that shape the outcomes, (2) broaden the scope of settlement transformation from spatial upgradation to impacts on other sites of transformation such as livelihoods and employment, and (3) explore alternative imaginations of 'property rights' and tenure regimes.

3. Re-drawing the Picture: Metrics of Urban Inclusion

The dynamics of urban poverty and vulnerability are poorly understood. We know that the security of tenure, spatial coherence of urban infrastructure and service delivery, transit distances between livelihoods and living spaces, socio- cultural identities and social networks play important roles in inclusive cities. However, we have limited statistical data and information on the locational and distribution patterns of urban India.

Cases in this theme (1) examine the use of data in urban decision making and identify potential sites for intervention, (2) provide a more contextual and holistic analysis of urban dynamics, moving beyond sector-wise administrative data collection methods, and (3) emphasise improvements in information and learning from experience for local decision making.

IIHS Case Method

The IIHS case is a work-in-progress that represents experiments in different forms of creating interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral cases, as well as a diversity of pedagogical environments to learn and teach with these cases. The opening set of cases is, thus, also in a sense, an experiment in form and teaching modes. Given this, we do not claim a singular 'IIHS Case Method' or any one form or definition of a case. Indeed, one of the explicit aims of case development at IIHS is to challenge conventional ideas of what case-based learning is.

How then does a user know how to use cases? Pedagogical transactions will differ from case to case and indeed multiple options will be open within each case. Therefore, in order to aid users, all IIHS cases come with a set of consistent elements that help users navigate through the diversity of form and content. These are:

- **Preface:** Every case begins with an introduction by the case writer that describes their own approach to the case. How did the case writer frame the case? Why did they choose to structure it as they have? What were their intentions in writing the case?
- **Teaching Note:** The second shared case element is the Teaching Note. Here, the case writer lays out their imagination of how they would teach with the case in its current form. They suggest learning outcomes, pedagogical modes, learning environments and assessment frames. True to the diversity of the cases, each of these is particular to the case.
- **The Main Case:** This is the main body of the case—its core empirics, arguments, discourse and data. Across the cases, these come in different forms: PowerPoint presentations, audio-visual material, web interfaces, written text, and data visualisations.
- **Pedagogical Possibilities:** The next element lays out the case writer's suggestions on other ways in which the case could be taught, including in other disciplines or learning environments. These are not as detailed as the Teaching Note but offer a set of possibilities to the user to imagine other uses of the case than those laid out.
- **Case Archive:** The final element of the case is a library of documents—reports to interview transcripts, unedited footage to visual photo libraries—that act as an archive for the case. This repository allows users to also access a host of background and additional information necessary to navigate the larger contexts in which the case is situated.

Each IIHS case—regardless of the diversity of its form—comes structured with these elements. It is our hope that this recognisable framework will enable users to navigate easily across cases with very diverse elements and forms.

Case Note

Our original brief was to develop a case on 'slum resettlement' in Chennai, based on our work in the mass resettlement colony of Kannagi Nagar. Chennai is no exception to the trend across urban India of forced mass resettlement of slum dwellers as a repertoire of land acquisition strategies in contemporary urban spaces that leaves in its wake a kind of routinised violence. A substantial body of work including scholarly and journalistic articles, documentaries as well as policy briefs exploring the violence of resettlement has been published in recent years.

Yet how do we understand 'resettlement' beyond this contemporary moment and read it instead against longer histories of settlement? We wanted to step back and study the idea of 'resettlement' against the backdrop of the longer processes of how the working classes inhabit the city. We know that these processes are typically outside the 'plan' and incommensurable with the 'theoretical city.' They are disjunctive and non-linear, marked by gains and retrenchments, ebbs and flows. The question of our case then shifted to asking: if the twinning of settlement-movement and entrenchment-mobility work dialectically in the urban lives of working class households, does the current practice of their forced mass relocation to the urban peripheries represent a rupture in this long history, or does it unfold as another moment in this shifting articulation of urban space and the working class?

We thus set out to capture histories and ethnographies of working class settlement in order to create an archive of movement and the socio-spatial transformations they wrought on the city. As this introduction explains, this quest brought us to the Buckingham Canal. The canal is a 150-year-old engineered waterway cutting down the length of the city with its banks hosting the largest cluster of Chennai's slums. It is a stretch that is thus both geographically and historically central to the making of modern Chennai, as well as to telling a history of working class inhabitation. After mapping and scoping the spread of settlements that ranged along the canal's banks from north to south, we settled on three settlements (one each from north, center and south) to explore ethnographically. These ethnographies form the core of the case study, illuminating three different modes of place-making in Chennai.

As the study proceeded, the canal became a subject of interest in itself. Its long and checkered history of construction, maintenance and destruction—gleaned from archives, government documents and interviews with state officials—illuminates how an urban waterway figures in the changing imaginaries of the city and of the communities that live along its banks. The case thus also studies urban ecologies, showing how the canal and its banks become a part of the unfolding of settlements, livelihoods, and forms of governance in the city.

We believe that this case study offers rich material for a range of teaching situations—from an appreciation of the many ways in which land is settled and urban spaces are built and lived by working class communities, to insights into the historical trajectories and political negotiations

through which governance of urban land and water (and the limits of urban planning) are produced. We hope that it will also add nuance and a rich historical context to the idea of 'resettlement' so that our understanding of both forced mass relocation as well as a generalized mobility part of development is strengthened. Doing so, we believe, can aid in building located theories of inclusion in the city.

The Case and its Methods

This case study examines how Chennai's urban form, its living and livelihood spaces, and its ecologies have been shaped by working class settlements and mobilities. As in many cities, the contemporary social form of Chennai has taken shape through concerted movements of populations, both forced and spontaneous, across its spaces, forming settlements of various types. Dominant histories of Madras have sketched the city's historical formation from either statist or elitist viewpoints. The few accounts that track lower caste and working class spatial dynamics have focussed on histories of land-use and social geography in 18th and 19th century Madras. This study, covering a more recent chronological span of 70–75 years, from the 1940s to the present, attempts to trace in more detail the *processes* of settling and moving of the city's subaltern populations.

The potentially vast scope of such an enquiry is scaled down here by focusing on settlements along a single corridor—the Buckingham Canal in Chennai—which provides in many ways a metonymic lens on the city's character and processes of transformation. The case study thus employs ethnographic methods and oral histories in three communities along the canal—one each from its northern, central and southern sections in the city—to elucidate the 'hows' of land claims, home building, livelihood construction, and mobility pathways of the urban poor in Chennai. Apart from capturing the fairly diverse origin stories and early settlement narratives in these areas, the ethnographies also sketch transformations in the character of built space, the status of amenities, livelihood trajectories, and relationships with the canal. The underlying logic of this narrative is to demonstrate how contemporary drives of mass forced resettlement mark a disjuncture from the long histories of settlement, resettlement, and mobility that have constituted not only the lives of working class urban populations, but also the city and its geographies.

Historical processes of transformation of urban space involve dialogic engagements between people's claims and contestations and state categories and policies. An important project of this case study was, therefore, to capture the categories and concepts that residents of urban slums and working class settlements employed in working their way in and around the city.

The key questions explored in the ethnographies were:

- How does a low-income neighborhood get built? What are the historical processes that comprise the 'unplanned' development of the city? What are the determinants, enabling and constraining factors?
- How do these histories of settlement (through continuous engagement with the state) complicate concepts such as ownership, property, title, encroachment, and rights to urban space?
- How do the urban poor value urban spaces? To the extent that they have made choices (over time) to move or stay, what considerations and calculations shape their decisions to locate or relocate in/to various spaces? What are the categories and concepts they use to describe and value urban spaces?
- How do the urban poor perceive, represent and assess change both in terms of larger urban transformations, and in their own lives over time. In other words, how do they tell the histories of the city, its spaces, and their own locations within these frames?

The ethnographic fieldwork included:

- An initial series of 'scoping visits' to a sample of about 10 neighbourhoods along the canal, from north to south, concentrated into a period of 3–4 weeks. These visits were intended to provide a broad familiarity with the social landscapes of the canal at different points in its trajectory through the city, and to explore the canal as a corridor—to explore what broad connections and continuities, if any, existed among settlements along the canal. This exercise yielded 2–3 oral history interviews each with elders or longtime residents from many of these settlements, and suggested threads and themes to be pursued in greater depth through more focussed ethnographic work in selected communities. These scoping visits were also aimed at exploring whether there were individuals or groups interested in participating in the study as co-researchers.
- Intensive ethnographic fieldwork in three settlements along the canal, involving daily visits and 'hangout' participant observation, in-depth interviews, oral histories with residents, focus groups discussions with a range of groups, and mapping. A team of 2–3 researchers, including one lead researcher from the MIDS team and 1 or 2 interns from IIT or the Madras School of Social Work, spent about 2 months in each community.
- Elements of community co-research with members of these communities. This component was envisaged as being a central part of the methods of this study. However, despite substantial energy invested in this effort in the early months of engagement with the communities, it did not go very far. Not building sufficient rapport within the short duration of the study, practical difficulties involved in coordinating time schedules, and logistical issues made it difficult to sustain this

project. Some exercises in community mapping with children, youth and other groups were carried out, and in one area, photo stories about the settlement was created by a youth from the community. Although considerable interest was generated in the process of research as a tool towards making claims, particularly in the community of Hanumanthapuram, ultimately, this did not bear fruit. In this area, the youth were provided training on mapping as a part of this engagement.

A second part of the case study focusses on the canal itself. In exploring the Buckingham Canal as an expanded site for the ethnographic explorations of settlement and movement, we discovered that the canal was much more than a locale or a backdrop. It had its own history to tell, a long and chequered history of construction, maintenance, neglect, and destruction. The canal emerges as another central figure in this case study, a body that speaks eloquently of legacies of the engineering and governance of both urban nature and urban socio-economic opportunity in Chennai. The second part of the case study thus explores the trajectory of state interventions over time (along with its metrics and frames) on the canal and on the settlements along its banks. It tracks shifts in the state's relations with urban land, nature and the poor, yielding insights into the ways that political, economic or 'developmental' calculations and rationales have produced spatial and social outcomes along the canal. Questions addressed here, then, included:

- How have state agencies perceived and engaged with:
 - the Buckingham canal, its operations, maintenance and development, and
 - the urban poor and their housing needs, at different points in time since the 1940s?
- What were the processes, mechanics and politics of implementation of the different schemes adopted to address the canal's operations and maintenance, as well as the housing needs of the urban poor?
- When and how did the canal reach its current state of non-functionality? When and how did the current policy shift in favour of forced mass peripheral resettlement of poor families occur, and what are the rationales—stated and unstated—for this shift?
- What is the current state of contestation/debate about?
 - the canal and its revitalisation in Chennai, and
 - slum policy in Chennai/Tamil Nadu, as emerging at different nodes of the state?

For this part of the study, we relied substantially on:

- Archival sources, specifically a collection of Government Orders from the Tamil Nadu State Archives in Chennai, dating back to the 1940s.

- Reports, maps, policy notes, government orders, project proposals, aide memoires and memos from the Tamil Nadu Housing Board, Slum Clearance Board, CMDA, HUD, and other libraries.
- In-depth interviews with a range of state personnel, retired or incumbent, at various levels in the bureaucratic hierarchy, and from the various state agencies engaged in planning for the canal and for slum evictions and resettlement in Chennai.

Components and Materials

The primary form of the case study comprises an extended written report. This report comprises this introduction followed by two main parts. Part 1 consists of three ethnographic narratives, on the settlements of Woodwharf in north Chennai, Hanumanthapuram in the Triplicane area of central Chennai, and Neelangarai in south Chennai.

The case study of Wood Wharf in North Chennai tracks the transformation of this settlement from a collection of tents and huts erected on unoccupied lands used as wharfs by the Public Works Department, into a vibrant working class residential neighbourhood and an important hub of small scale manufacturing (primarily for a wide range of stainless steel and aluminium utensils). An excerpt of this section is presented in Exhibit 1. The settlement has also become a workplace and livelihood hub for thousands of casual as well as more regular workers, both from the settlement itself as well as from other working class areas of North Chennai. The case study describes the transformation of this 'slum' and delves into the memories, problems, challenges and aspirations of residents, workers and entrepreneurs.

The study of Hanumanthapuram, a now well-established settlement of Scheduled Caste families who migrated as a group to the canal banks in central Chennai about 60 years ago, explores the crafting of a 'respectable' community, and its associated norms and ideologies of mobility, gender and caste, morality, authority, and leadership. It illuminates these processes of identity-crafting through a discussion of the built space and its transformations in this settlement (Exhibit 2).

The study of Aringnar Annanagar in Neelankarai is an account of an enterprising community of low-income working class families, resettled from various slums of south Chennai, and more recently drawing an increasing number of north Indian migrant workers as renters to the area (Exhibit 3). This case illustrates the motivations, processes and struggles through which low-income working class families colonise new territories in the pursuit of bettering their standards of life. In this process they also become agents of urbanisation while challenging normative notions of planning, property, and urban development.

Part 2 consists of two Notes sketches the historical backdrop of the canal in the city and of slums in the city respectively. These notes serve to locate and contextualise the ethnographies of settlement which are the core of the study.

Both the Notes in Part 2 trace shifts over time in the state's perspectives and policies on the canal and on slums. Note A examines three frames in which the canal has been perceived and

debated by state engineers, managers and policymakers, and traces how these lenses and their intersecting visions have contributed to the death of the canal in the city. Note B provides an overview of state approaches to the problem of slums in Madras city, tracing how the state's stated commitments from the 1950s to 70s to improving slum conditions and accommodating residents within the city have been replaced with a commitment to market-oriented developmental and environmental projects that scapegoat slum dwellers as responsible for pollution and disorder of all kinds. The current policy approach to slums comprises concerted and mass evictions of slum dwellers from the city, under multiple laws and court orders invoking the public purpose of environmental restoration, and resettling them on the peripheries of the city in large-scale tenement projects. Important aspects of this moment of state-sponsored mass resettlement are:

- an increase in *forced relocations* of poor and working class populations since the 1990s, as opposed to a mix of in-situ and relocation efforts that had characterised slum clearance until then
- an increase in the *scale* of resettlement, wherein mass evictions involving several thousands of families to huge resettlement sites (of between 5,000 to 20,000 tenements) have become the norm, and
- an increasing 'scarcity' (real or artificial) of space in urban areas, yielding a higher intolerance of unauthorised settlements, larger numbers of slums classified as 'objectionable', and stricter norms for permitting slum improvements and housing rights for the poor within city limits.

Exhibits

Exhibit 1: Living in Uncertainty – the Constant Threat of Eviction

The residents of Wood Wharf have for several years known that their living situation is precarious. This is especially true of those living on the canal banks, whose houses, built of cheap materials, have not been upgraded due to this insecurity. But people in the residential streets also live in fear. Although, almost every family has invested substantial sums of money over the years to convert their thatched houses to brick and cement houses, their repeated demands for *pattas* have been denied. There is also a lot of confusion among people about whom the land belongs to. A majority of the people think that it is Central Government land while others say it is railway land. In reality, it is the Public Works Department that control the lands.

According to people here, PWD officials have threatened eviction on several occasions, and rumours about impending evictions also circulate at various points of time. All outsiders are regarded with fear and doubt, reflecting the sense of temporariness or uncertainty that people are living in. The last time that evictions appeared to be a real possibility particularly for residents on the canal bank was in early 2013, just before the last elections. Das, who works as a daily wage worker in Parry's, built a house close to the water in 2002. He said that they had been asked to go to the local office and their fingerprints and details were taken. "We were given a small slip of paper and told that we would be given a house. But they didn't tell us where," he said. Since then there has been no word from the Corporation or the PWD. Right next to his house, an older lady had built a small wooden structure which remained unoccupied. Das told us that it was built so that she can claim a token. However, many people feel that after DMK government lost power and the ADMK formed the government, these eviction plans were dropped. Ironically, the slum has been a stronghold of the DMK for several decades now. While many of the residents do not want to be resettled, they feel they will have no choice.

Some of the political groups in the area have strongly articulated their opposition to resettlement outside the city. The residents are knowledgeable about the conditions prevailing in Kannagi Nagar, Semmencheri, and other resettlement colonies in/outside Chennai. Kalaivani, who has worked as a domestic worker for a north-Indian family nearby, said, "We have heard that in Kannagi Nagar, women cannot move around freely after 6pm. Here, whenever we want, we can come back from work or go to a hospital. If we go there, we will lose our freedom." The most serious concerns are alienation and loss of livelihood. Murugan of the Indian Republican Party is vehemently opposed to relocation. "These are people who are daily wage workers and rely on this location to find work. If the government wants to relocate them so far away, they might as well kill them. Some people may be

enterprising and survive, but most families will be ruined as they will not be able to find work," he said. According to the Republican Party leaders like Murugan and Manimaran, the government must build tenements in the same area. Rajesh, a 21-year-old who has grown up in the area and works in a clothing store, feels that people would find even tenements undesirable. "I agree that the most sensible thing to do is to ask for tenements. People are somewhat fascinated by buildings but, practically, it would be very difficult for people to adjust to a multi-storey building. It will not be easy to climb stairs. They can't make any addition to the house," he said. However, the demand remains construction of in situ tenements.

Exhibit 2: Collectivisation and Resistance – Bargaining with Government and Local Political Groups

The manufacturers in the area have formed two associations. The TN Stainless Steel Utensils Manufacturers Association works exclusively for owners of stainless steel utensil manufacturing units and the TN Metal Manufacturers Industrial Society for manufacture of all types of metal utensils. According to Babu, who is the leader of the association, their primary work has been to solve issues relating to labour, payment of wages, and disputes relating to prices with the wholesalers, suppliers of raw material, etc.

The association also intervened on the issue of donations being forcefully sought by some local political groups. There is an undercurrent of tension between the owners and some of these political groups. Owners claim that in the past few years they have been threatened and coerced into giving large sums of money as 'donation'. Some groups asked for donations during festival times and usually the owners obliged. But as larger and larger amounts were being demanded by the Ambedkarite groups to supply school bags and free lunches, the association took a decision to stop giving donations completely. The North Indian owners claim that the locals ask them for more donations than the Tamil owners. After a few months, this issue was resolved through informal dialogue and some owners have now acquired the capacity to refuse donations or, in some cases, donate in kind.

According to local youth associated with the Ambedkarite groups, there were 'good owners' and 'bad owners'. Mani, who belongs to the Indian Republican Party, feels that local people who reside here have a sense of ownership of the area. "There are instances of owners objecting to planting of trees near their buildings or refusing permission to put up banners" he said. "This is after all our locality and, if they are doing business here, they should give back. They must not stop us from doing charitable activities by refusing donations," he said. "If they do, what other way do we have than to resort to *rowdyism*?" he concluded.

The Manufacturers Association is aware that the PWD may take back the lands which they now occupy. Nevertheless, it has been able to arrange for improved roads and lighting in the area with assistance from the MLA, and has been campaigning with the government to set up an industrial estate. Several leaders from ADMK and Communist Party of India have backed

their demand. While the residents have succeeded in sustaining any form of resistance to potential eviction, business owners have been able to secure and protect their interests through the Manufacturer's Associations.

Exhibit 3: Livelihood: Kamaraj

Kamaraj has been working since his early teenage years. Like many others, he worked in the steel polishing units and started out with a salary of Rs. 1 per day. But since he heard that many people who work in these units get tuberculosis, he changed jobs. He worked in a couple of plastic recycling companies in Vyasarpadi. In 1990, when he got married, he was earning a salary of Rs. 400 per week. He realised that he would need more money to support a family and obtained a loan from the state government to buy an auto rickshaw under the SC quota. "I have to pay Rs. 3000 per month to repay the loan but, for the last three years, I have not paid," he said citing the new meter system as reason for inability to earn money. If they (government officials) come to ask for the loan, I will ask them to take the auto back," he said. On an average, he is able to earn Rs. 500-a-day and, if he has to earn anything more than that, he would have to work past midnight. Even to buy school uniforms for his daughter, he took a loan of Rs. 5000 last week.

He continued to stress that auto drivers are facing a lot of difficulties. He said that after the meter system has been implemented, police harassment has increased. Even if they were caught for not wearing uniforms, the police would register a case against them for Rs. 200 or more. "Sometimes, people at home are ill and can't wash the uniform, and so we don't wear it. But the police never understand the auto driver's circumstances," he said. He used to belong to the Centre for Indian Trade Union (CITU), which is affiliated to the Communist Party of India Marxist, but, according to him, after their loss in the local elections and then a failed attempt to forge an alliance with ruling AIADMK party, CPIM has become weak and quite ineffective. The union's demand for the meter fare was Rs. 30 as a minimum and Rs. 15 per km, but now, the government has approved lower fares i.e. Rs. 25 minimum and Rs. 12 per km. According to him, almost 5,000 people had stopped driving autos after the meter system. "In fact, a fellow auto driver from another area was asking me to get him a job in one of the steel units," he said.

Given the circumstances, Kamaraj forced his son to drop out of school in the 8th standard and sent him to work. Initially, Manikandan worked in the steel polishing units but did not like the work. He now works in a two-wheeler mechanic shop near Vyasarpadi. Kamaraj feels that his son doesn't contribute enough income to the family. According to his sister Selvi, Manikandan would have preferred to continue his education. "I passed my 8th standard examinations, but my father forced me to work," he said ruefully.

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And finally, many thanks to Gautam Bhan for getting this case study going and for valuable comments, feedback and encouragement throughout the process.

Teaching Note

This case study can be taught in several distinct modules, either independently or as a part of larger courses. This note details 3 modules that can be taught as independent short courses (between 8 and 15 sessions of 90 minutes each, which can also be extended). The note on each module contains the break-down into sessions and topics, teaching method or transaction for each session/topic, and materials to be used.

Module 1

Spontaneous Settlement and Subaltern Urbanisation: Histories of Canal-Bank Neighborhoods OR 'Understanding Place': Glimpses into Settling and Building on a Canal Bank

This module can be taught separately or as part of a larger course. Here it is presented as a separate, 8 session module.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To help learners understand processes of urbanisation from the ground up, in terms of unplanned, spontaneously settled and autonomous development of residential and economic spaces in cities. How does urbanisation proceed in the absence of state, or in spite of state's plans and schemes?
2. To give learners a view of the diversity of urban poor settlements as they evolve over time. What are the different motives and compulsions that drive movement and settlement of working class communities in different areas? How do these shape the emergent character of a settlement, its social and economic features and its built space? (The contrasting character of the three settlements in this case study would provide insights into how different kinds of neighborhoods take shape over time).
3. To help learners understand the multiple and complex meanings of tenure security. How is tenure asserted and protected by communities that lack formal rights? (E.g., through schools, temples and other public/social infrastructure). What does tenure security enable, what enables tenure security?
4. To give learners an understanding of how key elements of built space and physical infrastructure take shape over time in a spontaneously developed neighborhood. E.g., why do some families build up vertically and some abstain? How do issues of privacy and adequacy of space figure in this process? What are the implications of the lack of space and privacy (e.g., is it linked to the high rate of suicides in Woodwharf area?)

5. To help learners explore different meanings of housing and home from the perspective of autonomous settlers. What is given priority over what? What insights can be drawn from the different housing patterns in each of the three settlements?
6. To help learners understand processes of building community and social institutions in autonomous settlements, including insights into different styles of leadership and sources of leadership, social conflicts and solidarity, and collective action.
7. To help learners gain insights into processes of building up local livelihoods and economies. How do different configurations of built space enable the creation of certain types of economies, or vice versa? How can we understand sectoral transformations (e.g., from the service to manufacturing economy in Wood Wharf) role of state/capital. Relations to other economies as a work site or housing for other workers, migrants, etc.
8. To help learners understand and analyse the role of the state in such settlements and processes. How the state's plans and schemes have been translated and mediated into what we find today (the 40 slums study)

This module will have 13 sessions including 3 debate/discussion sessions of 90 minutes each:

No.	Title/Theme	Content	Teaching Method	Teaching Materials
1	<p>Urbanisation of Chennai: A Social History</p> <p>This session will walk through the history of urban expansion in Chennai, the processes through which migrant populations found their hold over urban space and the manner in which governance institutions have tried to grapple with this inflow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonial city or a collection of villages? • Post-independence growth • Filling in—the process of filling vacant land and water bodies • Slums and their discontents: State policy towards informal neighbourhoods • What causes slums? A discussion 	<p>45 minutes Lecture</p> <p>10 min Q&A</p> <p>30 minutes Discussion</p>	<p>Part 2 Note B of Main Report: Canal and its 'slums'</p> <p>Old and new photos of Chennai</p> <p>Maps of Chennai water bodies (then and now)</p> <p>Maps of Chennai slums</p> <p>Statistics on slums, slum improvement schemes, etc.</p>

2	<p>From Commerce to Industry: The case of Wood Wharf</p> <p>This session will give an overview of the Wood Wharf settlement, highlighting key elements of the case that are crucial in unraveling the larger story.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The canal economy: how it became a wharf • The decaying canal and transforming economy • Land, labour and capital in the new manufacturing economy • Housing insecurities in wood wharf • (add other relevant content) 	<p>Lecture based on extracts provided in advance by the facilitator</p> <p>Discussion (45 minutes)</p>	<p>Extracts from PWD interviews and materials on death of the canal</p> <p>PWD documents on land and industry</p> <p>Photos of work and housing</p> <p>Other relevant material</p> <p>Extracts from ethnography</p>
3	<p>Cultivating a Community: The case of Hanumanthapuram</p> <p>--do--</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The origins • The rise of a leader: why, how and when • Protecting land: negotiating with state and securing tenure • In pursuit of respect: rules, norms and leadership • Building up or walling in: housing from a gendered prism • Life after the leader: continuities and changes • (add or delete topics) 	<p>Discussion (45 minutes)</p>	<p>Extracts from Ethnography</p> <p>Photos</p>
4	<p>Aspirations and Enterprise: The Case of Neelangarai</p> <p>--do--</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The search for land: why, where and how • Wrestling land: hardships, conflicts, burdens (a gendered narrative) • Building a neighbourhood: physical 	<p>Discussion (45 minutes)</p>	<p>Extracts from ethnography</p> <p>Photos and maps</p>

		<p>infrastructure and collective efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproducing labour: migrants' second wave • Of aspiration and enterprise: multiple economies, land as capital. 		
5	<p>Patta: Living without it</p> <p>What does it mean to not have a legal tenure, how does it influence housing design and social relationships, how do people pursue it, what other measures do residents take to claim their space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing insecurity and built form • Finding other documents to claim residency • Mobilising to gain <i>patta</i>. • Alternative mechanisms to gain basic services 	Using extracts from interviews and field notes on the theme, each group (one for each site) will share insights from their material	Learners, divided into three groups (one for each site), would extract sections pertaining to the theme from the interviews and field notes. They will use the case study as a guide in completing this task
6	<p>Patta: Living with it</p> <p>What does having a clear title enable in settlement? What changes does it bring to the uilt form as well as social relationships?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land as capital • Maximising housing space: going upwards • Incremental improvement • Impact on local economy 	--do--	--do--
7	<p>Would Guaranteed Tenure Security Provide Solution to Perpetual Housing Crisis?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should <i>pattas</i> be given to long term encroachers? • Impact of in situ housing on urban planning—who gets priority? • Merits and demerits of in situ provision of tenure rights • Challenges to such a policy 	<p>A moderated discussion on provision of tenure security</p> <p>(like an assembly debate on policy)</p>	<p>Reports on housing policy</p> <p>Experience from other areas</p> <p>Critical reading from ethnography</p>

8	<p>Slums: Vibrant Economies or Poverty Sinks?</p> <p>This session will look closely at the variety of income generating measures adopted by residents in informal settlements, whether such initiatives bear fruit or whether there is a poverty trap that keeps such spaces as poor neighbourhoods. What policies and interventions can be made to improve economic mobility?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do economic activities take shape in informal neighbourhoods (the big, the medium, and the petty) • How do informal neighbourhoods drive the city's economy • Poverty vs mobility within informal neighbourhoods (comparison between the three sites) • State's role in shaping these economies—legal and administrative role, infrastructure provision, etc. 	Lecture cum discussion using examples from the ethnographies	Use extracts from case study and oral histories (by learners)
9.	<p>Working in Poverty or Working out of Poverty: A Discussion on Urban Informal Economies and Urban Poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What forms of urban economy provide mobility to families? Why are there working poor? • Can cities be truly free of slums? 	A moderated debate on urban informal economy (Group Discussion)	
10.	<p>Building Neighbourhoods Incrementally</p> <p>This session deals with the manner in which residents in diverse urban informal settlements build up their space over time, incrementally. What does it do to the built form?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do informal neighbourhoods evolve, what is built and how? • What factors shape built form of housing, common space and public space. • How do informal neighbourhoods gain access to basic services? 	Lecture using interviews, photos and diagrams	<p>Photos</p> <p>Diagrams of built space</p> <p>Community maps/investigator generated maps</p>

	How do factors such as the local economy, identities, and legal status affect built form and how do communities gain basic services over time.			
11.	<p>Shaping Urban Communities</p> <p>This session deals with the formation of communities, the internal fissures and fractures that develop, the factors that forge a collective spirit among individual settlers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key factors in forging urban communities (Shared goals, shared threats, identity and community, social and physical proximity, leadership and associations, rituals and festivals, time) • Diversity of urban communities • Physical infrastructure and neighbourhood communities 	--do--	--do—
12	<p>The Multiple Facets of the State</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State as a threat: Rent seeking, evicting, interfering • State as an arbitrator among various interests: councillors, police, line departments. • State as a provider of basic services • State as a source of legitimisation and illegality 	Lecture cum discussion using examples from the ethnographies	Use extracts from case study and oral histories (by learners)

13.	From Informal Neighbourhoods to Formal Slums: a Discussion of Resettlement Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merits and demerits of resettlement policy • Is resettlement viable and sustainable • Cost benefit of the resettlement method to urban planning. 	Moderated discussion on resettlement policy (debate format)	Articles on resettlement policy, nationally and in Chennai.
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Module 2

History of an Urban Engineered Canal

Key Concepts: Vestigial Urban Installations, Failed Infrastructure, Urban Ecologies

OVERVIEW

The Buckingham Canal in Chennai City is a testament to the liminal status of old infrastructures rapidly expanding and transforming metropolitan cities. For almost half a century now it has been non-functional as far as its original purpose of inland navigation goes. Like other urban waterways (rivers) in the city, it is a sluggish and polluted stream of sewage and other toxic effluents. Also, like urban rivers, its banks have, for at least a century, hosted large numbers of dense settlements and small industries.

Yet, the canal is not like other urban waterways, in that, it is not a natural but an engineered body. It is an infrastructure project with a strong functional and economic purpose, expected to yield returns. Projects to revive the canal are not framed as eco-restoration, but as infrastructure enhancement ones.

However, the current state of the Buckingham canal within Chennai city confounds such efforts. Canals typically serve to link and network segments of waterways, and while the Buckingham canal was historically envisioned and constructed as a long channel interconnected with a series of waterways and waterbodies all the way from Andhra Pradesh to Tamil Nadu, the segment of the canal within the city has now been cut out and written off from current projects to revive the canal. What does this conundrum say about the fate and future of urban water infrastructures? What can a study of its history of maintenance reveal about this?

This module would use the failure of the canal as an engineered navigation channel to open up the multiple ways in which an urban waterway may be conceived and acted upon by various sets of stakeholders. The module would attempt to frame engineering projects within a historical and socio-political frame (of governance). Learners would be guided in looking

backward from an existing urban waterway to the plans, dreams and debates that accompanied its career up to the current moment. In particular, this module would examine how state metrics and rationalities, planning priorities and blind spots, which sanction some purposes and uses of the canal and not others, may have contributed to the failure of this canal. The module would also explore the implications of the canal's failure as a navigation channel, and raise questions about what its current survival in the city might mean.

OBJECTIVE

To provide an understanding of how and why engineered infrastructures fail, and to explore the after-lives and other lives of this body as a part of the histories of the metropolitan present.

To explore what a historical lens on the building and maintenance of the canal by the colonial and postcolonial state can tell us about water infrastructures and governance by different kinds of states.

Additionally, the module would address the following questions:

1. Can an engineered waterway serve as an urban natural resource, a part of the urban ecology? What role can/has the Buckingham canal played in the ecological life of the city?
2. Can the canal be said to be 'surviving' in some way in Chennai, and if so, in what way? What explains the canal's enduring presence in the city today?
3. What does the canal's history tell us about Chennai's urbanisation process?
4. What insights does this case throw on inland navigation as a mode of transport in cities? How does this canal compare with other IWT systems in the country? What factors—scale, size, location, nature of markets or commodities—would seem to make a difference?
5. What insights does the case provide on how waterways are treated in urban governance?

THE TRANSACTION

Eight sessions of 1.5 hours each:

No.	Content	Mode	Materials
1	<p>A Failed Navigation Canal in Chennai: The 'Dead' City Segment.</p> <p>This session will introduce the story of the canal as an inland navigation project, ending with its declared 'failure' within the city, and setting the scene for analysing the urban segment of the canal as distinct from the rest of the waterway.</p>	<p>Presentations: video, slideshows, accompanied with lecture.</p> <p>Followed by discussion.</p>	<p>- Video journey down the canal, showing landscapes and features.</p> <p>- Slideshow on the canal's locks, bridges, interconnections, its stages of construction.</p> <p>- Slide show on current conditions on the canal</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The geography, ecologies and structural features of the canal: its locks, bridges, and interconnections with rivers and lakes. 2. Zoom in on the Chennai segment of the canal. Slideshows will present the damaged condition of the canal. 3. An introduction to the early history of the canal: how and why it was built, its stages of construction, etc. 4. Proposal of the Inland Waterways Authority of India for revival of the canal, and its plan to exclude the Chennai sections of the canal, as it is dead. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The role of inland navigation in cities—then and now. 		The case write-up (Part 2 Note A)
2	<p>Insights from History: State Metrics on the Canal.</p> <p>This session will give learners a glimpse into the ways the state viewed, discussed and debated the canal and its maintenance and operation from the 1950s on.</p> <p>Discussion points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What were the challenges in maintaining and operating the canal? - How did the state's metrics influence the outcomes on the canal? 	Small group discussions (Package of materials given for reading in advance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extracts from Mayor Krishnamurthy's book - Old GOs. - Transcript of interview with retired PWD official - Transcript of interview with retired planning official - Case Part1.
3	<p>'Developments' on the Canal: The MRTS.</p> <p>This session will focus on one specific state metric on the canal—i.e., as open lands for development of road and rail corridors. It will examine the process of planning the MRTS along the canal, and the outcomes of this development.</p>	Group discussions (Package of materials given for reading in advance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extracts from MRTS planning documents - Press clippings on MRTS plans (and protests?) - video call/session with urban activists on the proposal, execution protests, and current status
4 and 5	<p>Settlement along the Canal.</p> <p>This session will explore settlement along the canal banks primarily in terms of the state's</p>	Lecture/slides how followed by small group discussions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Old GO (1975) on slum improvement plans along the canal.

	<p>metrics on 'the problem of slums', and its responses in a historical frame.</p> <p>Discussion and learning points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why do migrants and the urban poor settle along banks of waterways? - How does 'the problem of slums' get constituted and change over time? - What metrics and measures has the state historically employed to tackle this problem? - What kinds of transformations do such settlements undergo over time? 		<p>- Case Part 2 Note B: 'The Canal and its "Slums"'. Transcripts of interviews with retired Slum Clearance Board and Planning officials.</p>
6	<p>The Current Life of the Canal</p> <p>Despite its hopeless conditions, the canal is still alive in some form. This session will discuss the current role of the canal in the city.</p>	Discussion	<p>-Part 2 Note A: The Dubious Canal -Press clippings on the canal</p>
7	<p>Debate: Can the Need for Affordable Urban Housing be Reconciled with the Need to Preserve Ecological Resources of the City? If Yes, How? If No, Why?</p>	A group discussion on the theme of ecology and urban land use	Case study notes, policy documents of government
8	<p>How can Planning be Made More Sensitive, Inclusive and Effective?</p>	A seminar format discussion with each learner presenting a paper based on readings and experiences (from the current study as well as other studies)	<p>Notes on Buckingham canal by policy makers Other reading materials to be selected</p>

Elements of the above module can also be extracted for teaching in other courses. For instance, in a course on Urban Transportation, the above case can be used to highlight the challenges of inland waterways transportation in urban contexts. For this, sessions 1, 2 and 3 above can be condensed into a single or two sessions.

For a course on Urban Ecologies, the above module can be used to highlight the special case of navigation canals and the governance challenges they pose. Here, sessions 2,3,4 and 5 can be condensed.

Module 3

Methods and Skills in Urban History: Practical Insights from Fieldwork

This case was developed through active field and archival research carried out by a team comprising both relatively inexperienced student interns and more experienced research assistants and faculty. Therefore, it offers a valuable opportunity for learners to study methodologies, skills and techniques of research in urban histories through exposure to the research *process* as documented in the notes and reflections of team members.

Specifically, this case would contribute to skill building in qualitative research by offering learners an opportunity to critically engage with the package of raw materials generated in the course of the study—fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and personal reflections on method by those on field. The materials for this module have been deliberately selected to reflect a range of fieldwork styles, levels of competence and confidence, practices of note writing, and modes of data gathering and documentation. They include hesitant field notes from the interns' early scoping visits, annotated transcripts of long oral history sessions, and analytic/reflexive meditations on the fieldwork encounter.

Thus, this module offers learners access to a rare body of research-in-progress materials that not only document the evolving insights of fieldwork, but also reveal the learning process of young researchers in the field. Rather than teaching about 'ideal' tools and techniques in qualitative research and oral histories, then, this module would enable learners to learn from the struggles, choices, compromises and innovations of the always imperfect practice of research and fieldwork, including the challenges of entering and negotiating the Archives. It also offers lessons from failures small and large, from sketchy attempts at field-based mapping, to the overall failure of our attempt at community co-research.

Since each package of materials has culminated in a case study report, the module also offers learners a chance to critically analyse the different ways in which these raw materials have been/could be synthesised, analysed and reported. And finally, it addresses questions about different ways of disseminating research findings among various publics, including the communities researched.

OBJECTIVES

- To expose learners to various methods, techniques and tools in the study of urban histories, and to provide insights into their limits, challenges and possibilities.
- To allow learners to engage with qualitative data (in the form of reports, field notes and oral interviews) and critically explore the move from description to analysis.

- To facilitate an understanding of various modes and media for sharing and disseminating findings with various publics.

This module will comprise 8 sessions of 60–90 minutes each:

Sl. No.	Theme/Topic	Teaching Method	Teaching Material
1.	Introduction to Qualitative Research What, why and how: A quick overview of qualitative research (QR) and its main features.	Lecture/discussion	Reading materials from books
2.	Design in Qualitative Research Moving from a topic of interest to a research design. Framing questions, defining the scope, determining a sample.	Discussion using notes from the methods package	Notes and reports of investigators
3.	Entering 'The Field': scoping, building rapport, picking up clues, casual interviews, identifying themes.	Study and discussion in small groups using materials identified.	Notes from early field visits.
4.	Ethnographic Engagement: sticking with the field, iterative contacts, expanding themes, using different tools of data collection (focus group discussions, ethnographic interviews, observation), note taking.	Same as above	Selected packages of field notes and interviews from case studies
5.	Building the Narrative: deepening insight, cross-checking and triangulating	Same as above	Same as above
6.	Oral Histories: Insights from the Field What, why, how? Key elements, scope, limits and challenges from practice.	Discussion using selected oral history interviews	Same as above

7.	<p>Archival Research:</p> <p>Experiences from archives; what is and is not available, how to access.</p>	<p>Discussion using archival material (this session could be co-taught with the IHS archives team)</p>	<p>Use selected archival materials from the study</p>
8.	<p>Dissemination</p> <p>Who are we publishing for, in what forms, what are the stakes? How can we remain accountable to and include respondents in the publication and dissemination of the research?</p>	<p>Discussion from notes and reports by investigators</p>	<p>Reports and notes of investigators</p>

Accessing the Full Case

The full content of this case is open-access and downloadable at www.cases.iihs.co.in.

The full content of this case includes the following documents:

Folder A: Introduction to the Case

Terms of Use and Agreement

Reframing Urban Inclusion

IIHS Case Method

Preface Note

Teaching Note

Folder B: Main Case

Narratives

Part I: Settlements and Struggles on the Canal Ethnographic Sketches

From Salt to Steel: Life and Work in Wood Wharf

Crafting a Respectable Community: The Politics of Caste, Morality and Authority in Hanumanthapuram

Hustling for Property: Emergence of an Entrepreneurial Community in Neelankarai

Notes

Part II: State Perspectives on the Canal and its Settlements

Note A: The Buckingham Canal in Madras/Chennai—Notes on a Dubious Waterway

Note B: The Canal and its 'Slums'—A Historical Mapping of State Policies on Slums in Chennai

Folder C: Case Archives

Government Documents

Interview with Government Officials

Maps of Buckingham Canal

Photos of Buckingham Canal

Field Materials

Hanumanthapuram

Neelankarai

Woodwharf

Press Articles

Index of Field Note and Interviews

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About the Author

Karen Coehlo is an urban anthropologist who received her Ph.D in Sociocultural Anthropology (Minor in Applied Anthropology) at University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA. The doctoral research concerned questions of neoliberal reforms in urban water provisions in South India, titled: *Of Engineers, Rationalities and Rule: An Ethnography of Neoliberal Reform in An Urban Water Utility in South India*.

Coehlo's teaching case is a result of her wide ranging work on the urban anthropology of Chennai. Her work on the subject has resulted in a number of opinion pieces, conferences organised around the politics of the Buckingham Canal at the Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS). Coehlo is currently an Assistant Professor at MIDS where her work also focuses on reforms in municipal governance, informal labor, urban ecologies, and urban civil society. She teaches modules on History of Development Thought and Ethnographic and Qualitative Methods at MIDS.

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