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21

# The urban planning fragility of the in-between city



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TRIA

## Ethnography of Ecology of Organizations in Planning Bhubaneswar City, India

*Sasmita Rout*

### *Abstract*

This paper is a discussion of ‘doing organizational ethnography’ in Bhubaneswar, capital of the state of Odisha, India. Ethnography of the organizations involved in planning is possible because of the trust and acceptance among agencies that are enquired. Doing ethnography in urban spaces are a few and yet interesting with the complex and multiple realities. Evidences states that my identity being a student, a female, being an unknown person and my regional identity or belongingness, language and caste identity; and the ongoing issues and problems in the field mattered to the respondents; to either reveal or conceal the information. Interactions and trust building became easy because of regional and as well as caste identity. Some complications arose due to lack of trust and murder cases and frequent thrives happening in the field sites.



*Living in a city- a co-production*

Professional identity helped me inside the State agencies than in the neighborhoods. Being reflexive and understanding the context helps in reducing resistance and non-cooperation of the respondents through continuous interactions, and in-turn allows for getting better and in-depth meaning and information.

**KEYWORDS:**

*interview, urban, ethnography, planning, implementation*

**Etnografia dell'ecologia delle organizzazioni nella pianificazione della città di Bhubaneswar, India**

Questo articolo riporta l'esperienza della realizzazione di "un'etnografia organizzativa" a Bhubaneswar, capitale dello stato di Odisha, in India. L'etnografia organizzativa è possibile solo grazie alla fiducia e all'accettazione delle varie realtà che vengono coinvolte nella pianificazione. Sono in pochi a praticare l'etnografia in spazi urbani interessanti da realtà complesse e molteplici. L'esperienza ha dimostrato che la mia identità di studentessa, di donna e, essendo una persona sconosciuta, la mia identità regionale o di appartenenza, lingua e identità di casta si sono rilevate importanti per gli intervistati al fine di rivelare o nascondere l'informazione. Le interazioni e la costruzione della fiducia sono diventate facili grazie all'identità regionale di casta. Alcune complicazioni sono sorte per mancanza di fiducia e di casi di omicidio frequenti soprattutto nei siti di campagna. L'identità professionale mi ha aiutato sia nelle agenzie statali che nei quartieri. Essere riflessivi e comprendere il contesto aiuta a ridurre la resistenza e la non cooperazione degli intervistati attraverso interazioni continue e, a sua volta, consente di ottenere un significato e informazioni migliori e più approfondite.

**PAROLE CHIAVE:**

*interviste, città, etnografia, pianificazione, implementazione*

## Ethnography of Ecology of Organizations in Planning Bhubaneswar City, India

*Sasmita Rout*

### Introduction

Until I was planning and writing my Ph.D. thesis work, I was excited to begin the fieldwork for my research. Choosing the field site and the respondents was based on the research question and the nature of problem of the research. Bhubaneswar (see figure 1) is one of the early planned cities of independent India. Several planned interventions have been made by the planning agencies at individual and organizational level such as by Otto H. Koenigsberger, a German planner and architect, Bhubaneswar Regional Improvement Trust (BRIT), Directorate of Town Planning, most importantly in 1980s by Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA), and recently by IIT, Kharagpur, an outsourcing agency in combination with BDA in the year 2010 and many other internal and external agencies through different schemes, projects and mission programs such as Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), Smart City Project intervention by the Central government in the year 2005 and 2015 respectively. Despite such interventions Bhubaneswar is no different than any other cities in terms of unplanned growth, issues of infrastructure development, unhygienic and filthy conditions, loss of natural habitats, loss of natural slopes and continuous increase in the number of slums. Yet regional importance of Bhubaneswar has remained on hold. This is reflected in the rapid expansion of the city both horizontally and vertically and creation of a network in urban space as a capital city region i.e. Bhubaneswar and Cuttack Urban Complex (BCUC). Besides Bhubaneswar and Cuttack cities, BCUC comprises major townships such as Khurda, Jatani, and

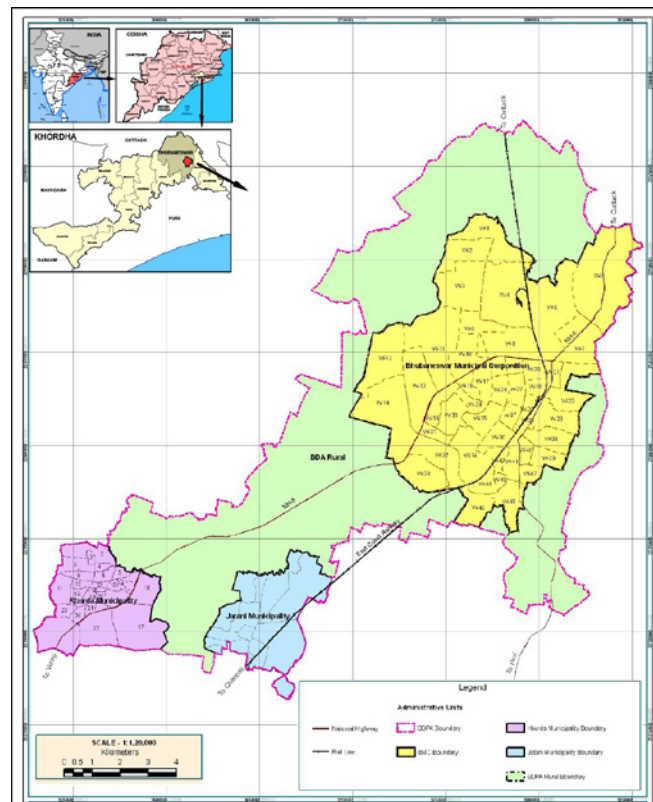


Fig. 1 – Location and Area Covered under Bhubaneswar Master Plan, 2010.

Pipili under Bhubaneswar Development Plan Area (BDPA, see figure 1) and Charbatia, Baranga, Mundali, Bidanasi, Choudwar, Chhatisa, Nirgundi, Nimapur, Sikharapur and Gopalpur under Cuttack Development Plan Area (CDPA, see figure 2) cutting across the neighboring district boundaries. Not only physical expansion, immense socio-economic-cultural transformation in the city has also been observed especially with the increasing migration for better education, medical and other facilities, and rapid expansion and conversion of land uses (Government of Odisha 2013a, 2013b; Rout 2010; Pradhan 2013; Lewandowski 1981).

One can observe the multiple realities of the city with multiple situations and contexts. With the continuous flow of information, money, goods and services, everyday realities





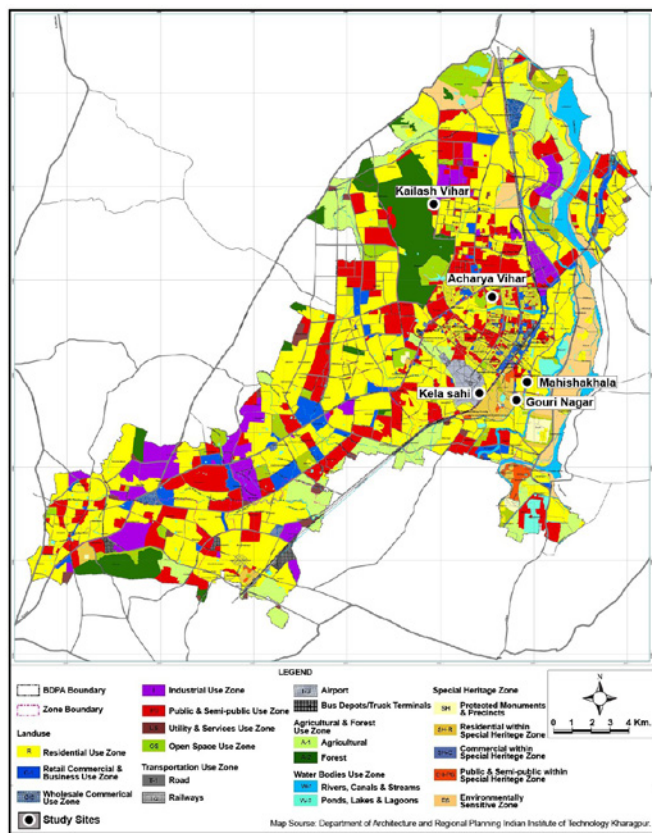


Fig. 3 – . Location of Neighborhoods Selected for Field Work.



Fig. 4 – Flooded Gourinagar (after the water flowed down).

Organizations), finally I had five neighborhood organizations (see the locations of neighborhoods in figure 3 and refer table 1) and a bunch of parastatal agencies that I wanted to enquire. My puzzle is ‘how the local scale organizations work for the implementation of master plans?’ Doing ethnography means that there is no single way to approach the field. For this research I needed to stay for a prolonged period with the respondents and observe them and understand the issue(s) closely as well as build trust and acceptance among the respondents. Ethnography also allows reducing the gap between the researcher and those being researched (Cresswell 2013). I settled myself in one of the neighborhood called ‘Nayapalli’ based on the convenience for communication and my prior familiarity with the place. I had already visited Bhubaneswar many times and explored all possible sources of secondary literature that includes selected parastatal agencies concerned for planning the city, and the local libraries such as Odisha State library, State Archive, State Assembly Library, Centre for Youth and Social Development library (CYSD) and Kedar Gouri Trust Library.

Other than information focusing on planning and development in Bhubaneswar, libraries such as National Institute of Rural Development, National Library, Kolkata were accessed to get special books and biographies written on Bhubaneswar that basically talks about the history, mythical stories and religious beliefs and practices on Bhubaneswar (Praharaj 2015; Pradhan 2007; Mohapatra 2005; Mohapatra 2001; Mohanty 1982). A few texts were on the people’s experience on the physical and social transformation of Bhubaneswar. Newspaper clipping collected from Odisha State Achieve for the duration 2000-2012. These sources gave a detail understanding on the recent problems in Bhubaneswar such as frequent floods (see figure 4 and figure 5), increasing slums, lack of solid waste management, loss of natural forest cover as well as water bodies, and issues of land use conversion (Pradhan 2013; Pradhan 2014; Mohanty 1987, Mohanty 1990).

Planning in a city incorporates the entire city space. In between spaces such as slums, poorly developed neighborhoods, converted neighborhoods from villages, or authorized slums with legal ownerships are supposed to be part of the planning processes. But Indian urban planning legally does not have space for the slums because of the whole idea of ‘citizenship’ that in turn explains about “who gets what and why”. As slum dwellers do not have any land or house ownership in the city space, they do not get counted in the master planning preparation and implementation processes. But slums are also part of the cities. They do contribute through informal economic activities and also providing services to the residents, which is otherwise difficult. Therefore, it is the



moral responsibility to include slums- the in between spaces in cities to be part of the planning process. Many urban villages which are yet to be completely urbanized, in fact many of them are seen as slums because of the deteriorating conditions compared to the surrounding planned neighborhoods. This kind of phenomena are common in the peripheries that often takes decades to be considered as urban. Similar stories are found in the old cities, which have grown organically with no planned infrastructures, buildings, narrow roads and no drainage and sewerage facilities. These in between city spaces are insecure, uncertain, fragile in character. They have been paid less attention in the planning process. Planning has to include those spaces to become inclusive, effective, and efficient in addressing all sections of the city space, is yet to be achieved. Relevance of the context is in terms of the need for planning the neighborhoods instead of implementing the centralized planning that focuses on certain sections of the people, certain parts of the city and many places have never been incorporated in the planning process. It is in this context I am focusing on reading the relationships between planning and the urban neighborhoods.

For understanding functional mechanism and work practices of the neighborhood organizations, pilot study of a Resident Welfare Association called 'Methodist Colony Welfare Association', circle V and Ward No. 6 of Municipal Corporation, Hyderabad helped me to see the feasibility and appropriateness of choosing the Resident Welfare Associations and Slum organizations as case studies. Moreover, because of the active engagement of this RWA in Hyderabad, pre-field pilot visit aided me to look for the possible dimensions that can be explored in the field site at Bhubaneswar. The aspects that have been focused includes organizational structure and work practices, practices of inclusion and exclusion, perception of the residents on their own community, membership, the relevance of the neighborhood organization, process of communication and translation of the problems and issues both with the external agencies and with their own residents.

I was able to access files and official planning documents including master plans, minutes of several meetings of Board of Inquiry, High Level Steering Committee, and letters that are exchanged among organizations concerned on planning the city. In addition, I understood the processes and functions of BDA, plan preparation, plan implementation practices of BDA, co-ordination among different government and private organizations particularly consultants for housing, road, parks and other developments. Information on Resident Welfare Associations and slums helped in decipher status of neighborhood organizations in Bhubaneswar and became the starting point for understanding functioning of the organizations and their role in the processes of plan implementation. In RWAs I was allowed to attend their monthly meeting but in slum organization being an outsider I was strictly asked not to attend the meetings. This prevented me in getting some information on functioning of slum organizations.



*Fig. 5 – Flooded Acharya Vihar.*



Despite this ethnography of neighborhood and concern state organizations helped me understanding the networking of organizations, their structure, processes and functions in relation to planning the city and its neighborhoods (Ybema et al. 2009; Ghertner 2015). In the next section I have explained the perspectives of different agencies in planning.

### **Inquiry to Agencies' Perspectives**

Three different sets of actors were enquired in the process of data collection. This includes 9 planners and 19 officials/technical assistants from various organizations that are engaged in planning activities. Further, detail information on distribution of the respondents is given in table 2. I explored the experience, opinions and perceptions of planners and official involved in planning the city because of the knowledge and professionalism they hold in planning the city. Personal interviews with officials were to understand planning in Bhubaneswar city, significance of BDA in planning, and to verify information gathered from several reports on Bhubaneswar planning and development. My ethnography with the organizations and planners was more of a confessional and

<b>Organizational affiliation of respondents</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Gender of the respondents</b>
BDA	6 Planners, 3 technical assistants	1 female, 8 males
BMC	1 planner, 1 technical assistant, 3 Corporators, 3 CDPOs, 1 OAS as slum improvement officer	3 males, 6 females
DTP	2 planners, 3 technical assistants	4 males, 1 female
SUDA	2 officers	1 male, 1 female

*Tab. 2 – Distribution of Respondents in Organizations.*

an advocacy stance. My intension here is not to advocate ethnography or qualitative approach rather to explain appropriateness of an in-depth enquiry.

Further, Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and field note of my own observations in the field was maintained. Triangulation with archival information, minutes allowed to check the potential self-reporting and retrospective biases in the interview evidences. These semi structure interviews, discussions and observation helped in generating a case narrative depicting operating context, organizational processes, development, its structure and practices of Bhubaneswar Development Authority and the neighborhood organizations under study. Respondents' body language, gestures and expressions gave me many clues, confusion, questions for further interests. This attempt has helped me assessing states' perspective towards planning and development of the city. After several interactions with planners, residents I conclude that despite numerous private interventions have been made at different scale yet city planning has remained State

centric. Both in plan preparation, plan implementation and decision making State holds the power. Planning in practice has been functioning in fragments. In reality concerned planning agencies also work separately and many times their jurisdictions overlap. Therefore what we need is collaboration among the planning agencies with other state and non-state agencies that include people as well. It has been realized in literature that coordination is the key for better plan preparation and implementation (Kumar 2000; Sami 2012, 2013; Saxena and Vijaykumar 2014). I believe that the need of the present practice is to accommodate more collaboration over coordination. Consent and consensus making, acknowledgment of arguments and disagreements instead of only idealizing agreements and avoiding disagreements needs to be included for an effective plan implementation. There is also need to foster direct discussion, keep the interests and opinions open and fair, and share the responsibilities in permutation and combination. These possibilities may sound impossible, not real and ideal, but in practice these will create a lot of differences both at organizational level as well as between the state, non-state agencies and the people.

Interviews with the planners states that there is a dominant and ideal ideology of the planners, which is often law/act based, over emphasized on technology, lack of concern for the poor particularly the slums, though slums are widely acknowledged for their contribution to the city development. Planners have heterogeneous perspectives on city planning and development yet there are many points of intersection. They had specific ways of expression using components like distance, proximity, encroachment and unregularized development. One can see the physical reality of the space been reflected in the planners ideology. What about social, economic and political space? How to read people/public in the planning space? Planners have explained that the public is too wide to take up in the decision making in planning process. That is why planners are reluctant to engage with the diffused public interest. So it is natural to question planning as the dualism of human and physical geography is well reflected. Instead of seeking convergence, planning is still sectoral and functions in fragmentation. Besides the planners I have enquired multiple other state and non-state agencies and all that confirms the reality of top-down, technocratic, expert driven, centralized and lack of interest in public. In next section I discuss about the information that I have collected from some of the key informants of Bhubaneswar city.

### **Identifying Respondents through Snowballing**

Identifying planners, officials and technical assistants involved in planning was based on their positions and involvement in planning activities. Yet, there are planners who are retired and currently in several positions such as Mr. Sudarshan Sahoo who is appointed in Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) for implementing centrally sponsored Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) project is one of my respondents through snowballing. Further, I interviewed key informants from the city such as independent planner Dr. Piyush Ranjan Rout from Local Governance Network (LGNet), a NGO



based at Bhubaneswar, and retired Secretary Mr. Nalinikanta Panda (currently he is the president of Citizens Apex Association, a locally based NGO) from urban development department who are currently actively participating in planning activities. Their position, experience and their active engagements in the planning process in Bhubaneswar city helped me understanding the current planning practices, deviations, role of BDA and BMC, transformations in Bhubaneswar, the practical implications of RWAs and the slum organizations in developments of the city.

To understand processes and functioning of neighborhood organizations, individual interviews were held with 218 residents from three Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs: Kailash Vihar (39 respondents), i.e. Gourinagar (43 respondents) and Acharya Vihar (51 respondents), and two slum organizations (Mahishakhala (53 respondents) and Kelasahi basti (32 respondents). These interactions revealed relationship between/among leaders and the residents, intra community conflicts, dominance and resistance of the residents in the neighborhoods.

Field sites were selected using snowballing techniques. Field sites of RWAs and the parallel bodies in slums were chosen from different parts of the city to look whether the spatial characteristics of the city has any connection to the difficulties planning have in translating ideas and knowledge. Attempts were made to understand how the neighborhood organizations differ from planned areas to organically grown unplanned parts, old city versus the new planned city, and between old neighborhood organizations and new neighborhood organizations. These three indicators are to explain differences in neighborhoods due to spatial relationships, nature of the neighborhoods and nature of the problems in the neighborhoods.

In the interviews with the residents I covered aspects such as origin and transformations of the neighborhoods, relevance of the neighborhood organization, aspects of participation and representation, sharing of information, functioning of the organization, communication mechanism within the community and with the external organizations. Besides that interactions were made to get information on social relation in the neighborhood, leadership, membership (owners/rentals/long stayed rental people), role of elected representatives, common place management, limitations of the existing organization, and conflict management. These interactions helped me to explore aspects of inclusiveness, processes of conflict resolution, building mutual understanding, and mediation.

Questions differed from interviewees to interviewees based on the comfort level of the interviewee. Questions also got changed with the settings and with the people whom I have interacted because of internal differentiations and the kind of engagements of the respondents. Through interview I identified problems and issues that the inhabitants face in the locality and need for planning. Besides the physical infrastructures such as road, means of communications, drainage, sewerage, solid waste disposal, market space, common place for gathering and meetings, residents do have problems of socio-cultural conflicts, safety and security especially for women, old and children. In addition, despite continuous effort, lack of cooperation and collaboration reduces the

possibilities of resolving problems. But importance of neighborhood organization in translating issues and concerns of the neighborhood is realized across the city. Further, I found despite difficulties, active and direct participation of the residents was the key in resolving neighborhood problems through organizational activities.

Semi structured questionnaire was prepared but respondents were asked directly without following the questions sequentially because of the reluctance in responding for long time. As stated earlier, number of interviewees differed from one field sites to other and purely that was based on availability and accessibility of the interviewees and size of the neighborhood. Interaction with the executive members was the entry points to start the field work in all neighborhoods. Snowballing technique was used to reach the people by taking reference from one to other. That helped in getting different perspectives as well as different issues that are very much internal in nature and rarely discussed upfront. In some cases such as Gouri Nagar snowballing didn't work, so I approached directly to the residents.

Slum sites have offered opportunities to speak to the people in group besides one to one interviews. Interview method, observation and informal interactions however proved valuable in understanding significance of neighborhood organizations and their functioning in detail. Narratives of the residents have added to the facts exists, explained the complexities, expressed local resident's perspective and understandings on the reality.

### **Interviews with Citizen's Forums**

To get a larger picture on the role of the citizen's forum, three executive members each from the Confederation of Resident Welfare Associations and Basti Mahasanghas (slum unions) were interviewed. They are the parallel bodies that functions at the upper hierarchies of the RWAs and the slum associations respectively. But these two different organizations are not well connected to individual associations respectively. Confederation of Resident Welfare Association and the Basti Mahasanghas have built alliances with state in different city level issues especially in sudden rise of power tariff, transferring lease hold of housing to free hold, tax hiked 5 times than the previous tax structure based on Orissa Municipal Act 1950 by the BMC that concerns to the citizens (Barik 2011). These agencies have suggested ways of slum rehabilitation like building permanent transit house to accommodate slum dwellers temporarily before resettling them without much loss to the people. Though not consistently but they are involved in the decision making process of BDA, BMC and other parastatal agencies such as electricity board. Basti Mahasangha which has been split into five associations function differently for different areas concerning to their own issues especially on displacement and rehabilitation of the slums. Neighborhood organizations illuminate stakeholders' linkages between different organizations at multiple levels. Evidences have suggested that neighborhood organizations have established effective sharing and use of information, and foster a two-way communication between the state and the people.



### **Ethnography of Ecology of Organizations**

In social sciences generally, doing ethnography means the researcher must present in the field and understand the internal perspective of the members and the field in terms of particularizing everyday life (Ybema et al. 2009). As we know standard ethnographic writings are often on community, society, groups, culture and organizations, for example, studies on race and tribes (Shagrir 2017) and caste and ethnography in urban space (Pullanna 2017). Based on ethnographic research many studies have been done on (boundary) organizations (Yagi and Jill 2011; Parker and Crona 2012). As a pre-requisite I have visited field sites in Bhubaneswar to build familiarity, trust and acceptance among the respondents in various state organizations and non-state agencies such as LGNet, Citizens Apex Association, Confederations of RWAs and Basti Mahasangha, neighborhood organizations to understand the planning mechanism in the city. BDA may be the only authority to prepare and implement master plans in Bhubaneswar city. But for any of its action BDA has to comply with multiple organizations across the scale. No organization involved in planning a city works in isolation. But there is no clear organizational design, rather a network of state and non-state organizations that works for planning the city.

My identity being the student of University and also continuous visit to the organization helped in developing an easy acceptance by the planners and officials in turn helped in getting in-depth information. One common observation across the state organizations was officials were very conscious in each statement they make, while retiree officials were comfortable in expressing their ideas and understanding. But interactions with neighborhood organizations and the residents was more with my familiarity with the language, and the locality and the caste I belong. Though a few respondents asked directly about my caste, but I realized often many of the respondents asked my surname and covert to know my caste. For instance, in Kailash Vihar, Mr. G.N. Swain, a retired clerk from Utkal University and a resident of Kailash Vihar allowed me to enter his house and had long discussion on the subject matter because we both are Kshatriya (warrior caste) and he was happy as a girl from his caste is pursuing higher education and well qualified. There are cases when I was accepted by the respondents because I belong from the same caste and community, so was able to have a detailed and long conversation. There are instances, because the respondent shares the same locality that I belong, I was able to access official documents of the neighborhood organizations. Therefore, because of sharing same caste and locality, it was easy to build trust and acceptance by the respondents. Unlike villages, in urban context, more than caste, it was their fear of me being with an unknown identity may harm them and that remained an obstacle for me in collecting the information. It took a while to establish their trust on me as a researcher in each neighborhood. Therefore, my identity did matter to the respondents, to either reveal or conceal the information.

Major constraints were the difficulties in getting people's co-operation partly due to the frequent crimes that are happening in the central part of the city especially in Acharya

Vihar and Gouri Nagar and also sparse growth of houses in Kailash Vihar in the relatively suburb of Bhubaneswar city. I conducted interviews and discussions either early in the morning (before 9 a.m.) or between 4.30 p.m. and 7 p.m. in RWA colonies. But in slums I could meet respondents in the evening time, to avoid clashes with their working hours. I however could not stay for expanded period of time in the neighborhoods especially in slums for personal safety. I have read or even heard from many people that slums are unsafe, theft cases are frequent, full of drunkers and one cannot stay long in slums for its unhygienic reasons. Though I found many confirming realities, yet residents in slums shares common interests, have frequent interactions and more affinity than the RWA neighborhoods where rarely people interact or spend time together.

The field exercise was carried out with an objective of having accounts of residents on functioning of neighborhood organizations, and obtaining narratives and subjective experience of the planners and other respondents on the functioning of Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA). They were enquired about the general understanding on the functioning of the organizations as well as issues and problems pertaining to planning. These wide ranging accounts were subsequently organized in themes such as significance of the organizations, structure and functioning of the organizations, reasons behind failure of planning, and possible improvements in planning. Group discussions allowed me to observe joint efforts put forward for the development of the neighborhoods. However, one-on-one interviews reveal internal conflicts, areas of discriminations, differentiations and ideological issues within the neighborhoods.

Most of the interviews I have conducted with slum dwellers are in open spaces like veranda of houses, or community hall, mandaps (a high outdoor place for public meetings, rituals and celebrations, see figure 6) and common gathering places. On the other hand, in RWA colonies such as Acharya Vihar, I was able to conduct group discussions with the executive members in the community hall. But rest of all interviews happened individually. Locations were chosen based on the convenience of the respondents. There are several instances especially in RWA neighborhoods, where the respondent (often women) used to stand behind the grill of the house with a distance that I will not be able to reach her physically even if I want. They did not allow me to sit inside the house. But they had conversation and discussion with me for the required duration. Even after confirming my identity and in some cases they kept photocopy of the official letter that I used to carry, yet they did not open the gate for me. There are also instances where being a woman researcher I was insecure and avoided the possible sources of information for my personal safety. For instance, in Acharya Vihar, to have interaction with the respondent, who was the previous president of the Acharya Vihar Parishad and a retired government Engineer, I had to pass through three gates with high security checking, which was highly unexpected for me. More than their security, I was more insecure inside while passing through all the gates that used to get closed immediately I passed the gates. Later in some cases deliberately I avoided the source of information that I felt

*Fig. 6 – Common space for meeting, Mahishakhala.*





uncomfortable with.

Sometimes previous experience, socio-economic conditions and educational status of the respondents decides their trust on the researcher. For instance, often respondents in slums perceived me as a government agent and asked if I can help them in getting benefits from government schemes and programs such as listing their names in RAY for housing facilities. I had to convince the slum dwellers that financially I cannot help them as I am researcher and do not have any affiliation with government. Contrast to this, in RWA neighborhoods I did experience difficulties in confirming my identity being a researcher in some cases only. In fact, I was able to interact with Ex- Member of Parliament of Rajya Sabha (Council of States), who are residents of Acharya Vihar, retired professors from Utkal University, and state sahitya academy awardees. Personal experience of the expertise guided me back to history of creation and establishment of Bhubaneswar city, politics of the planning process, transformations over the years, dominance of Bengali community in the construction of buildings and roads during the new capital city formation, religious practices within the city, difficult transport and communication facilities, and many stories of wild animals, forest cover and clean water bodies and streams in Bhubaneswar. Besides the historical dimension, the respondents were also open in discussing the mechanism that shapes their neighborhoods.

At times, it was difficult for me to handle respondents when they were uncooperative and wanted to cross check on what their fellow neighbor has told on different issues. In Acharya Vihar, a neighborhood under study, one respondent refused to provide any information as I did not agree to share information that other respondents have given me on a particular issue. I also found that convincing the respondents for interaction is difficult in places where there are local conflicts. However, continuous interactions helped me to avoid hesitation of the respondents. Sometimes long informal interactions with the respondents helped to obtain their confidence and cooperation and even information on internal conflicts, besides problems in their neighborhoods.

Respondents were also reluctant to answer me because they feared that by disclosing information they might fall prey to the internal conflicts of neighborhood. Women respondents in RWAs avoided responding more than women in slum neighborhoods. This may be because women in RWAs have lack of direct interaction in organizational activities. Women respondents of RWAs often suggested that to speak to their son or husband or otherwise leaders of the neighborhood. On the other hand, women in slums were actively participating and they are often leaders, and take part in decision making process. They are empowered especially after joining Self Help Groups (SHGs), are financially intermediate committees and that constitutes women members of the slums. Further, women who are born, brought up and married in the same slums have greater say compared to women who married off from other places. Initially, building mutual trust and to have continuous interaction was difficult. As the field work progressed, I learned and undertook several refinements in the process of gathering information. The five cases however were different in terms of organizational set up, functionality, external communication and interactions. Therefore, though there were similarities, yet they all

tell different stories of their functioning and processes of communication and neighborhood development.

## Result and Discussion

The above mentioned interactions and discussions however proved valuable in giving me an understanding on participations of local residents and organizations in planning across the city. Information gathered from various parastatal agencies helped me in selecting the neighborhoods. Five neighborhoods from various locations of the city have different issues and different problems. Typically, every neighborhood has problems or issues that are unique to their neighborhood, besides a few issues that are common to all neighborhoods, say on, in-access to basic amenities (see Table 1). Issues pertaining to poor drainage facilities and security dominate the neighborhood of Acharya Vihar. Gourinagar, is located in the old Bhubaneswar city also has poor drainage facilities. Issues such as lack of minimum basic facilities in Kailash Vihar, no supply of drinking water, poor internal roads, serious problems in the collection and disposal of sanitation and lack of electricity provision plague the two slums -- Mahishakhala and Kelasahi (see figure 7, figure 8, figure 9 and figure 10). Besides the physical infrastructure problems, neighborhoods encounter social issues, such as home alone elderly residents, thefts, murder (though infrequent), security of women, children and elderly. Neighborhood organizations are developing conditions to resolve, or at least minimize, the intensity of these problems at the neighborhood level. Rarely neighborhood organizations work in cooperation with other neighborhoods, even for the issues that are common. There are exceptions when neighborhoods cooperate each other for reciprocal development. Many issue-based cooperation among neighborhood organization has been found. Residents across the neighborhoods acknowledge the importance and necessity of an organization, especially to communicate, to foster bhaichara (brotherhood, to develop sense of community building), and to get connected with external agencies for better and effective plan implementation.

Whether it is planners, or officials or residents, all of them agreed differently that there is need of active participation of the agencies in planning process. It is reflected in the languages, expressions of the planners and people that organizations or agencies are working in silos. Therefore, coordination and collaboration need to be effective in networking these agencies of multiple scales. Decentralized planning practices need to be realized at each scale nested in the geographical reality. Situation and context differ from place to place. Planning must include the realities into account in all stages of planning includes plan preparation, implementation, monitoring and re-



*Fig. 7 – RAY implementation, Mahishakhala*



*Fig. 8 – Waste collection ground, Kelasahi*



*Fig. 9 – Common Bathroom, Kelasahi*



*Fig. 10 – Drinking water facilities, Mahishakhala*

planning. Otherwise, development that rooted in planning continues to fail in addressing the problems, issues and interests of the people and the city.

In this paper an argument has been put forth for ‘solving’ urban problems by an institutional design that facilitates dialogue among scientific experts and those with experiential knowledge, but the emphasis was on methods and methodology in knowledge building. The realization of this challenge is by drawing the ‘neighborhood organizations’ as intermediate agencies between the state agencies with non-state agencies and the people. The measures instituted by the neighborhood organizations bridges the gap between wide ranging agencies and organizations includes the state, non-state agencies, residents of the neighborhoods and most importantly even disagreeable. As a platform neighborhood organization is widely accessed. Neighborhood organization identifies problems that are unique to their neighborhood and have a constant interaction with the residents for identifying multiple issues or problems, put attention on priority based problems, and constantly work on maximizing (active) participation in turn makes the organizational structure and processes inclusive. Taking the case of Bhubaneswar city, the paper has come in favor of neighborhood organizations at the local scale shapes the preparation and implementation processes of planning. The study has been based on detailed ethnography of neighborhood organizations, used informal interaction and semi-structured interview methods and also brings in narratives of the residents into account.

Planned areas both within the municipal corporation area and in the suburbs remained in privileging conditions because of the elite connections while recently developed areas in the peri urban, slums and unauthorized areas are neglected in the planning processes. Master plans often do not consider organically grown areas or areas without land or house ownership. In this context in between spaces like slums have been neglected or paid no or less attention. Especially in Indian context when we have cities like Mumbai with more than 50 percent population of the city resides in the slums, and most of the cities above class I categories have slum population, planning those spaces become important. Bhubaneswar is no different than any other cities as it is a class I city, capital city as well as a city of regional importance. Therefore, growing slum population with increasing migration is a high possibility. Instead of dreaming for a slum free city what we need is to have a continuous interaction, negotiation and consensus making for a better, effective and efficient city space.

## Conclusion

Collectively, this paper discusses the reasons for selecting Bhubaneswar for exploring the research objectives and methodology and methods employed to gather data. The paper also gives insights to do ethnography of ecology of organizations as no organization can function in isolation. In this context, existing literature centralized on the organizational aspects of planning, sociology of organizations, and approach to see



the city being an inclusive space drawn from the understandings on organization and its associated concepts help in in-depth exploration. But the most important point is the reflexivity of the researcher, researched and the respondent play a vital role in deciding the subjectivity of the research. I realized connecting the container of the content of the research cannot stand alone. Hegemonies in the field are of one kind of source of information but one must look beyond for the varieties and multiple realities that shape the space. Further, other than methodology or methods of gathering information, it is the subjective and dynamic field reality that decides the nature of data or information and variations in the information as well. At the end, it is whose reflexivity that matters. This in turn decides the research objective and question/s, and thus research result naturally differs.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Please refer “Koenigsberger (1952)” for further details on the first master plan prepared for the city based on ‘neighborhood planning approach’.

<sup>2</sup> BCUC was named in the draft vision plan 2030, prepared by IIT Kharagpur, an outsourcing agency, in the year 2007-08, which is getting materialized through the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) 2010 for both Bhubaneswar and Cuttack respectively.

<sup>3</sup> RAY functions under JNNURM was meant to provide houses for the poor particularly slum dwellers. But implementation of RAY did not work out for many, rather made many dwellers homeless due to poor construction, for many the construction remained in half way and many dwellers are still in hope that they may live a better life with the implementation of RAY. But in reality, RAY did not make much progress in reducing the housing scarcity across Indian cities. Implementation of RAY has become a story of manipulation, difficulties and also a hope for many slum dwellers (Kundu 2013; Das and Bhise 2016).

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