India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) NRF Cooperation

Comparative Case Research Workshop

Summary of Discussions and Proceedings

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Introduction

From 28 to 30 March 2011, the African Centre for Cities (ACC) hosted delegates from Indian, Kenyan, Brazilian and South African higher education institutions to discuss the potential for comparative case research between the four countries. The meeting was arranged through the National Research Foundation’s (NRF) India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) programme for cooperation in Higher Education, which seeks to promote cooperation between respective academic institutions, faculties, researchers, and students, based on lasting institutional arrangements and joint research projects. Kenyan delegates participated as part of the Mistra Urban Futures partnership.

The meeting broadly aimed to:

- Clarify the research profiles and objectives the various institutions involved;
- Identify any areas of common research interest;
- Work towards the development of a collaborative case research proposal, for the purposes of attracting funding support.

In addition, the meeting was framed within the general goals of:

- Increasing empirical knowledge of nuanced urban practices and processes, as they actually happen in cities of the global South;
- Producing knowledge and information for teaching and learning, and to influence urban policy and practice;
- Responding to the overall agenda of building a body of theory from the South and redressing the global imbalances in the production and exchange of knowledge.

Participants were drawn from the following institutions (please see Appendix A for a full list of participants, their affiliations and email contact):

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tr>
<td>African Centre for Cities</td>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>University of Cape Town</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Urban Observatory</td>
<td>CUO</td>
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<td>Association of African Planning Schools</td>
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<td>South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gauteng City-Region Observatory</td>
<td>GCRO</td>
<td>University of the Witwatersrand; University of Johannesburg</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<td>Maseno University</td>
<td>MU</td>
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<td>Kenya</td>
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<td>Bondo University College</td>
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<td>Indian Institute for Human Settlements</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>Federal University of ABC Region</td>
<td>UFABC</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
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<td>Observatório Das Metrópoles</td>
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<td>Federal University of Rio de Janeiro</td>
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Discussions over the three days demonstrated a general commitment to promoting South-South theory building as a means of contributing to a ‘global learning process’ and addressing imbalances
in global systems of knowledge production and circulation. Comparative case research was affirmed as a useful means of building a body of urban theory rooted in the nuanced empirical processes of Southern ‘cityness’. It was also seen to have a potentially effective role in pedagogical and curricular innovation. The educational and learning benefits of a collaborative and comparative case project not only include the use of comparative or shared case material in teaching, but also the sharing of innovative teaching approaches.

Several shared themes of analytical interest emerged during discussions, including comparisons of historical processes of governance reform and institutional rupture in the South, as well as more ‘reflective’ cases of the discursive production of cities and city-regions through, for example, data management and narration. The importance of producing emblematic or meta-cases was further highlighted for their pedagogical utility and comparative theory-building capacity. Another important topic related to experiences of establishing ‘urban observatories’ as a basis for comparative research, and of successes and failures in network building and research cooperation.

Ultimately, debates and agreements pointed towards the huge potential of constructing a collaborative programme between the Brazilian, Indian, Kenyan and South African institutions, with a trialectic focus on learning, research and promoting reflexive urban practice.

**Day One: 28 March 2011**

The workshop started with welcomes and introductions by Edgar Pieterse (ACC) and Nancy Odendaal (AAPS). Prof Pieterse described the institutional structure and overarching objectives of the ACC. The ACC CityLab projects are rooted in the premise that cities of the global South require a different approach to knowledge construction. Standard academic procedures for the generation of knowledge are simply not appropriate for meeting contemporary urban challenges. To this extent case research is particularly useful, as it may allow for a more open-ended knowledge production process.

Nancy Odendaal briefly introduced the AAPS and explained the purpose of the workshop. Three broad workshop objectives were noted: Firstly, to clarify the research profiles and objectives of the various participating institutions; secondly, to identify areas of common interest for comparative case research, and thirdly, to produce a proposal for the purposes of securing future funding. Dr Odendaal further pointed out three broad areas in which knowledge production through comparative case approaches can be useful:

- Contributing to an improved understanding of the empirical realities of highly complex Southern cities;
- Producing information for use in teaching and policy reform;
- Promoting the redress of global imbalances in the production and circulation of knowledge.

The introductory presentations were followed by questions and discussions. Major issues arising included the following:
• The potential of the narrative approach for learning and influencing urban practice: Anecdotes and stories are still powerful means of generating and transferring knowledge. The narrative can also be used as a means of bypassing some of the issues relating to post-Enlightenment disciplinary constructions (i.e. promoting interdisciplinary research). Yet the question remains, how does the transformative power of the narrative differ across cultural contexts?

• **Interdisciplinary research** is important for generating knowledge about highly complex urban environments, and for promoting a more holistic and reflexive mode of learning. Constructing and writing interdisciplinary cases is notoriously difficult, nevertheless planning and urban theory could be greatly enhanced through engagement with other professions and case approaches.

• The learning issue, centred on the question of how thinking about or planning for learning processes should ‘feed back’ into research design and objectives.

• The usefulness of the case research methodology as an approach for generating new theory. Is the use of a multiple case approach the only means of generalisation, or can the single case study be useful in this regard?

The second session of Day One featured presentations by Aromar Revi, Jessica Seddon, Kavita Wankhade and Chris Kurian on the background, objectives, research and pedagogical approach of the IIHS. Shaping India’s urban transformation not only requires a strategic understanding of ‘who manages urban India?’, but also an interdisciplinary curricular approach to training reflexive urban practitioners. The IIHS sees case teaching methodologies and problem-based learning as important means of fostering a holistic learning process.

IIHS’s interest in case research fits within its aim to ‘produce interdisciplinary research that transcends gaps between academia and practice, providing an innovative, contextually grounded, and analytically sound voice in discussions about Indian urban spaces and urbanization’. A major research focus hinges on ‘re-presenting the urban’, or the possibility of fundamentally rethinking the way in which cities are represented and produced through data collection and presentation – this research area involves efforts to increase public access to data, to ensure the interoperability of different sectoral data sets, and to generally promote movement towards transactional/relational perspectives of urban processes. Other ongoing research projects within this cluster include the establishment of an ‘urban observatory’ in Bangalore; creating an ‘urban atlas’ for India, and co-developing an online ‘Urban Knowledge Platform’.

Furthermore, IIHS aims to operate a number of research projects relating to higher educational policy and innovative practice; contemporary technologies of urban governance; land and infrastructure issues, as well as climate change and urban adaptation. Urgent research agendas include informality and economic geography; transportation and water planning practice; regional planning in federal contexts, as well as urban service delivery and fiscal federalism.

In January 2011, IIHS conducted a weeklong course entitled ‘Re-imagining the world class city’, with the broad objective of testing some of the pedagogic elements of the proposed Master of Urban Practice degree (including interdisciplinary team teaching, practicum-centric experiential learning, peer learning and collaborative work, etc.). The course featured a highly innovative approach to
interdisciplinary, case-based learning using many different forms of media and teaching ‘teams’ composed of academics and practitioners.

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<th>Evidence enables perspective</th>
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<td>Virtual, flexible and evolving research clusters</td>
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<td>Nudge researchers to practice and practitioners to research</td>
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<td>Tactical attention to points of leverage in the systems governing urban transition</td>
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Figure 1: Outline of the IIHS Research Approach and Objectives

Questions and discussions emerging from the IIHS presentations related to areas including:

- The need for explication of the theoretical assumptions underpinning the research approaches of the respective institutions. For a comparative research project to work effectively there needs to be some common paradigmatic and epistemological ground to allow a shared intellectual project to emerge.
- Leading on from this point, there is some potential for building a comparative research theme around how institution-building and knowledge production happens in different contexts.
- The usefulness of teaching ‘meta-cases’ which aim to reveal the intricate and messy details of urban processes from an interdisciplinary perspective. This sort of meta-case approach was used with some success during the ‘Re-presenting the urban’ course. However, writing these cases is particularly difficult for professions such as planning, which requires transcending multiple disciplinary boundaries.

The afternoon of Day One included short presentations by the Brazilian participants. Firstly, Jeroen Klink (UFABC) presented on the context of urban development in Brazil following democratisation in the mid-1980s. Despite the ascendance of the Lula government; rounds of institutional strengthening and innovative participatory legislation such as the Statute of the Cities, Brazilian cities are affected by a persistent fragmentation. Prof Klink discussed two examples of UFABC researchers have been engaged with the ongoing transformation of urban spaces: Firstly, by promoting social learning (involving the development of an e-database of case studies as a platform for an ongoing social learning experience) and the participatory elaboration of local low-income housing plans. Secondly, the university has responded to the problems of city regional governance in the context of global economic restructuring by organising a 40-hour executive course (aimed at public officials, staff of development/housing banks, representatives of social movements, and so
on) dedicated to the theme of state spatial restructuring and emerging patterns of city regional governance.

Prof Klink concluded by highlighting some of the ‘elements’ that could potentially constitute an urban research agenda ‘from the South’:

- Narratives that take into account the increased interdependency between countries and cities in the context of globalization, as well as the high mobility of capital, labor and information.
- Research that weaves together ‘structure, contingency and complexity’ in the description and explanation of urban processes, with an emphasis on geo-historical specificities.
- An awareness of the limits and potentials of conventional regime and regulation theories for analysing the urban South.
- The identification of ‘strategic transversal themes with a potential to build a more cohesive research agenda from cases’, including ‘access to land’; emerging conflicts and convergences between the urban and environmental agenda in city planning and management; the significance of institutional strengthening initiatives for urban development; the limits and potential of community participation and multi-scalar governance approaches, etc.

Luiz Cesar de Queiroz Ribeiro (Observatório Das Metrópoles/UFRJ) then presented on the work of the Observatório Das Metrópoles (ODM). The ODM is a national network of Brazilian institutions, which has the basic methodological aim of comparing the different developmental trajectories of Brazilian cities in light of contextual factors relating to globalisation, institutional restructuring, legislative reform, and so on. This approach was deemed particularly useful for the analysis of Brazilian cities, which for geo-historical reasons display a massive degree of regional variation, yet are generally affected by similar overarching processes. A theoretical and methodological approach was needed to reconcile the broader analysis of structural change in Brazil with local case study analysis of specific urban dynamics. The focus on ‘urban trajectories’ allowed for the understanding of how contemporary urban changes may be generally similar, yet at the same time cities have particular historical-developmental trajectories which exert a strong influence on how those structural changes manifest in urban settings.

The ODM has an international reach, and plans to extend its network of observatories to other Portuguese-speaking countries, and ultimately to develop a multinational, multipolar network.

Questions and discussions followed the Brazilian presentations. Some points emerging:
• The ODM has evidently achieved a great deal in terms of building a national network of institutions, as well as a series of sub-networks. Lessons and insights from the network building process would be valuable to the ACC, which could potentially be involved in establishing urban research observatories throughout Africa in relation to the current State of the Cities in Africa project.
• The ODM has been by no means been free of failure. Building the network requires a continuous negotiation and renegotiation of research parameters in order to maintain a degree of overall research consistency.
• The ODM ensured some success by choosing a primary theme of analysis (the metropolis) that had been relatively neglected by conventional research and policy agendas. It also structured its research around Masters and PhD programmes, which generated the necessary ‘critical mass’ of research capacity required to promote network stabilisation. Another successful feature of the ODM relates to a broad and persistent ‘cognitive agreement’ amongst its participants. This agreement applied to the definition of the research problem in theoretical terms; the approach to analysing the problem conceptually and methodologically; and the reasons why the problem should be studied in the first place.

Day One closed with a general group discussion on the potential of producing collaborative and comparative case research from the global South. The issue of differing epistemological backgrounds between the participating countries and institutions was raised, pointing once again to the value of comparing how Southern researchers are currently going about the process of putting ideas together as part of an overall search for a different theory or perspective of urbanism. It was suggested that it would be hard to secure funding for such an epistemic project, but that it would nonetheless be extremely useful. Nevertheless, any collaborative-comparative work would have to take discursive variations into careful account.

The use of cases for teaching and learning was also highlighted. Implicitly or explicitly comparative studies of pedagogical methods and innovative practices (such as the ‘Re-imagining the world class city’ course run by the IIHS or the executive course on city regional governance by UFABC) would be useful to all institutions involved. A major outcome of future collaboration could be a ‘terms of reference’ for the writing of teaching cases. Sharing experiences of network building is another area of opportunity.

An interesting point of discussion centred on differences in the definition of territorial formations in urban governance. The fact that countries had differing ways of categorising ‘metropolitan’ areas had been noted previously. Comparative studies of the manner in which understandings of ‘city regions’ are practically and discursively produced were raised as potentially useful.

Historical processes of regime or governance shift, rupture or ‘break’ was considered a potentially major theme of comparative analysis. Analysis could take the exclusionary results of such changes as a major topic of inquiry (e.g. the implications of the implementation of the new Kenyan constitution for socio-spatial exclusion). Alternatively it could draw upon ‘social regime’ theory (understanding the city as an interaction of market, state and community/family) to examine how wider structural variations associated with globalisation, in conjunction with the specific historical trajectories of particular cities, are expressed through changing interactions and relations between these three spheres in processes of urban development.
Further discussions on Day One highlighted the usefulness of the following:

- A set of ‘meta-cases’ – detailed learning cases illustrating the highly intricate and nuanced urban processes unfolding in each national context.
- Comparative work on institutionalisation at the formal/informal interface, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Producing place-based cases as a means of opening up conversations that go beyond discussions of theoretical and contextual differences, and deal with geographic scale in a productive way – to ‘treat the case as an anchor’ in explaining the diversity, dynamism and complexity of urban processes.
- Comparing projective initiatives that have taken transformation as their primary agenda.

**Why do comparative case research in the global South?**

- To fill an empirical gap in existing urban knowledge and ‘speak back’ to Northern theory.
- To influence policy by extracting lessons of success and failure in different contexts.
- To compare different pedagogies as a means of refining teaching and learning practice.
- To produce information that can fulfill a social transformative role through use by social movements, for example.

**BUT** it takes different group/institutional dynamics to fulfil each of these objectives. How can they be balanced appropriately?

### Day Two: 29 March 2011

Day Two began with a presentation by Graham Götz of the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO), a project jointly operated by the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Johannesburg and supported by the Gauteng Provincial Government. Mr Götz discussed the overall mandate of the observatory, elements of its organising framework and key projects that have been undertaken to date (including the development of a comprehensive GIS data acquisition initiative, and two geo-referenced ‘quality of life’ surveys). As part of its three-year strategic framework, the GCRO has identified five thematic areas for project work (see Figure 3). A number of these projects have potential for a comparative approach (including metabolic flow analysis of the GCR).
Subsequent questions and discussions included the following points:

- The GCRO has worked impressively within a wide range of thematic areas, with few permanent staff. This is partly because the GCRO has sought to fulfil a ‘portal function’, meaning it has the objective of ‘reining in’ academic expertise to work within its strategic framework. This requires a constant balancing act between forging relationships with high-level academic experts (who have their own research agendas) and carrying out work within the Observatory’s specific mandate.

- A major challenge facing urban observatories such as GCRO is making data cheaply available to people with mobile handsets. In general, making raw data sets readily available to the public requires a constant process of experimentation and learning.

- Another challenge with GIS data relates to the need to produce analytic and not merely descriptive data. Making GIS an analytic tool that is capable of saying something interesting and useful at strategic points is an ongoing reflective task.

- Producing a GIS information system that is open to use by the wider public is not merely a technological challenge, particularly in highly unequal societies where educational inequalities can inhibit the capacity of people to ‘create their own information’ (i.e. beyond simply accessing raw data). There is a fundamental socio-economic dimension to whether such data can be useful in a social transformative sense.

- GIS maps can be useful in mediating conflicts between stakeholders. A map can simplify a dialogue, or take discussion and negotiation to a higher level (although to some extent this depends on the symbolic power of the map itself).

- It would be interesting to compare the manner in which different observatory-type institutions (ODM, GCRO, etc.) go about capturing, analysing and presenting data. How do actors enrol data products to influence policy and to empower? Which strategies have proven to be more or less effective?

In the second session of Day Two, James Duminy (AAPS) presented a literature review on comparative approaches to urban studies. The presentation highlighted the strategic-political dimension to comparative case selection and analysis. Previous comparative approaches have tended towards ‘most similar’-type analysis, leading to a general truncation of the range of cities for which comparison is possible, as well as the theoretical areas used in analysis. They have also concentrated on relatively similar, predominantly Northern urban contexts. Being strategic about comparative case research in the global South means paying close attention to the definition of analytical units and moving beyond ‘most similar’ approaches, so that processes of global urban theory-building may be made more uncertain and ‘open-ended’ by their exposure to a wider variety of diverse empirical urban contexts.

Discussions and questions centred on the following points:

- Participants from different institutional backgrounds clearly had differing approaches to case research and theory-building. Apiwat Ratanawahara (Chulalongkorn University, Thailand) pointed out that East Asian researchers typically have a highly empirical focus, without a significant emphasis on producing theory. The fact that their work does not necessarily engage with popular Northern theoretical debates is one reason why it is difficult for some Asian (and other Southern) academics to publish in mainstream international
journals. Instead, they may look to more localised publications as outlets for their research. In contrast, Brazilian researchers typically have a strong theoretical orientation and the national research and university system is structured to incentivise publishing in mainstream journals. Such differences certainly affect the general objectives and methods employed for case study research in respective contexts, and will require careful consideration in devising a South-South comparative research initiative.

- The selection of cases for comparative analysis has **both a pragmatic and a strategic dimension**. A prime question facing any South-South comparative project is, to what extent can the selection of a few cases contribute to effecting strategic shifts within global systems of knowledge production and circulation? There are also political-transformative questions that need foregrounding – how can the research contribute to empowering certain groups or the recognition of progressive policy discourses?
- Much could be learnt from other disciplines for a comparative research project/scheme, considering the marginal position occupied by social sciences in relation to total journal outputs. For example, the concept of ‘autopoiesis’ has been developed in the biological sciences to transcend a structure/function binary in the explanation of living systems – could this be a better starting point for envisaging a comparative urban project?

The afternoon of Day Two involved further general group discussion on how a South-South comparative agenda could be taken forward. Discussion varied from the general types of cases that could be useful to individual institutions, to potential topics of comparative analysis. Several themes of interest emerged, which are represented in Figure 4 following:

**Process-based cases**
- Cases of urban institutional or ‘regime’ change (in the broad sense) in different contexts (i.e. comparative analysis of ‘waves of urban reform and rupture’).
- Cases of the implications and limitations of participatory policy reform.

**Reflective cases**
- Cases of the ways in which ‘engaged institutions’ are built (who is being engaged?) and critically-engaged researchers are produced.
- Cases of how spatial mapping, data and narratives are produced and disseminated by actors, and how these technologies re-present cities or city-regions.

**Place-based cases**
- Localised cases, usually with a historical-comparative approach (e.g. ‘deconstructing the myth of Curitiba’; governance and upgrading of slums in Kenya).
- Meta-cases or ‘emblematic’ cases, capturing the ‘messy’ dynamics of urbanization.

*Figure 4: Possible Case Research Topics: From Discussions on Days 1 and 2*

Aromar Revi (IIHS) produced two diagrams as a preliminary step to developing a conceptual stratégic framework for future comparative research (presented in Appendix B). The first
(Figure B1) indicates that case types (A, B and C) can be distinguished according to their relationship with the three broad objectives of promoting learning, theory-building and praxis. (An interesting comparative approach could assess how the engagement between learning, theory and praxis occurs in different case research and teaching contexts). Often the most successful cases are those that combine elements of all three case types and hence promote all three objectives simultaneously. The second diagrammatic matrix (labelled Table B1 in Appendix B) linked case types with a conceptual frame depicting the various relationships between case research modes/data types and transformative objectives.

Aromar emphasised the power of the narrative (which may take the form of a short symbolic ‘story’) to effect paradigm shifts (to ‘tip things’), whilst recognising that case research is not necessarily limited to qualitative/narratological approaches. He pointed out that ‘modelling’ can take different forms – it is not necessarily limited to building analytical-predictive models. Planners often produce and employ different types of models to make sense of problems and the question, ‘what if?’

An alternative line of argument held that a conceptual/strategic frame could possibly be limiting as an entry point to a comparative research project. Alternatively, the production of historicised place-based cases could allow hypotheses and topics of comparison to emerge inductively. This ‘more modest’ approach could potentially build upon the research topics and areas that already exist within the research scope of the respective institutions. It was suggested that the parties could meet again in 2012 to present casework progress and have a more focused discussion on potential units and topics of comparison – at that point a conceptual/strategic frame may be of greater use.

An interesting line of discussion held that the comparative project could hinge on a particular research question; for example, ‘why is it so difficult to reduce inequality in city X?’

Day Three: 30 March 2011

The final workshop session was again oriented towards general discussion of the ‘way forward’ for South-South comparative case research project, as well as the possible shape and scope of a funding proposal.

Discussions started with some concerns being raised over the adoption of a frame. It was suggested that a matrix could act as a helpful guide for research, but it would also be useful to employ a place-based case research approach (potentially within the broad ambit of understanding why inequality persists in certain cities), allowing the cases to ‘speak in various ways’.

Edgar Pieterse (ACC) pointed out that at present such a comparative project does not have dedicated funding. It would therefore make sense to meet again at a later stage, tabling work in various areas including:

- Reflective cases;
- Process-based cases (e.g. ‘waves of urban reform and rupture’);
• Place-based cases, which could potentially be elaborated in four stages: (1) performing the case analysis; (2) challenging Northern theoretical assumptions; (3) generating novel hypotheses from the South, and (4) building an international network for long-term research cooperation (as part of a more ambitious meta-theoretical exercise that links up with place-based analysis).

Aromar Revi (IIHS) presented some ideas for a collaborative research framework. IIHS is currently interested in locating itself within Indian urban policy reform and long-term developmental trajectories. Once the national portrait has been painted, research attention can refocus on the city level (e.g. through the production of urban readers and atlases), with a range of cross-cutting place-based and thematic cases. Questions remain over whether such an approach could be ‘projectised’ between all parties to enable cross-comparison and joint work.

It was suggested that a timeline or calendar of meetings be created to ensure that the overall project maintains traction in the future. There was some consensus over the need to hold an interim meeting (within 12 months) at which each institution would present a two or three-page written note on their particular stance on the overall project, and their expected outcomes of the meeting. An outcome could be a funding proposal for a three-year research project framework.

Ultimately, the importance of exchanging views on education, curricular reform and pedagogy was reemphasised in concluding discussions. A task team was also elected to drive the process in the near future:

- Nancy Odendaal (UCT)
- Jessica Seddon (IIHS)
- George Onyango (Maseno University)
- Jeroen Klink (UFABC)
- Graham Götz (GCRO)

**Conclusion**

The IBSA workshop involved rich, critically engaged discussion about the potential for comparative case research as a means of producing knowledge ‘from the South’. Overall, there was broad agreement over the need for South-South collaborative and comparative research as a means of filling an empirical gap and ‘speaking back’ to mainstream urban theory, of producing information that can influence urban policy and promote transformative social goals, and of fostering innovative pedagogical and learning approaches. Comparative case research is not merely about building theory; it can and should have a keen strategic and political intention.

Discussion outcomes were too numerous and various to be comprehensively captured in this summary. Some major ideas and topics arising are summarised in Figure 5 following. Yet common discursive themes emerged over the three days of discussion. These sent strong signals about the potential meaning, form and function of comparative case research ‘from the South’.
At the broadest level, there is a question of how a South-South comparative research project could accommodate different epistemic backgrounds and research cultures. The term ‘South’ describes an enormous variety of intellectual, cultural and institutional traditions. Certainly, such contextual differences affect the manner in which actors approach the task of constructing new perspectives of global and regional urbanization. There is thus potential for work aiming to explicate and compare different epistemic approaches to urban research across the global South.

The workshop revealed contextual specificities in the employment and production of theory in case research. In some Asian and African contexts, a highly empirical approach to case research is standard: overall research objectives are set by those commissioning the research, and the task of the researcher is to gather and analyse relevant data, with little emphasis on producing or modifying theory. In Brazil, on the other hand, researchers are driven by institutional imperatives to engage with theoretical debates in mainstream international journals; they are therefore oriented towards theoretical and conceptual elaboration (perhaps enhanced by a historically close intellectual association with European continental philosophy).

Contextual variability in the relationship between case research and theory requires that methodological and analytical care is taken in devising a long-term comparative or collaborative Southern urban research project. Which conceptual frameworks, hypotheses, units of analysis and methods are robust enough to allow multiple comparative research exercises (from distinct epistemic backgrounds) to produce coherent and theoretically valuable ends? There are also important strategic-political factors to consider: how can the research be coordinated to optimise the socio-ecological transformative impact of its output, in a multitude of diverse and dynamic settings? Then, of course, there are the practical and logistical difficulties that accompany any joint international research exercise.

Further questions remain around the potential for comparative case research and theory building: what type of theory is to be produced, in terms of its balance between historical contextualisation and scientific generalisation? Where do we begin - do we deductively test Northern theories initially, or generate propositions and hypotheses inductively? Which theoretical-analytical approaches allow for the comparability of a wide range of cities, yet offer potential for credible knowledge production? Can or should we turn this project into an epistemological and phronetic research exercise, by documenting and comparing the ways in which we piece together ideas, pedagogies and values in order to build an alternative perspective of Southern ‘cityness’?

The teaching and learning benefits of cases also emerged as major points of discussion and agreement. Alternative approaches to educating urban practitioners are particularly necessary in Southern contexts, where outdated pedagogical practices often fail to develop professionals with the context-dependent knowledge and intellectual flexibility required to understand and address highly dynamic urban processes. Case-based teaching is one pedagogical approach that has potential to promote a reflective mode of learning, and to foster skills in complex problem solving. Thinking about case research in terms of its learning benefits has implications for how the research is performed, and what it should aim to produce – generally speaking, place-based meta-cases written from interdisciplinary perspectives are extremely valuable for educational purposes.

Undoubtedly, the workshop demonstrated that there is scope and willingness for a collaborative and comparative South-South research project balancing upon the thematic trinity of ‘learning’,
‘research’ and ‘reflexive practice’. Exactly how this project is formulated and executed will be an incremental process, perhaps beginning with meetings and personnel exchanges but ultimately developing into more intensive forms of cooperation – specific research activities and shared projects with predefined timeframes and analytical themes.

**Comparative case research**

- Addressing systemic global knowledge imbalances through South-South theory-building.
- Pragmatic and strategic dimensions to case selection.
- Need for a shared intellectual project / 'cognitive agreement'.
- Interdisciplinarity: difficult but necessary.
- Dealing with scale productively (socio-politically produced).
- Recognising epistemological differences between research institutions.
- Balancing historical-contextual and sociological approaches.
- The 'power of the narrative'.
- Reflective, process-based and place-based case types.
- Usefulness of ‘meta-cases’ or ‘emblematic cases’ – interdisciplinary cases capturing all the messy issues affecting a locality.

**Potential comparative themes**

- Processes of institutional reform and rupture and their urban socio-spatial effects.
- 'Why is it / has it been so difficult to reduce inequality in city X?'
- Implications and limitations of participatory discourse.
- Establishment of urban observatories and data dissemination: practicalities.
- Use of data/maps/narratives in defining, understanding and representing the city/city-region.
- Projective planning initiatives with transformation as a goal.
- Institution-building and knowledge production.
- Network-building and network stabilisation.
- Urban development trajectories under conditions of globalisation (emphasis on geo-historical specificities).

**Case-based teaching and learning**

- How does thinking about / planning for learning feed back into research design?
- Importance of sharing and comparing case materials and pedagogical innovations.
- Is there something beyond the Harvard Method?
- Case comparison as a means of reflective and lifelong learning.
- Usefulness of interdisciplinary ‘meta-cases’.
- Developing a 'terms of reference' for the writing of teaching cases.

Figure 5: Major Topics and Ideas Emerging from IBSA Workshop Discussions
### Appendix A: List of Participants and Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Country</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Appendix B

Figure B1: Different Case Types

Table B1: Case Research Objective vs Data Type: A Frame for Comparative Research?

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Appendix C: Bibliography


