**Project title (& acronym)**
A GRASSROOTS URBANISM: Community involvement and participation towards the making of the city. Innovative research processes in India and Canada (Québec) (GRASS-URB)

**Unit name and EPFL address**
LASUR / ENAC
BP2
Station 16

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<tr>
<th>Name of Project Leader EPFL</th>
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<td>Yves Pedrazzini</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:yves.pedrazzini@epfl.ch">yves.pedrazzini@epfl.ch</a></td>
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**Name(s) and address(es) of partner institution(s) abroad**
Mumbai University
The Kamla Raheja Vidyamathi Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies (KRIVIA)

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<tr>
<th>University of Quebec in Montréal (UQAM) Community Psychology Section</th>
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<th>Prof. Hussain Indorewala professor and head of the design cell</th>
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<td>Prof. Janie Houle Professor and head of the Vitality Laboratory</td>
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**Short project summary (max. 5 lines)**
This innovative project addresses the issue of users’ participation towards urban development and policies. It is through a transdisciplinary action research that we plan to investigate this issue. Our intention is to develop a community-based methodology taking principles from community psychology and participatory urbanism. This collective research ambitions to be ground-based from the early beginning, identifying non-academic actors and making them co-researchers. Our goal is to generate spatial and social change by empowering communities in regard to urban issues.

**Key words** (5 words illustrating the project and its content)
> participation / empowerment / community / urban development / transdisciplinary approaches

**Type of project (please select only the most adequate option)**
> exchanges aimed at launching a new research project

**Budget overview**

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<th>Amount of Seed Money grant awarded in 2019 (CHF):</th>
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<td>Amount of Seed Money grant spent in 2019 (CHF):</td>
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<td>Amount contributed by EPFL unit and Southern partner(s) (CHF):</td>
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<td>Amount of third party funding in 2019 (if any) (CHF):</td>
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Activity Report (maximum 7 A4 pages length)

1. Summary of project objectives

The urban sacpe doesn’t only play the role of supporting infrastructural facilities development. It is also a place for social interactions that implies the construction of a shared collective knowledge. Constructing the territory is thus a collective project requiring citizens to fully exercise their rights. Referencing to the right to the city articulated by Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey criticizes a weakened democracy: “the freedom to make ourselves and to remake ourselves by shaping our cities is one of our most precious but also the most neglected human rights.” (Harvey, 2011). Indeed, the technocratic city planning that drew our territories for the last centuries enhanced the production of fragmented landscapes with substantial social inequities, leaving far behind many city dwellers.

The production of a collective and democratic territory is challenged. Deep changes in the governance model and planning processes must be acknowledged to guarantee urban equity. New architectural and urban practices are to be invented. Undoubtedly, interdisciplinary methods and tools must be explored to address a common ground for participatory urban planning methodology.

In this regard, psychology community approach adopts an ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and postulates that the individual lives in several environments more or less close to the person. Its aim is to establish a link between macroscopic and microscopic scale. With targeted intervention strategies, this approach of psychology focuses on collective resources to empower and promote well-being of individuals and communities. It encourages healthy and adaptive change, social justice, self-determination as well as economic and social equity (Julian, 2006). Adopting this perspective, Houle and al. (2017) developed a community-based intervention in low rent housing context in Quebec. This study shows that community and participatory action research process increases collective empowerment and promotes positive mental health. Using the community to address social and urban issues would be of great interest.

Within the time frame of this one-year seed money grant, our intention was to address urban equity by creating a frame for a collective investigation into community-based approaches. Indeed, it is through specific social and spatial conditions that we were planning to explore this issue. Our interest focused initially on two different fields, on one hand, the Indian context in the smaller urban centers (or census towns) in the peripheries of Mumbai City and, on the other hand, Indigenous communities in Quebec. Both territorial and social conditions are combined in those contexts to tackle the concern of inhabitants’ involvement and rights towards their environment development.

We assume that through social and community analysis methods, the local scale can be addressed, an effective users’ involvement can be established to promote a democratic governance on urban planning. Moreover, exploring the urban surrounding through community implies formulating a collective vision about the city, its uses and representations.

The following questions lead the investigation in both contexts:

- How do we identify communities in each context? How do we address their practices and uses? How do we ensure the exercise of the right to the city on urban development processes and planning policies?

This seed money was meant to test our first insights, create an interdisciplinary network and generate synergies between academics and non-academics actors, all this in order to constitute altogether an application for a grant funding such as the SNIS program.

The principal objectives that drove this seed money project were as follow:

- to confront our questions to the field by organizing exploratory tips in each situations
- to identify academic and non-academic actors in each fields
- to engage non-academic actors as co-researchers
- to built a common knowledge by creating a community of interdisciplinary researchers
- to include communities of each fields at the initial stage of the research
- to develop tools to reflect on social and cultural aspects and to communicate on urban issues
- to allow us to confront our perspectives to the field
- to built up collectively the upcoming proposal research question with identified academic and non-academic partners
2. Activities carried out

During this one-year seed money grant we could achieve all the activities we planned. The planning during this one year seed-money went as such:

Phase 1 - First steps, field trips preparation:

From January to March 2019, we developed a theoretical approach, explored and identified each field of intervention, its communities and stakeholders. In order to process in Montréal and in Mumbai, our partners could identify and contact non-academic stakeholders and especially communities we would engage with during our field trips. We could conduct documentary research and prepare workshops that took place in spring.

Phase 2 - Exploration, field trips and partnerships identification:

During this phase, we could travel to Montreal and Mumbai, explore the fields, meet future partners academic as well as non-academic, discuss the issues we raised locally and come up with new insights related to each fields. The purposes of those travels were thus to identify partners for the upcoming research project, to confront our first intuitions and to explore the potential research fields.

The first field trip took place in Montréal from 29th of March until 7th of April. Our host was the UQAM where we had our meetings, conducted one workshop with several academic actors and indigenous from different communities. During this week we could discuss the Grassroots Urbanism proposal with the following people:

- Ivanie Aubin-Malo, artist and dancer from the Malecite community
- Johanne Aubin, interior designer from the Malecite community
- Barbara Diabo, from Mohawk Community, dancer
- Sylvain Rivard, artist from the Abenaki community
- Guy Sioui, teacher of modern and contemporary Aboriginal art at KIUNA college
- Maranda, met at the PAQ (Projets Autochtones du Québec) refuge
- Paul, met at the PAQ (Projets Autochtones du Québec) refuge
- Caroline, met at the PAQ (Projets Autochtones du Québec) refuge
- Elaissa Uqittuq, originally from the Inuit community, lives in Nunavik and works for Canadian Royalties
- Mohamed Benzekri, psychology student, research assistant on the project
- Carling Sioui, student in landscape architecture
- Juan Torres, urban planner and UDM professor
- Maxime Boucher, PhD candidate, Urban Studies, INRS
In brief, our stay in Montreal was guided by the national policy of "reconciliation" between Canada's federal administration and indigenous nations. The first step towards reconciliation was the recognition of the abuses committed by the federal administration against indigenous children who were forcibly removed from their families and interned in residential schools. Between 1883 and 1996, this assimilation policy, supported by the different Canadian jurisdictions, led to physical, sexual, psychological and cultural abuse. Since then, the expression of cultural genocide has been used to denounce the extent of the impacts of colonial and post-colonial policies on indigenous communities.

The ongoing "reconciliation" policy aims to "move forward" in order to build a "living together" between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. We were able to see that these ambitions at the national level are reflected at the local scale, as in Montreal. The City of Montreal appointed a Commissioner for Relations with Indigenous Peoples in 2018 to develop the City's reconciliation strategy. Montreal thus seems to be carrying out various actions to show the diversity and integration of indigenous communities and cultures in the Montreal landscape: changing the name of streets, promoting indigenous archaeological discoveries, creating an indigenous cultural centre, and so on.

At the same time, these same communities face social, health and educational inequalities as well as negative social representations that are reflected in the organization of the territory. A large part of Quebec's indigenous people live in reserved territories - so called reserves - with specific status and laws such as the Indian Act created in 1876 and most recently amended in 2017. Some communities live in villages that do not have this status, as Maranda will explain to us. Having migrated from his village 20 years ago to Montreal, his village is still unhealthy today, with no running water. Like Maranda, some people in the communities are moving to urban centres to find a better future. However, opportunities in the city are rare for the one coming from villages, the city is inhospitable to them and homelessness is often the only option. This situation implies an increased risk of physical health problems and socio-psychological distress. Paul left his community as a teenager, having been homeless for more than 10 years. He showed us his Montreal, his resources and places of danger. Over time, he created a new social network in Montreal, mainly with indigenous people. All these people face unequal access to land, services and governance, whether they are located on a reserve, live in an unhealthy village or have moved to urban centres. Many initiatives for indigenous communities are emerging. However, according to the Montreal Indigenous Community Network, relationships tend to remain vertical, decisions are top-down and discourses are punctuated by paternalistic elements.

The "reconciliation" policy and brief information we collected before our journey guided our attention through the city. Before our visit, Mohamed, a student in community psychology at UQAM, planned our visit and connected us with various associations and organizations. We thus walked around and met people, in this controversial context of "reconciliation" policy to learn more and open up new perspectives. We looked up for potential collaborations to collectively build a research project that meets our intentions : to address the participation, empowerment and involvement of communities in the city’s modes of production.

The second field trip took place in Mumbai from April 19 to May 1. Our host was the KRIVIA where we had our meetings, conducted one workshop with several academic actors and people from Adivasi community. During this week we could discuss the Grassroots Urbanism proposal with the following people :

- Meenal sheety, professor at KRIVIA
- Hussain Indorewala, professor and design cell head at KRIVIA
- Shweta Wagh, professor at KRIVIA
- Sheema Fatima, PHD candidate TATA institute Mumbai
- Reshma Susan Mathew, research assistant, KRIVIA
- Mihir, research assistant, KRIVIA
- Amrita Bhattacharjee, activist from Save Aarey movement
In brief, during our stay in Mumbai our focus was meant to be on territorial struggles between indigenous and public development policies in Mumbai, from the very first exchanges prior to our visit. At first, we focused on the small peripheral cities of Mumbai and their inhabitants, as they are under a strong demographic pressure and an intensive development policy. Nevertheless, the in-situ meeting with the Indian team led to the co-construction of new questions and potential fields based on our Montreal story. Indeed, the political context of indigenous communities in Canada, their territorial struggles, the social inequalities they face and their ancestral and contemporary cultures have drawn parallels with the struggle of the indigenous people in Mumbai. More precisely, we are talking about the indigenous populations - the adivasi - from the Warli communities, living in the forest near Mumbai.

Non-development area. This is how Mumbai government classified this area south of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park. This area, in close proximity to the city of Mumbai, looks like a forest, but isn't one legally. With its strategic location and development capacity, it is facing significant financial and political pressures. Some projects of public interest have been developed there for several years, such as the construction of a university, of touristic infrastructures or - the latest one - the construction of the Mumbai Metro 3 terminal. To carry out these projects, deforestation is mandatory, which has a direct impact on the environment and biodiversity but also on its inhabitants, their lifestyles and their health. These pressures are not a new occurrence. The acquisition of land has already taken place before. For example, since the 1940s, Aaray Milk cooperative has purchased more than 1600 hectares in order to relocate the production of buffalo milk for the city of Mumbai. Tensions surrounding this territory are high. An activist group, "Save Aarey", has therefore been set up to defend both the rights of the forest and its inhabitants. Many actors are part of this conflict over this non-development area: the inhabitants of the Warli communities, Aaray Milk cooperative, the inhabitants of the slums, Save Aarey, Royal Palm Estate, metro corporation, the army and other public and private institutions and investors.

This territory is inhabited by "Adavasi", i.e. indigenous people, recognized by the government. These communities are a minority in India and are subject to the Scheduled Tribe Act in terms of law, granting them specific rights and duties. Today, the Array area has 27 villages and includes about a thousand households. People live from agriculture and some have also studied and have jobs in the city. Some of them are involved in the conservation of their living environment and are active in non-governmental organizations. Amrita, activist of the "Save Aarey" movement, explains that at the beginning of their actions, the movement was mainly composed of Mumbai residents involved in the protection and defence of the environment. By force, the movement met the Adavasi inhabitants who joined the fight and integrate social and health aspects. The Array area also includes slums, i.e. unauthorized constructions, different from the hamlets previously described in terms of architecture, relationship to agriculture, social and economic status and social practices. However, the government does not recognize the difference between these two types of habitats or the rights of indigenous people related to the forest act. Thus, the indigenous people of the hamlets and slum dwellers live in the threat of their eviction from the territory.

**Phase 3 - First feedback on field explorations** :

During this phase, we could write a travel notebook as a feedback on field experiences, meetings and issues raised. The travel diaries were not meant to be exhaustive and did not claim to present a truth. They traced our encounters, our discoveries and our questions. Those notebooks were the ground to the upcoming collective seminar. They were the basis on which we could all discuss and make a collective understanding of the different situations in Montréal and Mumbai. This phase was, as well, the opportunity to prepare the september seminar with both our partners from Mumbai and Montreal.

In addition to the notebooks, we prepared a program for the week in Mumbai in collaboration with the Indian team. The Montreal team has also been involved during this time with people who have expressed an interest in pursuing the reflections for this pre-project and the construction of a long-term partnership. Thus, we contacted Janie Houle, Juan Torres, Cassandre Chatonnier and Ivanie Aubin-Malo again to prepare the trip to India. We were able to offer the trip to two partners, one academic - Cassandre Chatonnier - PhD student in urban studies at INRS and the other - Ivanie Aubin-Malo - professional dancer and member of the Malécite indigenous community. Before the trip, the Canadian team had a meeting to meet each other and share with us their proposals for the week's program that we sent them.

From the Indian side, our colleagues hired two students to map the site we visited, the forest near Mumbai that we mentioned above. This work was asked by inhabitants of the Adivasi communities to assist them in their struggle.
Phase 4 - Seminar, collective gathering, team encounter, collective discussions:

This Seminar has been the opportunity the Indian and Quebec team to meet in Mumbai and have a collective exchange on the Grassroots Urbanism project. The aim with this seminar was thus to discuss each fieldtrips, issues raised and to come up with a theoretical frame, methodologies and tools to explore for the upcoming SNIS application in 2020.

During this week, we presented our different fields of expertise as well as our interests for the research project. The Indian team first presented us with the results of their forest mapping. After that, the Montreal team presented the situation of indigenous communities in Canada. Ivanie and Cassandre have collaborated to bring historical and legal information. Traditional cultural practices, including powwow dance, were also presented. Ivanie shared her experiences as a member of an indigenous community and as a dancer.

We also organized a presentation on the situation of indigenous people in Canada and powwow dance to first-year architecture students. The presentation turned into a participatory powwow dance workshop and led to cultural exchanges, with many Indian students also wanting to share their knowledge of Indian classic dance.

We then visited Aaray colony site and met the inhabitants: Prakash Bhoir and his family and other indigenous forest dwellers. On this occasion we shared moments of discussion, visited the houses and shared about artistic cultural practices: dance demonstrations and warli art.

We pursued the scientific and cultural exchanges during the week at the Research Institute(KR VIA), and invited the inhabitants of the villages. During this meeting, we discussed the communities’ needs and their participation in the future research process. We also wanted to include other modes of communication than words and again proceeded to cultural dance exchanges. These moments participated in bringing the team together, highlighting the values of the team, explore new research practices and elaborate an academic and non-academic way of collaboration.

Phase 5 - Report writing and prospective:

CODEV report submission. Academic and communities partnerships development. Preparation for a SNIS project application.

3. Main results

- Partnerships: During these 3 trips and particularly during the seminar in Mumbai, we were able to create a research team that would like to be involved in the submission of a future research grant. The teams in each country are also interested in working together on their own themes with the intention of initiating cultural exchanges through international seminars between the Indian, Canadian and European fields. Academic and non-academic colleagues have already collaborated in the research and consider it an advantage to continue this collaboration. The inhabitants of the Indian villages mentioned their needs and contributions in a future research project. Ivanie also mentioned her interest in future research and the potential benefits of this research for communities.

- Field trips: through the fieldtrips we could identify partnerships but also immerse ourselves into the issues raised, that will lead us to a collective theoretical frame.

- Seminar and theoretical frame: the seminar was the opportunity to meet altogether, to discuss each fields issues and to develop collectively the upcoming theoretical frame for the SNIS proposal. Cultural exchanges occurred as well between the adivasis’ cultural practices and Ivanie’s traditional dance practice. Indeed, this pre-project allowed us to work in interdisciplinarity: urban sociology, urban planning, architecture, psychology, sociology, urban studies, arts, dance, painting. Interdisciplinarity also includes the expertise of the inhabitants of the places we visited. We were then able to build the beginnings of a common language between the disciplines and highlight theoretical elements that we wish to question in a future research project. We first questioned the posture of research and values. All mentioned the desire to be in an emancipatory and resistant perspective through their allied posture. The notion of "decolonizing science" through research methods co-constructed from the beginning with the concerned persons will be an important part of the research. We also mentioned that the research must serve the needs of communities and create awareness. Thus, appropriate methods for cultural, social and urban contexts will have to be investigated and tested. It also seems important that the empowerment process also involves the reinforcement of communities from a political and economical point of view. It is therefore important to work on a different scale: individual, interpersonal relationships, group, community, local, national and international politics. We will have to consider the roles of each person, the way of collaborating and the sharing of each other’s knowledge in the research questions.

We also examined the notion of "indigenousness": the senses and place of this concept within the project. Do we want to start thinking about the link to the land and the relationship to the urban character? Do we want to work exclusively with indigenous peoples who have experienced colonization and are currently experiencing various pressures? Thus, the question of the third field in Europe was highlighted as an important element that should be consistent with the
basis of the future research questions. Could we also rouse reflection around marginalized people due to the link of the land? Indeed, some nomadic communities are a group of people who do not belong to a single territory, which extends beyond geopolitical borders. In the different European countries, for example, they experience discrimination and a similar process of marginalization as indigenous peoples.

How relevant is it for the project to include this type of population in the reflection? If we open the discussion, what would be the sense of community and the contribution of cultural exchanges to the project? What notion of mutual support in the struggles and the relevance of creating an international network? We also mentioned some themes we want to address: the notion of marginalization, urban and/or rural territorial struggles, the non-recognition of the voices of these people, their invisibility and their deep-rooted cultural, social and artistic practices.

4. Practical application of results and impact to the SDGs

By developing a community-based approach of urban development, the goal is than to empower citizens to enact and react towards their environment. This grant lead us to meet and discuss bottom-up issues raised by our non-academic partners. We could thus address directly social minorities, on one hand in the urban peripheries in India and on the other hand as First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities in Québec.

Through a dance class given by Ivanie to 1st year architecture students, she could create a cultural exchange and valorize her knowledge. As well as songs sang by the Adivasis member to all the seminar participants. Culture and traditional practices were highly valorized within the fieldtrips and the seminar.

Two assistants were hired in India to map the Adivasis villages to trace the actual geographical situation.

5. Publications and dissemination activities (copies of any publications must be attached)

We did not produce (yet) publications, except internal reports, but would maintain CODEV informed about the future/planned ones. In addition, we certainly would include the results and lessons learnt from our Seed Money project in our Master courses in EPFL, also in University of Québec in Montréal and Mumbai University.

But: in Mumbai, our colleague of KRIVIA / Mumbai University and the stakeholders of Aarey (North Mumbai Region) co-produced an incredible report which is for the moment the main “output” of the research. See Annex to the report.

6. Difficulties encountered (scientific, practical and personnel, and how these were overcome)

The biggest challenge of this project was to bring together, academics and non academics people. We had to determine the role and explain the importance of all taking part in the reflections on the setting up of the research project.

7. Partnership experience (how did the cooperation between partners go? how would you describe the participation of the partners in the project? were the KFPE 11 principles of research partnership followed? http://www.kfpe.ch/11-principles/ Do you have advice to offer in view of future collaboration of a similar nature?) This part may express your principal opinion and may include as well the opinion of your Southern partners.

Collaboration between the different teams went very successfully. We were able to co-construct interests and themes as from the drafting of the CODEV. The Lausanne team was in charge of coordination and was able to collect the needs, questions and interests of the teams' members at each stage. For every fieldtrip, the Lausanne team worked with a dedicated contact person, which helped to facilitate the development of the project. The Indian and Quebec teams participated in the conceptualization of the final seminar. They showed a high degree of engagement in seminar discussions and cultural exchanges. Finally, all members wish to contribute to the drafting of the SNIS proposal and to continue this collaboration.

8. Follow-up activities and perspectives (future plans beyond EPFL funding, steps to be taken, funding options from other sources)

Our intention is to submit SNIS grant application in January 2020 for a research proposal with the indian and canadian partners. We also plan to submit proposals for funding in Canada.

9. General comments
We could achieve successfully our ambitions with only 20'000 swiss francs due to the unpaid commitment of Karen Devaud and Carla Jaboyedoff. We also could achieve our goals due to the involvement and high motivation of the partners in each field that generously organised the encounter with non-academic actors.

Picture appendix - final seminar Mumbai with the Canadian, Swiss and Indian teams

Ivanie’s class dance to 1rst year architecture student

Seminar - visit villages in Aarey colony

Aarey colony landscape

Financial Report
A detailed accounting of the use of the granted funds should be provided, with a table listing all expenses incurred and indicating the final balance. Copy of the Infocenter Data extract should be included.

Signature of Project Leader at EPFL

[Signature]
Date: November 29th, 2019

Please send your report duly completed by email to: corinne.waridel@epfl.ch

Together with the reports, please send as well 1-2 representative photos of your project in high resolution (min. 1.5 MB), which we could use for our website (images of results, implementation process, partnership, local context, etc.).

Deadline for submission: 30 November 2019