

MONSOON ASSEMBLAGES

CHENNAI FIELD TRIP REPORT

December 2016

Beth Cullen



Chennai Field Trip Report by Beth Cullen
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**UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER**

**MONSOON
ASSEMBLAGES**



Horizon 2020
European Union Funding
for Research & Innovation



Week 1	Monday 28 th November	Tuesday 29 th November	Wednesday 30 th November	Thursday 1 st December	Friday 2 nd December	Saturday 3 rd December	Sunday 4 th December
						Kanchipuram	
Notes	PM: Leave London	PM: Arrive in Chennai	AM: Meet with Anna University PM: Visit Buckingham Canal	AM: Administration and prep PM: Administration and prep	AM: Collect DS18 students PM: Check-in to hotel; admin and prep	Trip to Kanchipuram	AM: Water Walkshop PM: Water Walkshop
Week 2	Monday 5 th December	Tuesday 6 th December	Wednesday 7 th December	Thursday 8 th December	Friday 9 th December	Saturday 10 th December	Sunday 11 th December
					Mahabalipuram		Kochi
Notes	AM: Lectures PM: Fieldwork	Hotel lockdown	AM: Lectures (Rain Centre + Transparent Chennai) PM: Fieldwork	AM: Group work at Anna Uni Alumni Club; lecture (Care Earth) PM: Group work	AM: Studio Review at Anna University PM: Mahabalipuram	Transect Walk (BC, MV + HB)	Kochi Bienalle
Week 3	Monday 12 th December	Tuesday 13 th December	Wednesday 14 th December				
	Kochi	Kochi					
Notes	Kochi Bienalle	Return from Kochi to Chennai	Return to London				

FIELDNOTES

Summary

During December 2016, Beth Cullen and Michele Vianello spent two weeks in Chennai. The initial aim of the trip was to establish contacts and identify potential research themes in advance of a longer fieldtrip in July and August the same year. The trip was scheduled to coincide with the DS18 Studio fieldtrip, to be led by Lindsay Bremner. Due to ill-health Lindsay was not able to lead the studio fieldtrip so Beth and Michele stepped in, this meant they were not able to carry out the fieldwork research as planned but combined this work alongside coordinating the DS18 trip.

WEEK 1

Monday 28th November

- Met with DS18 students and briefed the students, collected base maps and individual work and left Westminster University around 2pm. Left for Heathrow around 4.30pm and departed for Chennai at 8pm.

Tuesday 19th November

- Arrived in Chennai at 2pm. Immigration process took a while. Exchanged money at the airport (4,000 rupee limit) but couldn't withdraw from cash machine. Currency situation is concerning – demonetization initiative taking place.
- No signs of rain, newspapers and social media reporting failure of the northeast monsoon (also known as retreating monsoon). NE Monsoon described as 'difficult' and as

having a distinct personality of its own, Chennai dependent on it which places the city in a precarious position. This year the city and wider region is facing a rainfall deficit.

- City seems dry, temperatures in high 20s, Greener than expected, didn't expect the number of trees. Different styles of buildings. On the drive to the hotel saw big differences in neighbourhoods, some clearly more affluent than others. Striking example was driving along the Boat Club road, a tree lined avenue with very large houses policed by security guards. Caught a brief glimpse of the Adyar river when driving to the hotel, view of the river is constrained by the high walls along the bridge that crosses the river. Dense informal settlements visible along the banks, large piles of refuse some of which seemed to have been piled up to form bunds. No sense of the city at all from the short drive to the hotel, will explore more tomorrow.

Wednesday 30th November

- Arranged meeting with Anna University staff (academics 1 and 2) in the morning, which was very positive. Campus a very nice space. Renovated the space and created doors to the courtyard. Buildings shaded by 'architectural trees' which are now overgrown and need to be replaced. Monsoon is delayed, people worried about lack of water, but according to government aquifers have enough water until next year. Cyclonic weather is predicted. Local weather man who is something of a celebrity says rains will start on 1st December (tomorrow). He is thought to provide better information than the Met Office! People contact him via social media (Facebook) with queries about the weather.

Anna University students have worked on marsh remediation project and lake restoration project, they will present this work to the DS18 students. Academic 2 is a landscape architect by training and has been working on traditional water harvesting structures (tanks), presented her work at the Chennai Water Forum, offered to give a short presentation to the students. Currency issue affecting whole country, apparently justified by the government as a measure against terrorism and to force low income people to open bank accounts. Enforcement of bank accounts ensures the poor become part of the formal economy thereby reducing the strength of the informal economy, means people are subject to more monitoring and control. Uni. staff were personally affected by the situation, reported having to spend much time queuing to withdraw cash, very time consuming.

- Following the meeting we tested the MRTS, saw the Buckingham Canal for the first time and walked around the IT Corridor. Discovered that city is not at all pedestrian friendly! Very narrow sidewalks. Limited drainage mechanisms in pavements and roads. Lots of traffic, beeping horns, pollution. Dangerous negotiating junctions and crossings, traffic lights very limited, some traffic police directing traffic at certain places. Long waits to cross the road. Bus stops well designed (obviously new) but not very user-friendly in terms of their relationship with pavements (non-existent in places). MRTS station near Anna Uni. was completely extraordinary! Vast structure, recently built and not completed, large parts remain unfinished and unused. Much larger than necessary. Stations quite empty indicating

they are not particularly well used. Affordable means of transport (5 rupees for 2 people) but not very convenient in terms of the position of the MRTS stations and the connections with other forms of transport infrastructure. Buckingham Canal (MRTS built on top), very polluted, smelly, lots of waste and mosquitoes. Section we saw has been channelized with concrete, and reduced in width. Observed dragonflies, kingfisher, butterflies around the canal. People also living close to it. Second MRTS station was smaller, seemed busier and more finished in terms of construction, decorated with murals (Poongal tradition of Jallikattu where men wrestle bulls, and Chola temple with chariot – TN culture)

- Cyclone Nada expected from tomorrow – anticipated to be quite severe and bring heavy rainfall. Slightly alarming storm warnings on social media (Twitter and Facebook).

Thursday 1st December

- Spent the day preparing for arrival of DS18 students. BC worked on presentation on ethnographic methods, compiled student information and sent emails. Met with MV to review presentations and schedule for the week, prepared draft outline for LB to review and arranged logistics and transport for the students.
- Rain started today, as predicted by local weatherman! Very heavy rain (must be related to cyclone) but didn't have a chance to experience it as we spent most of the day working in the hotel. Water in the hotel taps and showers has started to smell, possibly related to the rainfall.

Friday 2nd December

- Woke at 5.15am and went to collect bus from University to pick up the students from the airport. Students arrived around 7am, tired from their trip and a bit overwhelmed. Problems withdrawing cash. Took students to International Hostel at Anna University where we waiting until the hotel accommodation was ready for them. Some of the girls shocked by the accommodation, refused to sit on beds or use the toilets, worried about security. Accommodation and canteen were segregated according to gender.
- At 8.30am BC and MV left students and went to Anna University's School of Architecture and Planning to arrange printing, organise the room, pin-up student work and order stationary. Space allocated to the studio work was very haphazard and needed a lot of sorting out. Rearranged the room and pinned up the student work with help from Anna students. Room very dusty, due to lack of rain.
- Travelled back to International Hostel to collect students and travel to hotel around 11.30am. On the way to the hotel one of the students pointed out a hotel that had been designed in the style of the Chola period, apparently a landmark/well-known building in the city. (Apparently the third largest hotel in India, designed by Singapore based architects and themed after traditional Dravidian Architecture of the Chola Dynasty).
- Arrived at the hotel around 12 noon. Check-in process was very long, did our best to help the hotel staff and speed things up but students were tired and frustrated. Seems staff were very unfamiliar with the computerised booking system.

- After a short rest, we met with students around 2.30pm to brief them on the arrangements for the coming week. After the briefing BC and MV worked on presentations and logistics and sent emails to LB and ZS. After this BC went to print permission letters for fieldtrip.
- Met students for dinner around 8pm.

Saturday 3rd December

- LB had organised a fieldtrip to Kanchipuram. Bus picked us up from the hotel at 8.30am with a local tour guide. Drove through the southern part of the city, first glimpses of the IT corridor. Flooding on the roads, apparently due to construction works, not due to the rains. Pumping of water to enable construction led to pooling of water, obstructing traffic. Expansion of the city southwards was evident with industrial ventures being established in previously agricultural areas. Formerly this land was very productive but is now overrun with prosopis as lots lie vacant waiting for developers. Many large international companies including Saint-Gobain, a French glassware manufacturer, car manufacturers (Chennai known as Detroit of Asia) and even a racing track, Madras Motor Race Track.
- Visited a number of temples in Kanchipuram, smaller, older temple in the afternoon was the most spectacular although apparently it is not visited by local people, only tourists. Very peaceful. Sandstone construction with evidence of repair works. Local people relaxing outside the temple, boys fishing in temple pond. Evidence of designs to facilitate the flow of water through the temple (not clear whether these are part of the repair works or the original structure).

- In the afternoon, we visited a silk weaving 'village'. Apparently, Kanchipuram is one of the biggest production centres of pure silk handlooms, there are around 60,000 weavers many of whom work within cooperatives. Students bought sarees.
- The tour guide was a great source of information. Spoke about the impact of the 2015 floods. Her friend living in Adyar River area was badly affected, lost all her possessions, books and saris and hasn't been the same since, took her a very long time to recover. People now live in fear of the rains. People still anticipating flooding this year. Her own family were less affected because of their location but it was a great shock. Amazing to see the reaction of people in the city, people helped one another. Previously older people had criticised the younger generations because of their obsession with social media/mobile phones, but during the floods these things came to their aid and meant people could communicate and coordinate the flood responses. This has changed many people's attitudes towards such modern forms of communication. Rumours about the cause of the floods, apparently attributed to a decision made by a senior female politician (Jayalalitha) weeks before not to allow the engineers to release water in the Cherambakkam Lake when they requested to do so. If the waters had been released earlier in a controlled fashion the floods would not have been so devastating. Thought to be the fault of decision makers who lack technical knowledge and do not listen to the people below them, such decisions should not be made by them.

- Departed Kanchipuram around 4.30pm and arrived in Chennai around 6.30pm. Had dinner and then prepped for the following day.

Sunday 4th December

- Arranged transect walk for the students (DS18 and Anna University), described as 'Water Walkshop'. Transect walk was designed to go from Kilkattalai eri (tank) to Neelankarai on the coast, divided into five 'zones' (see brief for details). Left hotel at 8am with the students and took the MRTS to Velachery where we met Anna University staff and students and representatives from a local environmental NGO. Introductions in the morning and icebreaker were very successful. Academic 3 later said that she was worried about the initial meeting as not all the group members had met in person beforehand, but she was pleasantly surprised. She responded well to the idea of using the walk as a 'get-to-know-you' exercise.
- Day went well overall, but was very long and tiring. Weather conditions were not ideal for the walk, we had been planning for rain, but it ended up being very hot with clear skies and no rain. Many of the students had not brought sunscreen and got very burned. Not enough water so everyone was quite dehydrated.
- Walk started in Zone 1: Keelkattalai Eri. Eri (tank) cut in two by road (200 feet road). Some drainage channels running underneath the road connecting the two sections. Channel to the north of the northern section of the ery (Environmental researcher 1 pointed it out as being particularly significant, links the eri to other water bodies).

Walked along the bund of the eri. Seemed to be constructed by mounding a mixture of soil and garbage. Evidence of dumping all along the road that runs alongside the eri, different types of waste including plastics, rags, bicycle tires, construction waste (concrete columns), dead animals, sand bags etc. Industrial units ran along the side of the ery, not clear what type of industries. Pipes coming from some of the buildings over the wall, appeared to be transporting water/waste into the eri. Travelled by bus from the eri to nearby temple tank. Apparently, such tanks are often located at the lowest point in the landscape, wells are located inside the tank. This compound was an example of a restored tank, modern methods (concrete steps), exotic tree species.

- Zone 2: Narayanapuram Eri. From the temple tank, we travelled by bus and stopped on the 200 feet road. We walked along a section (possibly following the Dr Ambedkar Salai Rd and one of the back roads in a loop back towards the 200 feet road, where it meets Narayanapuram Ery). Crossed a bridge that ran over a channel which connects with another major eri. Areas of 'marsh' were evident throughout the section, water and bull rushes emerging in vacant building plots. Buildings seemed affluent. *Kolams* in evidence on gateways. Palm shacks in vacant lots (possibly left by construction workers). Some still showed signs of habitation despite being surrounded entirely by water. Care Earth has carried out extensive work on the Narayanapuram eri, restoration and rehabilitation work. Evidence of structures that are used to control water flow, channels and sluice gates.

- Zone 3: Pallikaranai Marsh. Drove along 200 feet road across the middle of the marsh. Saw Perungudi rubbish dump from afar, smell not as bad as anticipated. Stopped at a Care Earth check point along the way. Avantika Bhaskar from Care Earth gave a talk about the marsh biodiversity and the work they have been doing to both protect and conserve the marsh from encroachment – working in collaboration with the Forestry Department.
- Zone 4: IT Corridor. Walked along Subramanyar Nagar road which runs parallel to the Jain Engineering College, joins the Buckingham Canal, temple at the end of the road. Streets very busy, small shops and businesses, people preparing food. Elevated walkway had been constructed along the backroad, but used heavily by motorcycles and tuktuks making it not very pedestrian friendly. Evidence of ongoing construction work, and vacant lots awaiting construction. Evidence of the 'marsh' in vacant plots, more water and bull rushes. Palm shacks, temporary homes for construction workers. Many of the buildings were rental accommodation and single sex (mostly male) hostels. Advertising boards providing information about rental advance down payment options, exclusively for IT professionals. Rough gravel road, pools of water and trash (mapped by Jeronimo). Goats grazing along the road. Decorated tiles on the gateways warning off the evil eye. Type of housing became less affluent the closer we got to the Buckingham Canal. Informal settlements stretched along the banks of the canal. Atmosphere was not very friendly when we reached the canal, some said it was because people were drunk and aggressive (alcoholism mentioned consistently in

association with the less wealthy). Environmental researcher 1 said the people from her organisation were regarded with suspicion by slum dwellers as they know there is risk of resettlement. Number of temples visible near the Buckingham canal.

- Zone 5: Neelangarai. Travelled by bus from Buckingham Canal to Neelangarai beach. Everyone very and Care Earth staff keen to get home. Stopped and walked along the back streets to the beach through the villas (along Sunrise Avenue and Beach Rd, coming out at the beach near the Rajiv Gandhi Aquatic Centre – major building along the sea shore). Very upmarket neighbourhood. Gated communities, guarded houses, high-end architectural building styles, formal road markings, speed bumps etc. Different atmosphere, cooler, more air circulation due to sea breeze. Beach area very popular and frequented by people in the evenings for leisure time. Food stalls, stalls selling beach games, children's play equipment. Not able to visit the fishing village, apparently not a good time because people tend to be drunk in the evening. One of the Care Earth staff comes from the fishing community), he spoke to Zone 5 group to give them some information about fishing practices. Men fish on a daily basis, larger boats are required to go for longer periods. Women responsible for selling the fish in local markets (sometimes sold at the port fish market). Fishermen warned not to go to sea during cyclones due to the dangers. Many of the younger people are gaining an education and so don't carry on the fishing traditions. Walked back to the bus along back roads. Came

across a riding school, apparently a popular pastime with wealthy residents.

- When we returned to the hotel it became apparent that there were concerns about the health of Jayalalitha, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. At 11.30pm I received a call from the hotel management asking me to confirm that all the students were present in the hotel. We were informed that the likely death of the CM may result in public unrest. I wrote to Lindsay to ensure that the University were informed of the situation. Both the hotel staff and Harshavardhan Bhat (MONASS PhD student) seemed very worried about the situation and felt that the situation may escalate into violence, apparently there was a precedent for this when another prominent politician died in the 70s leading to widespread unrest and looting. Hard to know how concerned to be and how much potential danger.

WEEK 2

Monday 5th December

- Left hotel around 9.15am and travelled to Anna University by tuktuk. BC and MV gave presentations to students (ethnographic methods and mapping), followed by student presentations of their work, pin-up and group reviews of the respective work from DS18 and Anna University. Had lunch around 12.30 (arranged by Anna Uni.) and organised transport.
- Departed for fieldwork around 2pm. Due to the concerns about Jayalalitha we were aware that time for fieldwork

was limited. Anna staff arranged taxis and a staff member to accompany each group.

- BC travelled with the Zone 3 group to Balaji Nagar informal settlement. We stopped for fuel on the way, long queues for fuel and many shops were already closing down. Balaji Nagar a fascinating site. An informal residential area built along the Velachery Rd that runs alongside Pallikaranai marsh, near the National Institute of Wind Energy, opposite the Perungudi rubbish dump. An Anna University student acted as a guide, he had lived in the area previously in rented accommodation with other architecture students so knew the neighbourhood and some of the people. Met local residents who took us to their homes and showed us their various water supplies. These included: well water, water from a water truck, Metro water, bottled water and rain water harvested from the roof. The different types of water were used for different purposes depending on quality, i.e. certain types of water were only used for washing clothes and cooking utensils, other water used for bathing, only bottled water used for drinking. Sources of Metro Water were not trusted, water very poor quality. People living on the same street clubbed together to pay for water trucks on a weekly basis. Water table very high so well water accessible, but very polluted. Surrounded by water, but facing a water shortage. Rainwater harvesting system seems to be a local innovation. Significant engineering involved to construct an underground sump to store the water, not clear how it was made, or how the water in the sump was kept separate from the groundwater. Women very happy to speak with us about the water situation. They don't feel

they are listened to by local authorities and have limited opportunities to voice their opinions. Amused to see the students taking water samples. Men in the neighbourhood seemed less pleased to see us. One man (providing an ironing service from a small street-side stall) demanded to know why we were there. Apparently, many people have come to the area asking questions and interviewing people but they never hear what comes of the research and what is done with the information.

- Received a call from academic 3 telling us to leave the site due to information from trusted sources that an announcement about Jayalalitha was anticipated. Throughout the period we were in the informal settlement some of the Anna University students had been very nervous and worried. We left the site as quickly as we could. On the way back to the hotel the roads were very busy with traffic as many people were trying to get home early. The death was announced in the early hours of 5th December and we knew we were likely to be restricted to the hotel the following day.

Tuesday 6th December

- Hotel lockdown was confirmed. Had breakfast at the hotel, contacted Anna University staff, University of Westminster and the British Consulate to inform them of the situation. Spent the day working from the hotel – restricted to the back room so we weren't visible from the street. Hotel staff covered windows with newspaper, scared that hotel would be attacked if people thought they were open and serving guests.

- Used the time to review work with students, made arrangements for the following day and rearranged lectures. Downloaded photos, caught up on fieldnotes and charged equipment.

Wednesday 7th December

- Left hotel and travelled to Anna University around 9am. Arranged lectures for the students in the morning from a rainwater harvesting expert and an independent researcher. A rainwater harvesting expert spoke about the rainwater harvesting (RWH) initiatives that are taking place throughout the city. Apparently when Jayalalitha came to power she made rainwater harvesting compulsory. Mentioned that architects and builders are the most important actors as people are no longer building their own houses. Rain is the predominant source of fresh water, huge potential for rain to provide drinking water. Described Indians as 'world leaders' in RWH and described traditional eris which were designed to collect water, mainly for irrigation purposes. This traditional system has decayed from 1800s to present day. The independent researcher spoke about efforts that are being undertaken by citizens to influence urban planning. Spoke about the Transparent Chennai initiative which makes interactive maps available on their website to provide people with accurate information – without the right data the need and demand for services can be underestimated. Information from different government departments is often conflicting leading to communication issues. There is a need for data that speak the language of government but represents the

people. Overlaying multiple kinds of information through maps created compelling narratives for insight and advocacy. Mentioned mapping vacant land close to slums facing eviction to provide alternative places for habitation. Poor often used as scapegoats, wealthy people and government agents encroach on land but not held to account. Mentioned links between slum evictions and flooding. Flooding used as justification for relocations (even though public buildings are also located on water bodies).

- Fieldwork. BC accompanied Zone 3 group (Pallikaranai Marsh). Walked along the 200 feet road, near the dump. Met construction workers from N. India building sewerage lines that drain into the marsh, apparently part of a city-wide project. Observed service workers coming out of buildings on the IT corridor, all female, wearing uniforms, looked like cleaners/janitors. Bus service provided for workers. Bus stops, tea stops, bus parking along the road. Wine shop/bars. Waste pickers and informal waste sorting centres (plastics). Evidence of open defecation. Came across construction site and spoke with the engineer. Geology of the site is silt and clay. Dangerous to use pile foundations, difficult to make raft foundation due to height of water table, requires pump. Issues of skilled labour for pile foundation. Work needs to be supervised to avoid shortcuts. Daily labourers paid per day. Fastest completion rates 3 weeks. Turnover is high, different labourers each day. Gathering places in every region to gather labourers. Local construction workers live in informal settlements/slums. Male and female construction workers. Saw dragonflies over what seemed to be a rainwater

harvesting tank (eri), apparently dragonflies are a sign of rain. Evidence of unregulated pipes from houses being used to export wastewater/sewage to the street/marsh/waterbodies. (Apparently there are many residential houses without piped water or sewerage. Every independent house is meant to have a septic tank, but many simply let the sewage run out onto the roads. In some places sewage flows across the road and pools near drinking water taps so residents have to negotiate sewage in order to collect water). Accessed the Perungudi dump yard through an informal recycling centre, smell was intense! Made our way to the guard's office to seek permission, but were refused because the high-level supervisor was not present. EXNORA initiative encourages planting of vegetation in urban areas for shade. Newly planted trees used as advertising space. Floating population of Chennai is huge, 15 million, compared with settled pop of 4.5 million (check this). Students and IT workers constitute part of the floating population – considered a settled resident after a certain amount of time. Saw group of boys fishing in marsh area using homemade rods. Caught small fish, doing it just for fun (not to consume). Managed to get access to a high-end gated community, Egret Park, off the IT corridor and adjacent to the marsh. Very different building typology. Ornate lampposts and exotic palm trees, manicured

- Departed for hotel 5.30pm. MV, HB and BC had dinner together and did some planning.

Thursday 8th December

- Left hotel at 9.30 and walked to the Anna University Alumni Club (Boat House area). Explained brief to students (MV) who then spent the rest of the morning working in groups. Environmental researcher 1 gave a presentation to the students.
- Had lunch at 1.30pm and following this, students worked in their mixed groups for the rest of the afternoon. Returned to the hotel around 4.30pm.
- BC visited market in T. Nagar, popular shopping area. MV, HB and BC had dinner together. Spent evening with students going over group work.

Friday 9th December

- Left hotel around 9am but only arrived at University around 9.50am due to bad traffic. Student groups were scheduled to present their work to reviewers. Style of review was not what we were anticipating. Panel members seemed very critical of student work, sometimes unfairly so. Possibly reflected a different style of teaching.
- Broke for lunch around 1.30pm. Atmosphere was slightly tense over lunch. Reviewers seemed very impressed by Environmental researcher 1 who is something of a local celebrity (has appeared on television and participated in prominent meetings and decision-making forums). During the lunchtime discussions references were made to internationally funded research projects which come to Chennai run by people who do not have good knowledge of the area and don't involve local experts. Environmental researcher 1 was positive about the student work and wants to promote connections between architecture and ecology.

- After lunch BC and MV were taken to meet the Dean. At around 2.45pm we departed from the campus for a trip to Mhabalipuram.

Saturday 10th December

- MV, HB and BC met for breakfast and arranged a car for the day. Academic 2 from Anna University had requested permission for us to access the Guindy National Park. Decided to cancel this element of the walk (due to a 5am start and the demands on her time) but arranged to drive the rest of the route, with stops along the way. Drove along IT corridor to Okkium Maduvu. Channel was clearly visible and much bigger than expected. Surrounded by residential developments. Government resettlement scheme and newly built flats/serviced apartments. Area was obviously still being filled in with construction materials, sand, cement etc. possibly to facilitate further building works. Resettlement scheme was clearly a planned layout. What initially appeared to be small houses we found were also split into flats/rooms housing (possibly four per housing unit). Boys bathing in the water of the channel, looked very malnourished. Buffalo and goats grazing, accompanied by egrets. Large red and white building nearby, Jain college? Channel running alongside wall surrounding block of flats, full of trash, not sure where it was coming from. Wall showed signs of subsidence, constructed in different stages using different materials. Drove through the resettlement scheme, people didn't seem to mind us being there. Barrels for storing water in evidence next to each doorway, indicates issues with water provision. Murals of politicians

on the walls of the neighbourhood. Houses painted in bright colours. People residing there obviously poor.

- Drove along Perumbakkam Main Road alongside ELCOT complex, vast area with very tight security, couldn't get access. Stopped alongside a house under construction in an area of former marsh to watch the process. Water clearly visible, foundations being built then filled in with rubble, no damp course etc. Walked along a newly built road (possibly First Main Rd) to see newly built flats. Spoke to a woman and her mother living in smaller house situated alongside (different building typology). Apparently, their house was the first building to be constructed, followed by the apartments. They were badly affected by the floods in 2015, the house was flooded up to the first floor, they had to be relocated for some months. Road providing access to the apartments was higher than the smaller house probably exacerbating the effects of flooding, it appeared to have been recently tarmacked. Huge high-rise buildings could be seen to the north-west of our location.
- Tried to access the road that ran along the Buckingham Canal but it wasn't accessible. Travelled as far as we could alongside the canal, following Sholinganallur 1st Avenue. Discovered new housing developments, not yet visible on Google maps. Construction occurring at an unprecedented rate. Not allowed to take photos of the construction site. Grassland along the canal being used for grazing. Fodder being collected for cattle by two men and put into sacks. Walled areas with ornate top stones marking out future plots for development, canals running parallel to the walls

to drain and control water flow. Unclear what is planned for the area but highly planned layout is visible on google maps.

- Travelled to Mutukadu boat house area to see point where the Buckingham Canal meets the sea. Strong current flowing away from the sea, people in row boats struggling to row against the current. Bumped into fisherman returning from a fishing session in traditional style boat (*katumarram*). Fish caught in planks of the boat, which appeared to be made from recycled wood. Fishing nets full of plastic which the fisherman dropped back into the water. One of the old locks of the canal still present, keystone inscribed with date of construction AD 1887. Another fisherman active upstream in the canal.
- Travelled past the Mutukadu area to the salt pans further south. Not sure whether the pans are still active. Rich diversity of bird life. Old bridge alongside the road, date of construction not clear. Nets set out in lines into the pans.
- Returned to the hotel and had dinner.

Sunday 11th December

- Left hotel around 9am for the airport, departed from around 11.45 and arrived in Kochi around 12.55 to visit the Kochi Biennale. Caught bus from airport and arrived at the hotel around 4pm. Magazine article in hotel about how to dress for the monsoon!

WEEK 3

Monday 12th December

- Had a slow morning and then met for lunch. Spent the afternoon visiting the Kochi Biennale. Work by an array of international artists hosted in seafront warehouses and colonial townhouses at Fort Kochi. Took ferry to Ernakulam with MV and HB, had dinner at Gateway Hotel.

Tuesday 13th December

- Caught 13.25pm flight from Kochi to Chennai, flight delayed due to Cyclone Vardah which had made landfall in Chennai around 3pm the previous day (winds reached speeds of around 140 kmph). Arrived around 15.30pm and witnessed the destruction caused by the cyclone. Many trees damaged and uprooted, some had collapsed onto buildings, damaging telephone and electricity cables. Pavements and facades of buildings were damaged, small shacks and shops seemed particularly vulnerable. Met English cricket team in Starbucks café, everyone looking for an internet connection! Power cuts in many parts of the city. Police and volunteers clearing the streets of trees.

Wednesday 14th December

- Depart for London.