



**BUILT ENVIRONMENT
INTEGRATION
TASK TEAM**

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Meeting Report



15 August 2018

requested to take a moment to write down what they understood the purpose of BEITT to be. This could also extend to what the task team was seeking to achieve. This discussion provided a platform and an opportunity for a shared understanding. The soft shoe shuffle session had each of the participants sharing their viewpoints to the rest of the team in an effort to show converging and diverging ideas.



A fundamental aspect of defining the purpose of BEITT would be to assist in clarifying to the team, their role and reasons for attending and being committed to the overall agenda of integration. The captured ideas from the members expressed the need for building and sharing knowledge, developing a platform for engaging on practitioner experiences and strategies in the city space as well as a sense speaking and acting with



confidence.

The full list of descriptions from the perceived purposes of the BEITT have been noted below:

- to **share knowledge** on practical ways to achieve spatial transformation and spatial justice;
- to **encourage and stimulate** built environment practitioners in cities to **work across departmental boundaries**;

- **coordinate and facilitate** city experiences **across multi-disciplinary teams** in the built environment;
- **share** ideas, lessons and practices;
- **build confidence to act** on informed convictions;
- to **provide interventions** on municipal spaces (case studies);
- BEITT is about **moving away from buzz words** and abstract/decontextualized theories;
- **share city experiences** and **build our skills in working together** to achieve outcomes (like informal settlement upgrading);
- to **capacitate and build a knowledge base** for professional built environment sector to **better drive our transformation agenda** and achieve meaningful change;
- to **understand** the municipal/government challenges;
- **share ideas** on how to go about integrating resources for better productivity and service delivery;
- BEITT is about **exchange on real life experiences** and challenges as urban practitioners.

Pulling these views of the purpose of the BEITT together, there is a strong sense of sharing and unearthing experiences to learning from each other. However, there is also a strong collective sense that the group is striving to shift practice by building cities capacity to act in a more integrated manner within the built environment.

Anchored by a collective understanding and clarity around the purpose of the BEITT, the session shifted towards a focus around the Cornubia case study.



A focus on Cornubia

In an effort to learn from each other's challenges and experiences around integration, the Cornubia case study presentation led by Fadeya Ebrahim, a



project consultant with Ethekwini facilitated a broader understanding of some of the challenges faced in its current development phase. The discussion observed some detailed aspects of the current situation that the Ethekwini and Cornubia members faced and the institutional tensions in seeking to transform the informal settlement into a society that is liveable for people. Some of the tensions that were outlined included the aspirations of housing and social amenities being developed and delivered simultaneously, tensions with different spheres of government and the need for individuals or structures who could champion ideas.

One of the key learnings around the Cornubia case study were that integration of practitioners in their different skill-sets is possible. Among the other key take-aways was the partnership approach that was facilitated between municipality and private sector, more specifically Ethekwini and Tongaat Hulett as well as the importance of having a champion driving force for such programs and projects. Finally, intervention systems from the CSP with National Treasury along with the inputs around transversal management have also assisted in this work. The discussion around the case study was more impactful as the needs for the development of the settlement were clear and apparent if one took the time to look outside the centre.

The presentation also shed light on the conditions needed to protect the process of providing settlement opportunities and other amenities for people already in the area. Reflections around the

land-use management plans visualized the idea of planning for a community in a transversal manner and the progress made since in the inception of the development. One of the deliberations in systematic provision focused on the management of growth and exploring incremental tenure along with incremental planning.

Group Discussion (Transversal Management conversation)

National Treasury's Cities Support Programme (CSP), the SACN and Ethekwini were then requested to share with others, the progress on Transversal Management; the highs and lows and paths that had been navigated. Since the initial BEITT reference group, advancements around the tool of transversal management have been noted by some of the practitioners. These advancements range from asking the right questions to looking into accessing global good-practice and making diagnostic assessments.

The CSP and the SACN noted the similarities in their work as well as intentions around future work. The foundation of these similarities centered around transversal management and integration in the built environment needing to be behaviour driven. Reflections were also provided on other projects that had applied the tool of working together and the shifts towards improvement in dissolving working in silos.



Transversality is about strengthening relationships. Most of the relationships that need to be strengthened are at municipal level. Therefore, genuine facilitated processes, with good facilitators are needed as well as a sense of collective contribution to the work done. More than anything, such tools assist in exposing weaknesses and strengths in a collective manner.

Other important lessons that were learnt in the conversation included systemic functions and rules in institutions, the need for decluttering- where prioritizing what is important for the city takes precedence, establishing key political championing and acknowledging the state of institutional engagement or disengagement. Good leadership and accountability were also noted as attributes of traversing intergovernmental issues and how they could be resolved. Additionally, it was advised that cities are at the pivotal role to effect change.

Ethekwini and their exploration of the Cornubia case study were noted as a living example of being on the transversal management path. Finally, the practitioners were challenged to shift the idea of working in confinement and within boundaries and consider and learn from the externalities that are present and their impacts.

Prioritising Integration Challenges

The group was then requested to consider some of the challenges experienced in their institutions as outlined in the groups previous BEITT meeting. Although over 35 challenges were established, they were consolidated into 14 overarching challenges. Each practitioner had to select 3 priority challenges that they thought were pivotal to the issues found in cities. One of the voices in the room advised that "...these challenges are all important..." which is true but outlining the critical levers of resistance to integration is a key tool for progress.

The consolidated challenges are listed below:

- Ineffective Institutional design
- Problematic institutional culture and behaviour
- Lack of alignment in prioritization and decision making
- Lack of visionary and courageous leadership
- Breakdown in the political-administrative interface
- Lack of city-based evidence and data
- Unsustainable and unintegrated financing
- Staff attrition rates
- Unintegrated planning
- Siloed implementation despite approved plan
- Cannot get out of crisis management mode
- Financial and budgeting prioritization
- Misfit in skills available to work required
- Ineffective legislative framework



Once all the members had voted for their priority challenges, the challenges were ranked according to which were most prevalent.

Unintegrated Planning	5
Problematic institutional culture and behaviour	5
Lack if alignment in prioritization and decision making	4
Financial and budgeting prioritization	4
Breakdown in the political-administrative interface	3
Cannot get out of crisis management mode	3
Siloed implementation despite approved plans	3

What was established in assessing the challenges that were brought forward was that some of the challenges related to each other in some form. It was also noted that some of the challenges were being dealt with by other forums and platforms and thus a discussion unfolded as to what issues the BEITT should be focused on in light of attempting to drive municipal BE integration. What unfolded was a discussion around how these issues manifest at a municipal level. The challenge was to get to a reflective enough position for the group to begin asking critical questions that the BEITT could begin to work on. It was agreed that SACN process the discussion and develop an outline of the BEITT agenda for the 18/19 financial year.

A way forward (planning BEITT programme)

An important aim of the meeting was to inform the BEITT 18/19 Programme of work. It was also agreed that we create a Whatsapp group for better communication around logistics in addition to knowledge sharing of interesting articles and events etc. Moreover, the SACN secretariat was requested to finalize the key themes. Upon processing the discussion had in Cornubia and drawing on the directives from the 2016 State of Cities Report the following broad themes and the specific issues to be worked on within the BEITT are proposed:

- **Power and Politics**
Political-Administrative Interface
- **Institutions and IGR; and**
How institutions shape behaviour
- **Management and Capacity**
Skills and experience for BE integration

Meeting dates were also proposed along with potential host cities:

- **29 October 2018 – Tshwane**
- **19 March 2019 – Buffalo City**
- **9 July 2019 – Mangaung**

The updated BEITT Programme Framework is included in Figure 1.

The generated research and information develops the opportunity for practitioners and cities to have platforms to voice collective city issues from a positioned of informed insights. From the meetings and case studies, the BEITT will also be in position to generate an annual report on how evidence-based insights and lessons that can be shared across different cities.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

The afternoon session closed off with a role play by the practitioners imagining the impact of a collective city voice backed by credible research and how that could change the nature of conversation and interaction with other spheres of government and institutions. All agreed on the importance of building practice based research that could strengthen city practitioners understanding of the daily reality and collective voice of cities which could be a stronger than individual cities trying to raise issues. There was

also a commendation to Ethekwini as the hosts on their choice of venue and the success of the day.

The importance of consistent member participation was elaborated as the strength of the Task Team is based on the input of the attending members. Meetings are the sites of work for the group in reflecting on current reality and directing research tasks to address issues relating to integrated practice. It was agreed that the work of the group requires championship by the members to institutionalise the efforts. Ways of championing built environment integration is an ongoing agenda item for the task team.

Event quality feedback



What was the high point of the Reference Group?

- That we focal into one point-mandate, that is to try and solve our current Built Environment problems.
- Thinking about transversal management in the work flows of the DBSA.
- Focused discussions on unpacking transversality and integration in cities.
- Gearing into practical research that will yield into output that are in line with.
- The location.
- The practical discussions.
- Key elements of transformation.
- The Cornubia presentation - it can be done.
- Agreement on how and what will be done.
- The will end the appetite to champion integration individually and as a collective story-points sharing's and solutions.
- Story of Cornubia from Ethekwini, looking at the challenges and the interventions the city is doing.
- It was great to see that other cities are struggling with similar issues.

- It made me feel less powerless because in a group we are stronger.

Do you have any comments for the organisers on how to improve any future debates?

- Group are on track in planning themes.
- All seems well appetite, passion drive and quality of the content.
- Link the other reference groups on Sustainable Cities to align the focus areas which have implications for BEI.
- No, great work.
- Scheduling of dates well in advance helps a lot.

Feedback form results and attendance register included below.





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BEITT 18/19 Programme Framework

Smaller pieces of research that inform and build insight into identified themes
(Discussion papers, Practice Notes, Case Studies- per theme)

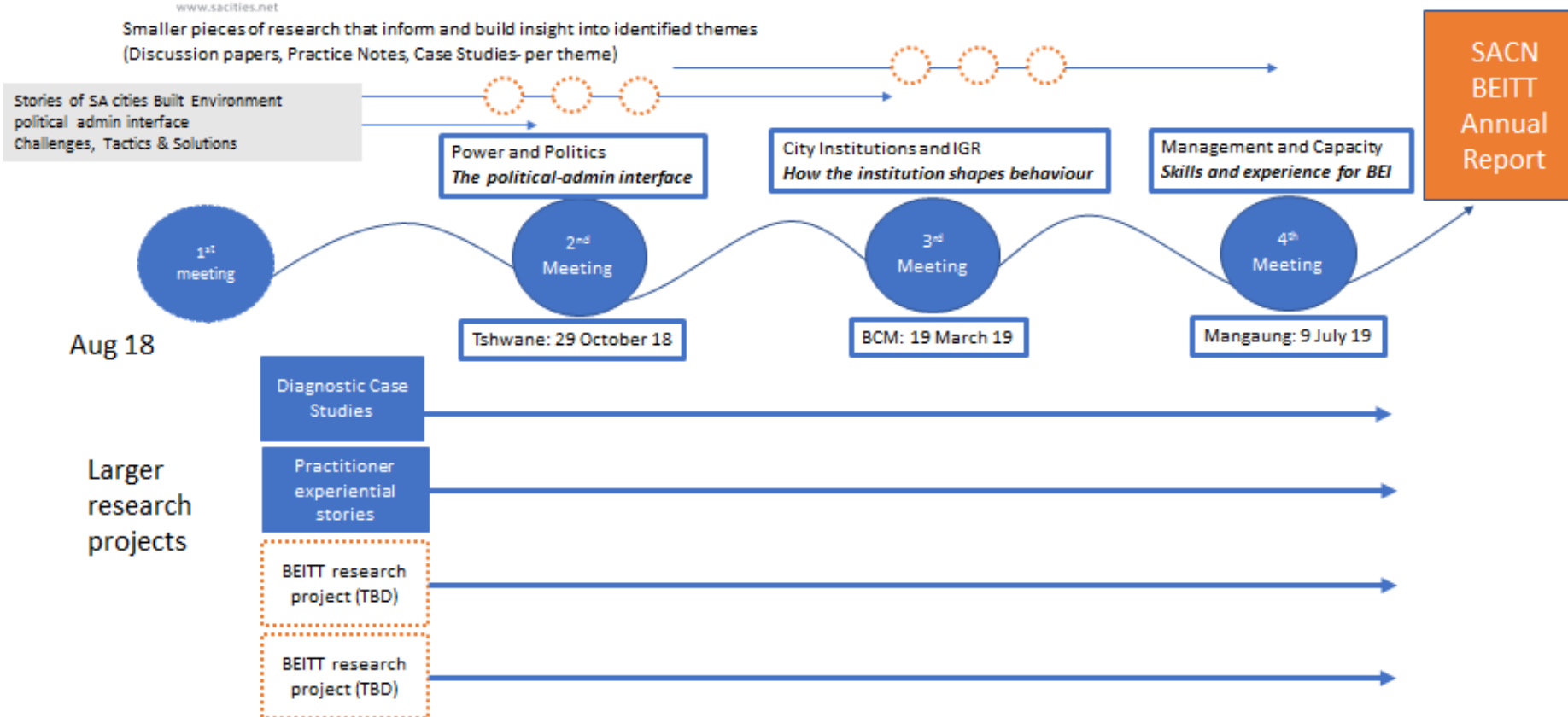


Figure 1: BEITT 18/19 programme framework

Evaluation of the event

Category	Most Satisfied	Satisfied	Partly Satisfied	Rather Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
1) Was the information you received today relevant and useful to you?	6	4			
2) Do you feel that you have learned anything that would assist you in thinking about your work?	6	4			
3) Are you likely to use any of these Lessons in your own work?	5	4	1		

10 delegates completed the questionnaire.

Attendance Register

SACN Built Environment Task Team - Ithuba Community Centre, Blackburn Village (Cornubia) - 15 August 2018					
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