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ADDRESSING **INEQUALITY** THROUGH **PARTNERSHIPS**

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OVERVIEW

- ✓ Aim/objectives
- ✓ Lit Review
- ✓ Methodology
- ✓ Preliminary findings
- ✓ Conclusion



ADDRESSING **INEQUALITY** THROUGH **PARTNERSHIPS**

The aim of the paper is to **explore the role of partnerships** in bringing about change to address the **problems of inequality and social exclusion** in the township of Alexandra (Alex) in South Africa.

Our research sits at the **intersection of two major yet interrelated discourses of social exclusion and inequality and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly SDG 10 (reducing inequality) and SDG 17 (partnerships).



CONTEXT OF **ALEX**

Located **near the wealthy suburb of Sandton**, Alex is one of the **poorest townships** in the Gauteng province of South Africa. The community in Alex suffers **extreme inequality, unemployment, poverty, crime and poor services** despite efforts by the government to address these problems.

Alcoholism, drugs, teenage pregnancies, youth unemployment, weak leadership are amongst the major problems in Alex. This has led to the **frustrations and disappointment amongst the residents**.

The deteriorating state of the township has led to **regular protests by frustrated residents** which further act as a major obstacle to sustainable development in the area.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Using Alex as a case study and drawing on data from a short immersion research experience we explore:

What are the key challenges of reducing inequality in Alex that organizations and communities are grappling with?

How are partnerships being used to reduce inequality in Alex?



LITERATURE REVIEW

- **Social exclusion is defined as a complex and multi-dimensional process**, which 'involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas (Levitas, Pantazis, Fahmy, Gordon, Lloyd, and Patsios, 2007: 9). **The first part of the definition highlights the close link between exclusion and poverty**, the concept of social exclusion is much broader.
- In addition to economic aspects, the concept also includes lack of access to civil, political, cultural and social rights and opportunities **affecting both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole** (Vinson, 2009).
- The lack of civil political and social rights in **Alex** have given rise to rising problems of poverty, inequality, and unemployment demonstrating a **case of serious inequality and social exclusion**. We approach the topic of social exclusion and inequality in Alex through the lens of **UN SDGs framework**.
- **SDG 17 (partnerships)** is increasingly being viewed as one of the most important goals as it not only binds the other goals together but also talks about implementation of solutions as opposed to other goals that focus on the different economic, social and environmental problems.
- Our research therefore focuses on **SDG 10 (reducing inequality) through the lens of partnerships (SDG 17)**.

"The youth is so distorted we are looking up to the government to do something for us. It has been installed in our mind you know, the Apartheid regime. Even now, they are promising us opportunities [...] actually, they are not showing us the opportunities [...] and giving me 100% motivation, you are not going to be left behind."

(Associate).

"It is up to the individual person to say honestly this is my plan, this is what I want to do, this is what I want to achieve. If I can go to this company or give them a proposal and show them my dream then something might happen."

(Community leader)

METHODOLOGY

Mixed-method approach embedded in a single case study of Alex

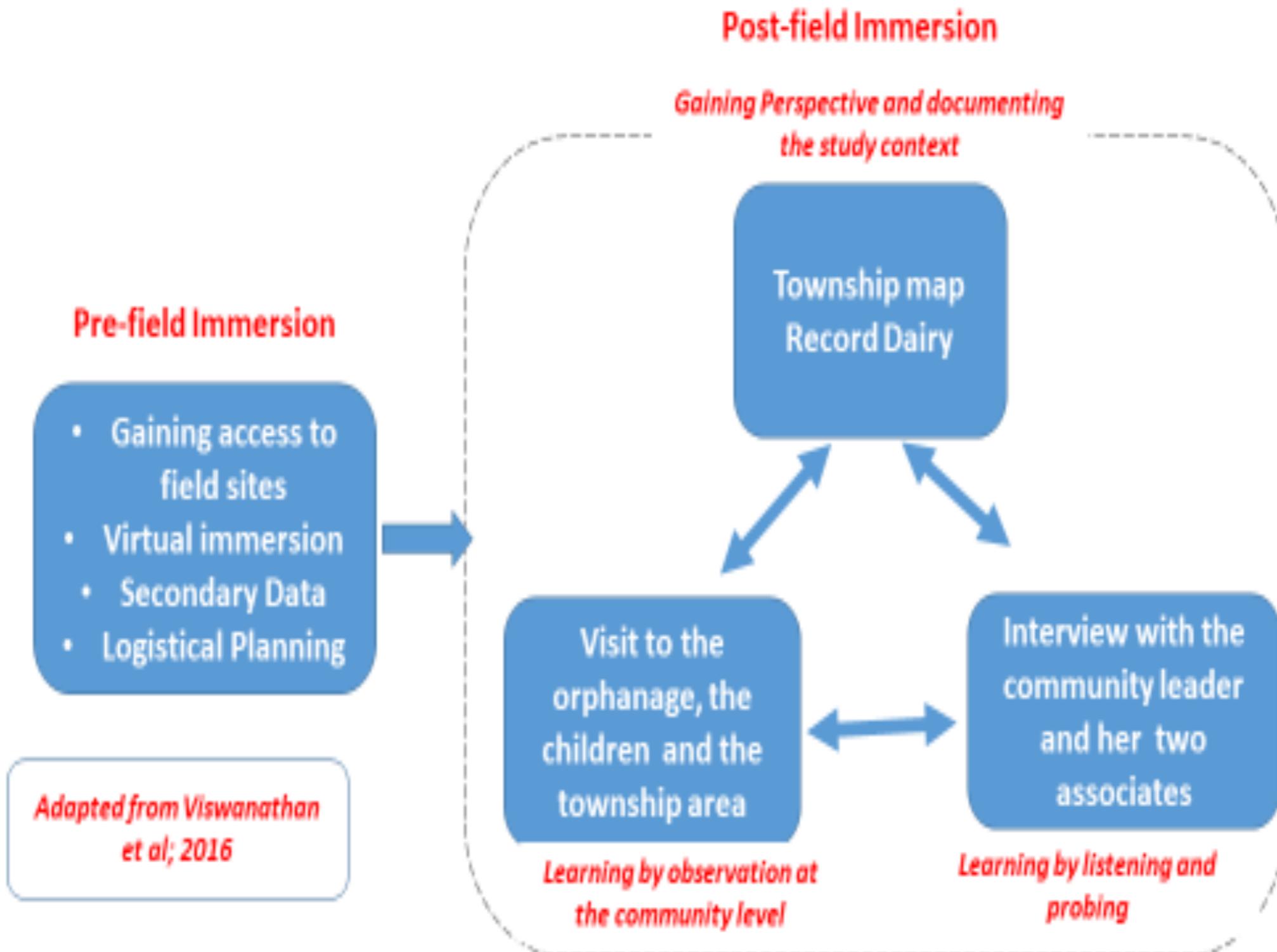
We use a **short international immersion** research visit conducted by a multidisciplinary team of researchers, in the township of Alex in Johannesburg and use this experience as data, drawing from Viswanthan et al (2016).

Interviewed a community leader and her associates on how they were contributing to address the issues of inequality through running an orphanage and were acting as agents of change in the community.

We used a number of approaches for our methodology (Viswanthan et al. (2016:439) :

- a) conducting a **short research immersion** for effectiveness and efficiency;
 - b) combining **verbal communication with sensory observation**;
 - c) using action-oriented approaches involving **researcher/-participant interaction**;
 - d) **covering different units of analysis** in terms of individuals, village-level leadership, and the outside ecosystem of the township.
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RESEARCH DESIGN



FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS



This paper highlights **how inequality, internal conflict and power struggle originally fostered by both the capitalist system and the apartheid regime, were evident in townships area such as Alex.** Participants perceived that government needed to take control to motivate and show people that they were not to be left behind. To listen to the voice of the residents of Alex will be **important in determining solutions to the problem, to make opportunities previously inaccessible to the local community accessible.**

This study indicates that while **low levels of education and the non-availability of jobs of the residents will remain challenging,** there is potential to address these through meaningful and respectful partnerships with the local community.

This indicates not only the power of partnerships in general, but the potential inherent in partnerships that avoid the kind of top-down approach which has typified some government engagement in the past

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