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Published in:
[Publication information missing]

2015

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Lundgren Kownacki, K., Gooch, P., Venugopal, V., Dabaieh, M., & Kolte, O. (2015). India livelihood case study. [Publication information missing], 14-14.

Total number of authors:
5

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India livelihood case study: Physiological and social hardship faced by brick kiln migrant labourers from increasing heat

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India's neo-liberalization has resulted in tremendous changes in the lives and livelihoods of rural people who increasingly work in the informal economy. Seasonal work sites include brick kilns that lure whole families leaving their villages. In addition to occupational health challenges there are sociocultural challenges at both the makeshift encampments at the brick kilns and back at their home villages. Heat stress from hotter temperatures induced by climate change could make it impossible to do this work.

This paper uses a livelihood analysis to consider solutions based in traditional knowledge including physical practices and sociocultural approaches found both locally and in regions with similar conditions elsewhere in the world. The analysis uses a holistic approach, looking at the worker's situation, but also at linkages with their home villages, unequal power relationships, rapid urbanization and climate change. The goal is to evaluate how knowledge of sustainability from the Global South, particularly in India, could improve both the lives and livelihoods of brick kiln migrant workers while also creating climate change adaption and mitigation co-benefits in terms of both the material construction of the built environment, and in terms of how the built environment is socially constructed.