

STUBE Hessen-Seminar

19th December 2020, 9 am – 17:30 pm, Online via Zoom

Sustainable Cities – Urban Future?

Seminar facilitators: Ms Eileen Paßlack, STUBE Hessen-programme manager
Ms Lea Pulter, STUBE Hessen-intern

Target group: Students from Africa, Asia and Latin America studying in English in Hessen

Learning goals: SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities; understanding sustainable urban development; expansion of knowledge on sustainable cities; illustration through case studies from the global north and south; the participants understand basic physical, social and psychological human needs and are able to identify how these needs are currently addressed in their own physical urban, peri-urban and rural settlements; the participants are able to evaluate and compare the sustainability of their and other settlements' systems in meeting their needs particularly in the areas of food, energy, transport, water, safety, waste treatment, inclusion and accessibility, education, integration of green spaces and disaster risk reduction; the participants know the basic principles of sustainable planning and building, and can identify opportunities for making their own area more sustainable and inclusive; the participants understand the role of local decision-makers and participatory governance and the importance of representing a sustainable voice in planning and policy for their area.

Participants: The number of registrations totalled 61 and a number of 17 students participated in this English speaking seminar (9 women, 8 men). Out of 17 participants, 4 participants attended a STUBE-seminar for the first time. All in all, the number of represented countries was 13. Divided by regions, 4 students from 4 states in the MENA-region countries, 9 students from 7 Asian countries, 2 students from 1 Latin-American country and 1 student from 1 European country participated in the seminar.

Process of the seminar

First of all, the seminar was originally planned for the date 6th to 8th November 2020 in Darmstadt. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the seminar was postponed, rescheduled and transformed into a digital seminar series on 12th December 2020 and 19th December 2020.

Saturday, 19th December 2020

The seminar started with a welcome speech for the participating students by the facilitator Eileen Paßlack. The programme started at 9 am. The facilitator presented the various offers of STUBE to the participants. After a short round of getting to know where everyone is from and what the study, Ms Paßlack introduced the speaker for the first workshop **“Sustainable Development and Urbanization“** Mr Guillermo Franco Jauregui Fung, who is a researcher at the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering, Geomatics at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences.

At the beginning the speaker shared a picture of the city Lima during the pandemic because a lot of big cities weren't used by cars or any public transportation due to the constrained public life. Therefore a lot of people used these streets for walking or as a bike lane. The government of Lima, Peru, was also planning to implement 301 kilometers of bike lanes, a plan that was initially thought to be finished in 5 years that the pandemic accelerated to an expected time of completion of 3 months. The project in Lima is also thought to solve a connectivity issue of the current bicycle lanes

which are isolated from each other and not part of a network that provides safe, direct, and meaningful routes throughout the city.

Mr Fung gave an introductory input and explained that by 2030 around 41 Megacities (+10million people) are to be expected to exist. In 1990, there were 10 cities with 10 million people or more; by 2014, the number of mega-cities rose to 28, and was expected to reach 33 by 2018. In the future, 9 out of 10 mega-cities will be in the “developing world”. Therefore city leadership is necessary to limit global heating to 1,5°C. About 55% of the population lives in cities. In a quick brainstorming Mr Fung asked the participants to think about their definitions of sustainable development and summarized their findings. Sustainable Development is development that meets today's needs without compromising the needs of future generations and calls for concerted efforts for an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future. The speaker presented ten dimension for sustainable development like planning for the future as a visionary debate and decide process, not a predict and provide, computer-driven process.

In a discussion the participants had to think about the Sustainable Development Goals and how do cities fit into the SDGs. Regarding SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities” Mr Fung presented that before COVID-19 the share of urban population living in slums rose to 24% in 2018. He recommended thinking regional, not global: local conditions and context for effective action must be taken into account. That means that the actions should be initiated and implemented by the ones who will experience their effects. In a group work the participants were confronted with different situations and roles they must play. After the breakout-sessions the participants discussed their findings of the groups and presented their case studies. For example group 2 and group 3 had to find Pro's and Con's for the task to build a bike lane in both directions. They spoke from different perspectives like shop owner, Mayor, Civil Society and urban planner. The shop owner was very skeptical at the beginning because they feared to lose a lot of customers, because they don't expect people who not live nearby to come to the stores. The city offered them support in terms of money. There will also be a parking lot outside the city center with bicycles and shuttle services to come to the city center. The Mayor presented his perspective and hopes for a good tax collection through new and innovative projects but also has an interest in a clean city and the expansion of electric cars. The Civil Society was in favor of the plan – less accidents, less pollution, cleaner air and environment. The Urban Planner assured that there are cities which already made it possible and they can lead as an example.

Mr Fung gave an example of the Times Square Reconstruction, which radically carves out 2.5 acres of pedestrian-only space at Manhattan's core, transforming a notoriously congested intersection into a civic space. With a measurable positive impact on public safety, air quality, and economic output, the project stands as a model for how the carefully considered design of our urban landscapes can improve the health and well-being of its users, while providing an important space for democratic gathering. Conceived as a project whose success would be measured not only by its new aesthetic but also the long-term physical, psychological and economic benefits on its local and global community, the new plaza on Broadway has reinvented Times Square as a contemporary stage for the spectacle of public life, reviving its place at the heart of New York City. In a final round the participants had the opportunity to share their conclusions. A participant shared his experience in the role play as a Mayor. He felt a lot pressure to bring all these different opinions and arguments together. Another participant commented that sustainability needs to be thought in an interdisciplinary, holistic way and all stake holders should be included in the decision-making process, especially when it comes to urban planning.

For the second workshop Ms Paßlack introduced Ms Pramila Thapa. She is a researcher in the Socio-Ecological Interactions in Agricultural Systems group at the University of Kassel. She completed her Master's degree in Sustainable International Agriculture at the Universities of Kassel and Göttingen and wrote her thesis on processes and results of participatory monitoring systems of small farmers in

Tanzania. Her research interests include food security, socio-cultural factors, agricultural trade and natural resource management. She is currently working on the effects of urbanisation on agricultural systems. On this topic she conducted the workshop **“Impacts of urban growth on the farming and food systems”**.

At the beginning she gave an overview to urban land and urbanization. Urbanization can be defined as an increase in the proportion of the population living in urban areas, process by which a large number of people become permanently concentrated in relatively small space. There are different kinds of cities, like newly planned cities, informal settlements (outcomes of hardships, displacement, poverty, hunger, over population) or mixed cities (example of Chennai). She further explained that up to 0,5 % of the terrestrial area is urbanized with 55% of total world population. By 2050, more than 6 billion (68%) of the world population will live in urban areas India, China and Nigeria are expected to make up of 35 % of total world population by 2050.

The speaker then presented a Quiz on questions like “Do you know which city is considered to be the first place to be urbanized”. A participant knew the answer: Çatalhöyük, which was a very large Neolithic and Chalcolithic proto-city settlement in southern Anatolia, which existed from approximately 7100 BC to 5700 BC and flourished around 7000 BC. In July 2012, it was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. But which is the world’s oldest city and is still inhabited? It’s Luxor, which is inhabited since 3200 BC.

The participants watched a video on the rural urban linkages. The video was produced by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Land and water use, food production, environmental management, transport and distribution, marketing and consumption concern urban and rural areas. Looking at the food system from a city region perspective – the city and its surrounding areas –, can ensure a more sustainable urbanization, and contribute in tackling challenges like urban food and nutrition insecurity, social and economic inequalities in cities and its surrounding areas, and degraded environmental and natural resources. Ms Thapa elucidated that food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences, for an active and healthy life. So how is “food and cities” connected, Ms Thapa asked the participants.

In a breakout-session, the group was divided into farmers, business persons, people/civil society/general public. From these different perspectives they discussed the impacts of urbanization on farming. One proposal was to introduce farming knowledge into the curricular activities in schools. Ms Thapa presented positive impacts of urbanization in farming systems like increased varieties of food suppliers, increased agricultural input supply, creation of jobs (on-, off-, and non-farm jobs) or agro-based industries-food processing. But there are also negative impacts in food systems, especially the negative impacts in food systems. Only 18 % of production consumed by the average city is regional, 5 % from the city itself. Another impact is so called “food deserts” (dry in terms of nutrients) that isolates citizens from healthy food. As a possible solution she presented the concept of “Urban Green Infrastructure (GI). Green Infrastructure (GI) is based on the principle that ‘protecting and enhancing nature and natural processes [...] are consciously integrated into spatial planning and territorial development’. Accordingly, the Green Infrastructure Strategy defines GI as ‘a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services’ in both rural and urban settings.

At the end of the workshop, Ms Paßlack thanked the students for their participation and Ms Thapa for conducting the workshop. She closed the seminar and asked the participants to fill in a short evaluation form. The participants had the chance to share their impressions of the seminar

Used methods and evaluation of the seminar:

The seminar was conducted through the virtual conference room Zoom and the speakers used Power-Point-Presentations. The group activities took place in breakout-sessions.

Impressions from the evaluation of the seminar:

- I liked the multidimensional approach of the speakers as well as the multidimensional input of the participants.
- It was very informative hearing about topics as food and transportation in a relation to urbanization.
- New ideas about a sustainable future.
- Everything was really well planned, and the theme was extremely interesting for me. The interaction with the other members was great, and in addition to learning a lot about sustainability and green buildings I also got to know more about other cultures.
- Maybe some time constraints, but two topics were for today, so I can understand.
- Too few breaks in the second part, a couple more case studies would have been nice.

22th December 2020

Eileen Paßlack

STUBE Hessen-Referentin