

Urban Thinkers Campus Phase 5.0 - Key results, actions, and outcomes

1. Title of the Urban Thinkers Campus

Public spaces as anchors in social resilience and climate action: The role of participation.

2. Beginning date of the Campus

18/02/2021

3. End date of the Campus

18/02/2021

4. Time of the Campus

11am-1pm (GMT)

5. Location of the Urban Thinkers Campus

online webinar

Website: <https://urbanthinkersntnu.org>

Recording: <https://tinyurl.com/wue7xypd>

6. Lead organizer

Lead-organizer: Program on Urban Ecological Planning at the Department of Architecture and Planning, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

<https://www.ntnu.edu/studies/msa1>

7. Partner(s) organizations

Co-organizer: UN-Habitat, Global Program Space Programme

<https://unhabitat.org/programme/global-public-space-programme>

The Centre on African Public Spaces, City of Johannesburg
<https://www.jhbcityparksandzoo.com>

The School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi
<http://spa.ac.in/Home.aspx>

8. Other organizations that participated in the campus

- Jessica Thorn, African Climate and Development Initiative,
<http://www.grgp.uct.ac.za/african-climate-and-development-initiative>
- Jessica Thorn, University of Cape Town; and University of York
<https://www.york.ac.uk/environment/our-staff/jessica-thorn/>
- Simone Borelli, Urban Forestry Office, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/urbanforestry/en/>
- Luis Miguel Artieda: The Sustainable Cities Programme, Avina Foundation
<https://www.avina.net/en/home/>
- Kristie Daniel: Livable Cities, Healthbridge
<https://healthbridge.ca/programs/livable-cities>

9. Number of participants

295 Registered

130 Participants

10.Objectives of the Campus

This was the first UCT on climate action. It presented public spaces as vital components in climate action with a key role in promoting social and environmental resilience of urban systems. The main objective was to showcase and mainstream the relevance of public spaces as anchors for climate action and social resilience and highlight the role that approaches based on ownership, engagement, participation and co-creation play in this context. The presentations were based on selected case studies.

The UCT was a start of a series by the partners on 'new' urban planning approaches and practices, such as engagement and participation, urban planning in times of risk and uncertainty (including COVID-19), mediating social and ecological agendas and political ecologies of planning, among others.

The presenters and panelists were asked to discuss the following main questions during the UCT:

- How, from your point of view are public spaces vital components in climate action, especially how do public spaces contribute to social and environmental resilience? Do you know any examples?
- When, from your point of view, can environmental and social solutions support and when are they opposing each other? Do you know any examples?
- Which role do citizen engagement and co-production play in promoting urban resilience and sustainability in the case of public spaces? Do you know any examples?

11.Relation of the Campus to the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

Both global frameworks SDGs and NUA, advocate for participatory, integrated, and sustainable human settlement planning, management and universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces. They also advocate for acclimate adaptation and social resilience.

The UCT relates and contributes most directly to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

The New urban Agenda has 10 specific paragraphs related to public space and promoting socially inclusive, integrated, connected, accessible, gender-responsive, environmentally sustainable and safe public spaces. Good quality public space supplies connectivity and access, protection from crime, shelter from climate, seclusion from traffic and the opportunity to rest, work and meet. Through its multifunctional and multi-disciplinary nature, public space offers a holistic view of the city, such as social inclusion,

gender equality, the benefits of nature and green spaces, governance, health, safety, education, climate change, transport, energy and the local urban economy.

12.Relation of the Campus to the City We Need

The UCT theme of locally adapted public spaces that have been developed through stakeholder engagement primarily caters to the TCWN Principles 7, “the city we need has shared identities and a sense of place” and 9 “the city we need is collectively managed and democratically governed. Even so linkages to all other principles can be drawn.

13.List of Speakers

Moderators

Peter Gotsch, Professor, Urban Ecological Planning, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Shveta Mathur, Professor, School of Planning and Architecture New Delhi

Keynote Speakers

Jose Chong, Programme Management Officer, Global Public Space Programme, United Nations Humans Settlement Programme

Jessica Thorn, Researcher, African Climate and Development Initiative, University of Cape Town, and University of York

Ayanda Roji, Head of Research and Knowledge Management at the City of Johannesburg’s Parks and Zoo agency; Centre on African Public Space

Simone Borelli, Urban Forestry Officer, Food and Agricultural Organization

Panelists

Luis Miguel Artieda, Regional Program Manager, Avina Foundation (Sustainable Cities Programme)

Kristie Daniel, Director of the Livable Cities program, Healthbridge Canada

Arunava Dasgupta, Urban designer and Head of the Department of Urban Design at School of Planning and Architecture (SPA) New Delhi as well as the Coordinator of the Center of Urban Design Innovation in SPA

Rolee Aranya, Vice Dean of Education at the Faculty of Architecture and Design at NTNU, and current Program Director for the two-year Master Program in Urban Ecological planning at NTNU

14. Speakers' Key Points

Speaker 1: Jose Chong

"Participatory approaches play an essential role in long-term community building and social cohesion. That is the case because communities know their priorities best and share collective knowledge. Understanding the problem helps people solve it. Participation may also enable the contribution of public spaces to environmental resilience."

The first keynote speaker, Jose Chong, introduced the theme of the discussion by reviewing its prevalence in the global agenda, from the perspective of UN-Habitat and its role in the work of the Global Public Space Program. Climate action and improved environmental resilience is a key priority of the Strategic Plan, domain of change 3.

The presentation highlighted how 90% of COVID-19 cases are found in cities. Also highlighted was the reduction in carbon emissions due to the impact of COVID-19, and its short-fall of the annual target needed to limit global warming by 1.5°C. Data presented indicated that there is a shortage of equally accessible public spaces – 46% of the global population in cities access public spaces within a 5 minute walk (400m) and the share of land allocated to streets and open spaces averaged only about 16% globally, according to 2019 data from 610 cities in 95 countries.

A key message from the presentation was that if public spaces are to have a positive effect on climate change, they must be created and managed in a participatory way and supported by policies at all scales. Policy examples include natural disaster and natural resource management and incorporation of green growth into global, national, and urban policies.

This presentation highlighted both the City-Wide Public Space Assessment (a tool used to measure distribution, quantity, quality and accessibility of public spaces across a whole city), and the Block by Block methodology (a participatory process that uses the game Minecraft to co-design public spaces). Examples of projects using both tools highlighted how they can help to guide local government to start with small interventions that can be repeated within the city, that can lead to wider city assessments and national public space strategies.

There is a growing emphasis within the Global Public Space Program to facilitate and overcome boundaries to engage with environmental resilience and climate action.

Interesting questions that were raised included, *'How the Global Public Space Programme approaches spaces of exclusion that are too controlled'*. The following was given as a response, *'Vandalism and misused of public space are related to many factors. Some points from the Public Space Program's experience include: 1. multi-functional public spaces are safer than monofunctional ones 2. It is important to consider governance frameworks to manage public spaces 3. Informal activities can also contribute to activate public spaces 4. It is important that the community feel ownership of their public spaces. In general, it is important to balance these issues to allow more accessible, inclusive and safe public spaces for all'*.

An additional question was in regard to how UN-Habitat's tools avoid the 'top-down' approach. The following response was provided, *' Usually our main counterpart for the city-wide public*

space assessment is the local government. However, we involve communities to assess the quality and organize validation workshops with NGOs, academia, and the general public. The assessment helps to facilitate a direct channel of communication between local government and communities. The Block by Block is more community-driven since we involve them directly on the co-design of the public space'.

Speaker 2: Jessica Thorn

„These Public Spaces [in Windhoek, Dar es Salaam] are very important for shade, particularly in drier areas as well as improving air quality and carbon sequestration. Beautification, aesthetic value, inspiration, and re-creation is the important value of these areas and, of course, exercise. And finally, many residents see birds and domestic animals as well as reptiles and snakes that they find in these public spaces.“

Barriers and enablers to mainstreaming green infrastructure for climate adaptation in peri-urban settlements in Africa

- Need to consider seasonal or permanent migration to urban pop
- Green infrastructure can provide way to use space differently in diff seasons

Dr Jessica Thorn and team are conducting research to find evidence and create an analytical framework to understand barriers and limits to access.

Their case studies included Dar el Salaam, prone to flooding and a quickly growing city, and Windhoek which experiences drought intensification. In both examples, irregular population growth has encroached on natural resources

Their findings include: in Windhoek, the perception of residents is most important. They found that communal meeting areas are the most used and valued, then green spaces, rivers and playgrounds, whereas in Dar es Salaam, the most valued space was green areas along rivers.

When looking at how public spaces in peri urban settlements contribute to social-ecological resilience, Dr Thorn's team developed four categories of assessment; provisioning services (such as fruits, medicines, grass), regulating services (such as shade, air quality), cultural services (such as aesthetic value and exercise) and supporting services (such as biodiversity). They found socio-ecological values specific to the context of these two cities.

They then identified key barriers to access which included:

- Financial barriers (household level) including inadequate financial resources, short project cycles, lack of monetary and nonmonetary valuation, inadequate transparent financial management.
- Land use change and spatial trade offs (community level)
- Design performance and maintenance (municipal level) including low data availability, lack of standardisation, limited technical capacity, poor long-term maintenance.
- Legal and institutional (national level) including pro-grey infrastructure path dependence, outdated policies and ineffective master plans, land regularisation and ownership rights, limited social inclusion and public participation

- Ecosystem disservices including exposure to physical risks, perceptions of low aesthetic value and health hazards

Finally, this study lead to the following recommendations:

- An integrated landscape approach
- Coordination platforms (urban-rural and governance)
- Simplified land tenure systems
- Local communities engagement
- A shared sense of responsibility
- Plan for agro pastoral livelihoods when there is a transfer of land uses
- Monetary and non-monetary valuation

References: ICLEI 2020: Policy brief: Dryland nature based solutions for informal settlement upgrading schemes in Africa. https://africa.iclei.org/iclei_publications/policy-brief-dryland-nature-based-solutions-for-informal-settlement-upgrading-schemes-in-africa/ (r10.02.21)

ICLEI 2020: Policy brief: Socially inclusive urban policy making for climate resilient dryland Africa, https://africa.iclei.org/iclei_publications/policy-brief-socially-inclusive-and-innovative-policy-making-for-climate-resilient-urban-strategies-for-informal-settlements-in-dryland-africa/

Speaker 3: Ayanda Roji

"The case study about the Bez valley park [inner-city farm in Johannesburg] and the sidewalks food gardens is really showing how public spaces are especially good arenas for creativity and also for collaboration between government, private sector, communities, universities."

Ayanda Roji's presentation focused on how we can build climate resilience through urban agriculture, how do we redesign public spaces for environmental and social resilience, and how we can manage them differently

The presentation highlighted that in the context of African Cities, basic urban services are still missing. COVID-19 has highlighted these difficulties. For example, in South Africa, public spaces are still so fragmented and unequal in terms of access, quality and distribution - an antithesis of the SDGs. The pandemic has increased the vulnerability of people and urban areas, as people seek refuge in public open spaces.

Ayanda emphasized that, although cities are learning how to mitigate climate change and in particular trying to have partnerships with universities, there is still not sufficient collaboration with the public. The people most affected are not brought to the table, however, to counter historic inequalities participation is necessary. The Global Public Space Program's tools (both the Block-by-Block methodology and City Wide Public Space Assessment were highlighted as useful participatory tools and in particular to reach out to constituents that are the most vulnerable and often the least included).

One example where social goals can clash with environmental goals was presented. This was the case of riverbanks and wetlands used for farming to provide food security and resilience during economic hardships. However, this has led to pollution and threat to wildlife in the area.

An additional example that highlights a synthesis of social and environmental resilience is in Johannesburg, where a portion of the park has been given to communities to develop an urban farm. This is a hallmark of intersectoral collaboration, led by the city and partnered with communities, universities, private sector, schools, and NGO's. This is a community asset, offering training to unemployed, using natural solutions for a flood prone area. Finally Ayanda particularly emphasized the role that this urban farm has in promoting intergenerational information transfer, and a reminder of identity and history.

Finally, the presentation highlighted the example of sidewalk food gardens that have emerged during COVID-19 pandemic. Although these have been found predominantly in influential neighborhoods, now they are apparent in all areas, evidence of existing horticultural skills and show a way that we can think beyond tree pruning and beatification landscaping.

Two references that were brought up by this keynote speaker was the following:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1r97Yd6vwQchulUDheMHLOB0IFH3LJw66/view>
<https://www.siyakhana.org>

Speaker 4: Simone Borelli

„Our Challenge is integrating urban forestry, urban agriculture and urban food systems into the process of urban planning. These areas are often considered as secondary priority after other infrastructures/transport/energy but are a key to making cities more resilient to economic, health and climate shocks.“

Simone Borelli's presentation highlighted the role of trees and nature in public spaces and how it can both bring people together, change people's mindsets about their role in their own environment, but also have a detrimental social impact. In his presentation, Simone referenced the Tree cities of the world programme; <https://treecitiesoftheworld.org>.

This presentation highlighted four examples of public spaces that have considered environmental and social resilience at the local scale, city wide scale, national scale and policy making level and in a rural context.

The smallest scale example was the Picasso Food Forest in Italy, where the neighbourhood took over management of an unused space in the city without support from the municipality. The neighbourhood has increased planting in this space, reducing the heat island effect in the area, increasing social interaction and coordination through space management, and environmental education.

A city-wide scale example was given to show how informal settlements in most high risk areas have been given support from the municipality in Lima, Peru. They have planted trees on the slopes above the informal buildings to prevent landslides. This project, Independencia, has now been used as a model of partnership between communities and municipalities, for improving sense of community and preventing natural hazards in other areas in the city and to create a network of parks.

At the national level, the example of Phoenix, Arizona, USA was given to show how a tree and shade plan, a policy driven by a combination of actions voted on by the community and with shared responsibility of implementation between both community and municipality, has provided both social and environmental benefits. Not only has it created a more comfortable environment during hot months, but also has changed perception on the connection between individual engagement in the urban environment and ameliorating everyday life.

Finally, a rural example was given to highlight how social and environmental resilience may not always go hand in hand. In Ouarzazarte, Morocco, an effort was made to collect wastewater to create a green belt around the city. This was due to desertification, high temperatures and dust storms. Although this improved the environmental resilience of the city, the land price has risen and a gentrification process has accompanied the greening of the area.

Part 2 Panel Discussion

Kristie Daniel, Panelist

„When considering how to build climate resilient cities, it is particularly important to consider where and how people can access food in a time of disruption. Markets, streets, parks, and open public spaces are all spaces in the community that are sites for food delivery, an activity that should be considered when developing public spaces. In addition, governments should reconsider their relationship with informal vendors, who can provide food quickly and efficiently in an emergency.“

Luis Miguel Artieda, Avina Foundation, Panelist

„If we want to uncover the close relationship between public space and resilience, we need to think about a wide concept of resilience, which is not only covering the capacity of populations to bounce back from extreme events like Earthquakes or floods but also their capacity to overcome chronic stresses such as poverty or inequality. Those chronic stresses hamper the quality of life of people, mainly of people that live in the peri-urban areas, the most vulnerable.“

Arunava Dasgupta, School of Planning and Architecture Delhi, Panelist

“If we are talking about social resilience leading to any kind of positive virtue of what a future city should have including the questions of climate change, then the discussion of resilience becomes paramount. And the idea of social resilience can happen only if there is an equal city as a target for all of us. [...] The idea of publicness also revolves around this very simple question of ‘which public?’ and ‘whose space?’”

„There is a mainstream planning approach that is commodifying public spaces because they are very attractive for many stakeholders and also for many goals and they don't always align. And secondly, there are power issues in public space and public spaces are not equitably accessible and not equitably available for all groups of people.“

In the interim between the keynote speakers and discussants, **Peter Gotsch** highlighted the blend between public and green spaces in the cities and the difficulties associated with ‘green washing’ (the practice of using climate action as a marketing tool or in a tokenistic way, without real change towards a shared goal to limit carbon emissions and manage climate change). Likewise he highlighted new typologies of public spaces emerging today blending traditional notions of nature and the city.

In the second part of the Urban Thinkers Campus, **Luis Miguel Artieda** brought a Latin American perspective to the discussion by highlighting examples in Mexico and in Brazil and by exploring the work of the Avina Foundation in relation to climate and social resilience. One of the key messages that Luis gave was that our definitions of resilience must be comprehensive and must be complete – that does not only refer to the capacity of local populations to adapt to climate

hazards. Instead, it must infer a possibility to surpass beyond the chronic stresses of poverty and inequality that existing populations face.

In Mexico, the Avina Foundation is working with communities to recover natural wetlands. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these spaces are not being used and, with the economic burden of the pandemic with shortages of tourists, the space is now being used for chicken breeding. This example of adapting a public space to provide food security for the community shows a blending of both environmental and social resilience founded in the fundamental adaptability of public spaces to critical situations.

Another example given was the construction of retaining walls to create terraces against natural hazards by a group of female workers that Avina is partnering with. As well as providing mitigation against hazards, these terraces also provide public spaces which are now being used for urban agriculture to produce food and create a source of income. Finally, Luis mentioned the work Avina are doing in Brazil to provide 'creative packs' to kids to help to support learning and mental health during the pandemic.

Kirsty Daniel emphasised the importance of a 'natural heritage system'; a mapping of blue and green networks, and how important the connection between public spaces are to create this network across the city, in particular to facilitate biodiversity, and to ensure that animals are able to travel across the built environment.

The adaptability of public spaces was also highlighted by Kirsty, for both social and environmental gains. For example, an amphitheatre in Copenhagen that could be used as a water storage and pond in the rainy season. In addition, an example of play equipment that was moved around the city so that children in different areas could access it was highlighted as another way that adaptability can build resilience. Kirsty also emphasised the necessity for governments to build streets, not roads – focusing on streets as public spaces, rather than as an auxiliary for transport.

Finally, Kirsty pointed out the inability for formalised structures to adapt to climate change or natural hazards and those informal vendors are crucial in providing for the needs of communities in emergency situations.

Like Kirsty, **Arunava Dasgupta** also discussed the role of informality in environmental and social resilience. He identified the multidimensional claim on public spaces, and the importance of not just users, but also of access and inclusion to avoid places of divide, but to create places of unity. Arunava described the need for more robust spaces, meaning multiple uses, occupancy and participation. An example he gave was the use of a car park for cattle in the early morning, cars in the mid-morning, hawkers later, food vendors, and recreation in the span of a day. He emphasised how open spaces can be used as spaces for playgrounds, ritual, protest, celebration, relief and escape. This is not due to planning, but due to a lack of planning and an allowance for a leftover space – how can planning learn from traditional ways of living? Urban agriculture can provide many functions for the city – flood mitigation, sewage treatment, floriculture, food - how can rural areas inform the urban?

Finally, **Rolee Aranya** outlined how environmental concerns compete with social resilience objectives because public spaces are commodified in mainstream project driven urban development. This has led to increasing exclusion through neoliberal urban development, where

powerful actors expropriate public spaces and determine access to public space. This competition most often increases exclusion.

Rolee also highlighted that not all public spaces are peaceful or equitable. An example given, was in 2019 in India, in a densely built city centre a smart city agency suggested looking at an area where parking has taken over public space, and aimed to develop a plan to stop vehicular access to this island through engagement with stakeholders. University students who took data and interviewed the surrounding community were rejected by both stakeholders and the municipality due to a suggested infringement upon jurisdiction as local shops relied upon economic benefit from the parking and customers access. This presented a conflict of interests where not all local stakeholders wanted to agree. Rolee emphasised that this regularly happens, and conflicting claims and interests cannot always be resolved.

Part 3 Summary

In summary, **Jose Chong** outlined the discussions above, as well as highlighting the importance of incentives and mechanisms to ensure access, quality, participation and facilitating a green network across the city, for example, through land value capture and subsidies for public space upgrading in deprived neighbourhoods.

Jose also emphasised how important it is for stakeholder engagement to understand the role that public spaces have in improving lives in cities, and to push for the public space agenda as part of the SDGs. Jose encouraged all participants and speakers to continue to share tools and examples to develop more principles on climate action and social resilience.

15.Key Results Achieved - Priority actions

All stakeholders, especially policy, need to embrace that:

- Public spaces are vital for the generation of social and environmental resilience. In action, these two agendas must be combined.
- Public spaces can improve social resilience, cohesion, and identity if they:
 - ◆ Address Well-being and inequality.
 - ◆ to Increase Access to nature, space to be active, and social interactions.
 - ◆ Are flexible in their programming and are used by diverse user groups
 - ◆ Are managed by those that use them.
- Whether for pedestrian use, or the role of trees in mitigation of temperature extremes, or for maximisation of uses etc., It is often the “traditional solutions” that work very well, so it is worthwhile to learn from local history.
- Globally, access to public space, and land allocated to streets and open spaces, falls short of UN-Habitat’s targets. Even with the effects of the pandemic, we have not reached our goals in reduced carbon emissions.
- If public spaces are to have a positive effect on climate change, they must be created and managed in a participatory way and supported by policies at all scales.

- The more communities can be involved in the process, the more successful the project will be in addressing their needs. Challenges and needs assessment, engagement and implementation phases of a project must be directed by participation.
- Capacity building of governments on the role of public spaces in environmental and social resilience must come hand in hand with shared resilience goals between stakeholders
- Adaptability is key to resilience, so public spaces, as adaptable places, can provide the resilience needed in face of natural hazards, climate change and social inequalities
- Social inequality and poverty are constant crises that city's face. The city therefore must be constantly and actively resilient to these social stresses, not only in times of large-scale events and catastrophes.

16.Key Results Achieved - Commitments of partners

The partners will continue to collaborate on the theme of public space and climate action. For example, in developing a partner input with a draft policy on public space and climate action for UN-Habitat. Among the follow up sessions proposed is an event space at COP26 in november 2021 in Glasgow.

17.Key Results Achieved - Roles and responsibilities

UEP NTNU will remain a lead editor of the partners input policy document and the lead in organising the COP21 event.

18.Solutions and Good Practices

- The Siyakhana food garden in Bez valley park, Johannesburg Inner-city, is a part of a public space where people can plant and also buy organic greens... It is also a platform for research and training. Collaborating with Universities, Corporates, academics, and volunteers.
- The Picasso Food Forest in Italy, where the neighbourhood took over management of an unused space in the city without support from the municipality.
- A city-wide scale example was given to show how informal settlements in most high-risk areas such as Independencia, have been given support from the municipality in Lima, Peru. They have planted trees on the slopes above the informal buildings to prevent landslides.
- The example of Phoenix, Arizona, USA was given to show how a tree and shade plan, a policy driven by a combination of actions voted on by the community and with shared responsibility of implementation between both community and municipality, has provided both social and environmental benefits.
- In Ouarzazarte, Morocco, an effort was made to collect wastewater to create a green belt around the city.

- The City-Wide Public Space Assessment (a tool used to measure distribution, quantity, quality, and accessibility of public spaces across a whole city)
- The Block-by-Block methodology (a participatory process that uses the game Minecraft to co-design public spaces)
- Public Spaces [in Windhoek, Dar es Salaam] are very important for shade, particularly in drier areas as well as improving air quality and carbon sequestration.
- Public spaces in Kathmandu as vital components of identity, community infrastructure and and post-disaster (earthquake) resilience
- Three lined streets in the historic centre of Dire Dawa (Ethiopia) as models for providing climate comfort in public spaces and promoting accessibility
- The typology of the Maidan in India as an example for flexibility, temporary adaptation and multiple uses.
- Allotment gardens as traditional examples of urban agriculture.
- The pertinence of the approach of planning networks of public and of green and blue spaces on a city wide and regional scale.
- Convertible public spaces along rivers that can become flooding retention areas such as an open amphitheatre in Copenhagen.
- The necessity for governments to build streets, not roads.
- The pertinence and agility of informal economies (i.e. vendors) in post-disaster situations.

22. Media

<https://www.facebook.com/peter.gotsch.79/posts/3755218571222946>

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6777246071874707456/>