EDUCATION FOR THE CITY WE NEED: EXPLORING HOW TO INTEGRATE THE NEW URBAN AGENDA IN HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUMS

Title of the Campus: Education for the City We Need: Exploring how to integrate the New Urban Agenda in higher education curriculums
Organizer(s) Names: Delft University of Technology
Partner Organizer(s): Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment
UTC Date: 7-9 June 2017
Location / Venue: Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology, Julianalaan 134, 2628 BL, Delft/The Netherlands

Urban Thinkers Campus in figures:

Executive summary

Spatial Planning and Design education around the world needs to undergo a revolution if we wish to prepare critical minds and skilled professionals who will be able to steer the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in the next 20 years. The way in which planning and design are taught does not cater for the need to create sustainable, fair and inclusive cities. This is because many designers and planners are the product of an old paradigm of architectural education that privileges individual genius and design creativity and do not prepare students to understand the implications of social, economic and environmental sustainability, spatial justice and the right to the city. Most importantly, the relationship between those concepts and the built environment is not well understood. This poses the question: what can planners and designers actually DO in order to help deliver the city we need.
Introduction of the Campus

Between 7 and 9 June 2017, the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the TU Delft organised an Urban Thinkers’ Campus (UTC) on Higher Education for the New Urban Agenda (NUA), titled “EDUCATION FOR THE CITY WE NEED”. As we know, the NUA will guide the efforts of a wide range of actors around urbanisation — nation states, city and regional leaders, international development funders and civil society — for the next 20 years. After the enactment of the document, attention has shifted towards IMPLEMENTATION: how to implement its principles?

We believe that universities have a special role in preparing young professional and critical citizens to face the challenge of making our cities sustainable, prosperous, fair and inclusive. But in order to do so, we are reaching out to stakeholders from the academic and educational worlds, as well as NGOs, companies and government agencies, to discuss how best to teach and learn issues related to and stemming from the New Urban Agenda.

The TU Delft UTC discussed strategies, methodologies, literature and practical exercises that can be implemented in higher education courses in Europe and elsewhere. Our attention is on social, economic and environmentally sustainable urban development everywhere, but the challenges of urbanisation in the Global South are truly urgent.

The main question is: How to prepare young professionals to understand and implement the New Urban Agenda in very diverse national and local environments?

This is an initiative from TU Delft in partnership with the World Urban Campaign (WUC), TU-Eindhoven, IHS-Erasmus Rotterdam, and others, with the support of Delft Global Initiative, ARCADIS and others.

We used the following premises to start the discussion:

1. Education for urban development is inter and multidisciplinary (TU Delft has a school of planning and design but we want to hear from other areas of knowledge and practice)
2. Staff and students are increasingly mobile and universities are internationalising quickly. Universities everywhere are responsible for educating young minds to tackle global challenges of urbanisation.
3. The Global South and the Global North share many problems of urban development, but the intensity of the problems varies dramatically, and so does implementation capacity.
4. Knowledge about urban development in the Global South must be produced or co-produced by and with researchers and practitioners from the Global South.
5. Education in urban development must happen within frameworks of discussion on democracy, values and ethical challenges.

TU Delft is one of the leading technical universities in Europe. It strives to create and disseminate knowledge in crucial areas of sustainable and resilient development, such as renewable energy and water management. The Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment is a global learning centre for fair and sustainable cities and regions.

The WUC has established 10 drivers of change that will lead to the city we need. We believe that the 10 drivers are intertwined and cannot be completely separated. For this UTC, we concentrated on EDUCATION. This is because we believe Universities have a special role to play in preparing young citizens with critical minds and skilled professionals who are able to steer positive change.

Within EDUCATION, we emphasised other drivers of change that are specially related to planning and design of the built environment. These drivers of change were 1. GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIPS, 2. PLANNING & DESIGN, 4. LAND HOUSING & SERVICES, 5. ENVIRONMENT, 9. TECHNOLOGY and finally 10. MONITORING and EVALUATION.
Summary of all sessions

The event was introduced by the dean of the TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, Professor Peter Russell, by the head of the department of Urbanism, Professor Vincent Nadin and by Roberto Rocco, assistant professor in Urbanism.

The first day of this UTC discussed mainly the relevance of the New Urban Agenda and the relationship between practice, research and education. Though the contribution of Jacobo Herdoiza, Secretary of Housing, Territory and Planning of the Municipality of Quito, Ecuador, Thomas Lindsay (UK), Strategy Delivery Manager at 100 Resilient Cities (Ford Foundation), Mehrnaz Ghojeh (Iran/UK), Consultant in Urban Development at BuroHappold Engineering and members of Veldacademie, a Dutch Foundation that seeks to articulate academic research and universities with ‘real life’ projects in partner cities.

Conclusions point towards the need of stronger links between educational institutions and local authorities (cities), because local authorities can open the door to the complexity of urban problems and the multitude of points of views and yet provide educational institutions with the relevant questions that must be answered. It is not only about the reality check of real assignments, but also a way to understand the challenges posed by a multitude of stakeholders with diverging objectives, pointing at the complex task of managing transition processes. Suchith Anand (India/UK), founder of GeoForAll, a foundation whose aim is to make geospatial education and opportunities accessible to all through different strategies of accessibility to data and computing skills and tools, demonstrated how such partnerships can affect citizens and how capacity building programs for citizens can have a huge impact in “space literacy” (how people understand and use urban space).

The second day was divided between several topics, with the morning dedicated to a discussion of how education and entrepreneurship can work together in developing countries to produce impact in urban development. Theodore Klouvas, head of the Orange Corner programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave a passionate account of how a network of small offices in Dutch embassies throughout the African Continent can support innovation and how TU Delft has been supporting this network. This message was clearly given by Jennifer Kockx, head of the Delft Global Initiative, a platform that supports innovation for global development. The Delft Global Initiative is in fact an example of how innovation, entrepreneurship and education can (and must) walk hand in hand.

This discussion was followed by accounts from students from TU Delft and IHS Rotterdam about their research in the Global South and the challenges they faced. The conversation here gravitated towards the need to have more opportunities to bring students to top universities in the Global North and the challenges and perks of doing so. Here, the question was simple: what is the value of bringing students from the Global South to the Global North? Discussions about neo-colonialism were joined by the perception that, if correctly advised, research developed in the Global North by students from the Global South can be enormously beneficial, because such students, if correctly coached, have the capacity to criticise the transferability of solutions and are able to articulate the knowledge gained into feasible interventions. In general, it was agreed that having students from the Global South and North working alongside each other is incredibly beneficial, among other things because they are able to compare experiences and knowledge. Moreover, the group discussed the fact that young professionals are extremely mobile and cosmopolitan and may find themselves in the position of having to design and plan for contexts about which they know little initially.

This debate was further enhanced by the contribution of Floortje van Sandick, member of the Feminist Group of TU Delft, a group that has been very active in questioning the prevalence of a white male perspective in education. Debate with Floortje and other students pointed at the need to diversify the points of view in urban development, in
order not only to make the responses richer and more varied, but also in order to access the knowledge of groups that are generally silent and for whom the right to the city is always mediated by other voices. In other words, there is a need to recognise other types of knowledge other than the technocratic, male dominated knowledge that customarily leads urban development and excludes alternative voices.

The third part of the day included a vivid debate on education which puts water management at the centre of the debate, through the explanations of Bert Smolders and Charlotte van de Water from ARCADIS. This was a familiar discussion for TU Delft staff and students, who dwell on the rich Dutch tradition of urbanisation with water. But here the challenge is to bring sensitive water planning and design to contexts with very varied technical capacity. The discussion pointed to technology transfer and capacity building as tools for development, but again the problem of transferability and neo-colonialism were discussed. Most importantly, the connection of the university with UN-Habitat initiatives was also mentioned. The discussion was enriched by the account of Anne Loes Nillesen (The Netherlands), founding director and landscape architect at Defacto, a medium sized practice that has given consultancy to several water-related projects in the Netherlands and abroad, opening the door for discussions about the relationship between water management and culture, as well as water management and political culture. The comparative emphasis of Nillesen’s presentation allowed the group to ponder on the profound impact that culture, informal practices and local politics may have on otherwise purely technical solutions. However, it is also clear that technical expertise is crucial, and it seems undesirable that technology transfer should stop. Again, the role of young professionals aware of the limits of transferability and conscious of the challenges of understanding the context, including its culture, informal practices and institutions was highlighted.

The third day was dedicated to further discussing transnational research and practice with an emphasis on housing. The day started with Alex Schafran (US) from the University of Leeds, UK delivering a provocative challenge to universities to completely reform the way they approach the relationship between knowledge building and delivery and what needs to be done for us to achieve socially, economically and environmentally sustainable cities. In short, Schafran challenged the relationship between what is needed and the questions being asked by higher education institutes and proposed that universities must find new ways to deal with urban problems.

Here, the accounts of Nelson Motta (Portugal) from the Delft Global Housing group helped participants reflect on the value of comparative transnational research and model transfer. His account was enriched by a lecture by Darinka Czischke (Chile), Assistant Professor at TU Delft, who also highlighted the fact that the transfer of housing provision models from the north face difficulties when made without critique and that models for the Global South could emerge from the Global South itself. Czischke highlighted the absolute predominance of Anglo-Saxon literature and research in housing provision and claimed this is detrimental to the development of models adapted to local conditions in different parts of the world.

This was followed by two contrasting discussions, by Ana Rosa Chagas (Brazil), PhD candidate at TU Delft and Laura Straehle, award winning young architect and social entrepreneur in Africa. Chagas presented methodological alternatives for knowledge formation stemming from everyday practices in informal settlements in Brazil, suggesting a path for decolonised knowledge building. Chagas’ methodology involved renting and living in a shack in an informal settlement for an extended period of time and building knowledge “from within”. Straehle, on the other hand, presented the graduation project she carried out in Africa, with little support from the University. She discussed the difficulties of carrying out a real-life project and issues concerning North-South technology transfer, entrepreneurship and activism. These two presentations were complemented by contributions by Stephan van Berkel (The Netherlands) lecturer at The Hague Hoogeschool, Rodrigo Andrés Barrios Salcedo (Colombia), PhD candidate at Weimar University and Nishant Narayan (India), who all highlighted advantages and limitations of research about the Global South being conducted in the Global North, issues of knowledge transfer and knowledge building, as well as issues about insiders and outsiders doing research in foreign contexts. Van Berkel reminded the audience about the differences in culture and informal institutions playing a big role in how information is collected, processed and understood.
The ensuing debate highlighted the differences between the two approaches presented earlier. Conclusions pointed towards the relative advantages and disadvantages of “knowledge-building from within” and “North-South knowledge transfer”, with both being necessary and desirable under different conditions.

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**Key outcomes of the UTC**

The main outcome of this UTC was a better understanding of the need to make education more agile and embedded into local governance networks, which might help the knowledge produced become more relevant to the growing complexity of city development and management. The list of recommendations can be seen below.

Our recommendations concern higher education institutions, rather than governments.

On the basis of the discussions held at this UTC, we claim that:

- Universities and other higher education institutions must actively seek to improve the relationship between local governments, research and education. Local governments know what are the pressing questions being asked. Universities are bound to enlighten local governments towards new questions and new solutions.
- The engagement of higher education institutions in real urban management challenges must be constant and embedded in local governance.
- Universities and other higher education institutions must actively seek transdisciplinarity and ways to join up different actions, projects and stakeholders into coherent strategies for urban development, enabling students to deal with complex fields of knowledge.
- Universities must work on trans-sectional education that contemplates urban development from alternative perspectives, such as gender equality, participation and democracy building, citizenship formation and the right to the city (including the right to public goods and the rights to individual goods that allow for the creation of socially stable and sustainable cities, such as shelter, education and health).
- Universities must work on and enable students to understand how urban systems are embedded in natural systems and how cities can incorporate, rather than fight those natural systems (e.g. actions that harmonise urban development, water management and energy efficiency)
- Universities must actively seek to “de-colonise” urban studies and urban development, pursuing knowledge-building and methodologies that contemplate local knowledge and in depth understanding of local contexts. At the very least, universities must actively work to prepare students to work in unfamiliar contexts, where they need to converse with local knowledge and work towards in depth understanding of local contexts
- While local knowledge must be a priority, universities should not overlook the importance of knowledge transfer. Here, comparative studies are important to reveal the differences in formal (governance) and informal institutions that might impact outcomes of projects and policies in different contexts.

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**Conclusion & Way Forward**

This was an atypical UTC and the results reflect the fact that the organisation failed to gather more decision makers on the floor for discussion on education policy. Universities are typically heavy and complicated institutions in which the pace of change does not match the pace of change of the societies where they are embedded. In other words, cities and their issues evolve quickly and maybe universities need to be more agile in order to catch up.
It is true, however, that universities are uniquely positioned to deliver change, because as heavy as they are, they are still well equipped to understand change using theoretical frameworks to understand and interact with real-world challenges. Local governments are perhaps too focused on practical day to day problems and must accommodate the political whims of the day. Universities are unique places where (hopefully) disinterested research and critical thinking can take place and where knowledge can be effectively disseminated.

In this perspective, the results of this UTC are a set of recommendations about education for the city we need. These recommendations have limited possibility to have a real impact on education policy, because of the lack of participation of key decision makers in education policy.

However, this experience has taught us several lessons concerning the organisation of such an event. We feel that we must work towards a list of teaching points concerning the New Urban Agenda and also collection of materials (texts, exercises, experiences) that support these teaching points. TU Delft is committed to this work, and we hope to produce these list and materials in the next years.

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### Recommendations to National Governments

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Monitoring & reporting

1. How do you intend to monitor the achievements and progress in the implementation of your action plan approved at your Campus (success indicators and other measures of achievement should be proposed)?

We intend to conduct periodical assessments of curriculums in three Dutch universities following the recommendations of this document and publish the results online. This assessment should be conducted by a group of stakeholders put together for the purpose, composed by members of local governments, teachers and students.

2. Explain how you intend to share the results of your action plan with the WUC community and other partners in order to jointly implement the New Urban Agenda?

**Short term:** In the short term, we intend to share the results of this UTC using our website and own communication channels (periodicals: B-Nieuws [https://issuu.com/bnieuws](https://issuu.com/bnieuws) and Atlantis [https://atlantistudelft.wordpress.com](https://atlantistudelft.wordpress.com)), as well as our BLOGS [http://spatialplanningtudelft.org](http://spatialplanningtudelft.org), [https://spatialjustice.blog](https://spatialjustice.blog), [https://utctudelft.org](https://utctudelft.org).

**Long term:** We will publish a full report on the UTC in November 2017. We will send an executive summary of the discussion to decision makers at TU Delft, TU Eindhoven and Erasmus Rotterdam and make it available in our website for other institutions to download, and we will reach out to our extensive network of partners around the world, using a mailing list that has been years on the making and contains more than 500 names of teachers and researchers working around the Globe.

UTC key speakers

1. VELDACADEMIE Otto Trienekens (the Netherlands), Veldacademie, City of Rotterdam
2. Dr. Wolfgang Stempfer (Austria) GB*: Gebietsbetreuung Stadterneuerung, City of Vienna
3. Entela Shkreli (Albania), Master student IHS
4. Carley Pennink, IHS, Erasmus University Rotterdam
5. Nelson Mota (Portugal), Assistant Professor, TU Delft, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment
6. Darinka Czischke (Chile), Assistant Professor at TU Delft
7. Ana Rosa Chagas Cavalcanti (Brazil), PhD Candidate, TU Delft
8. Laura Katharina Straehele (Germany), Architect at Powerhouse Company / MSc Architecture (TU Delft)
9. Stephan van Berkel (The Netherlands), Lecturer at the Haagse Hogeschool
10. Rodrigo Andrés Barrios Salcedo (Colombia), PhD. candidate, Bauhaus Universität Weimar
11. Nishant Narayan (India), PhD Candidate at TU Delft
12. Pieter Graaff (the Netherlands), Veldacademie, City of Rotterdam
13. Roberto Rocco (Brazil) Assistant Professor, Spatial Planning and Strategy, TU Delft
14. Rachel Keeton (USA), PhD Candidate at TU Delft, Global Initiative Fellow
15. Jennifer Kockx (NL), Delft Global Initiative
16. Kritika Sha (India), Master student Urbanism, TU Delft
17. Sugandha Gupta (India), Master student Urbanism, TU Delft
18. Edgard A. Zúñiga León-York (Nicaragua), MSc Student, TU Delft, Faculty of Civil Engineering and Geosciences, Chair
19. Floortje van Sandick (The Netherlands), Master Student Architecture at TU Delft, Member of the Feminist Group, TU

List of Participants

DOWNLOAD THE LIST OF PARTICIPANTS HERE

List of organization represented

1. Arcadis
2. Bauhaus Universität Weimar100 Resilient Cities, Ford Foundation
3. Municipality of Quito, Ecuador
4. GeoForAll
5. LATITUD (Latin American Student Association of Delft)
6. Low Design Office
7. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
8. Powerhouse Company Architecture
9. The Haagse Hogeschool
10. University of Leeds
11. Veldacademie, City of Rotterdam
12. TU Delft (NL)
13. Bauhaus Universität Weimar
14. BuroHappold Engineering
15. Delft Global Initiative
16. Eindhoven University of Technology (NL)
17. IHS, Erasmus University (NL)
18. Feminists of TU Delft
19. City of Vienna

List of partner groups represented

1. Businesses & Industries
2. Civil Society Organizations
3. Foundations & Philanthropies
4. Local and Subnational Authorities
5. Research & Academia
6. Professionals
7. Women
List of countries represented

1. Albania
2. Argentina
3. Austria
4. Brazil
5. Canada
6. Chile
7. China
8. Colombia
9. Costa Rica
10. Ecuador
11. France
12. Germany
13. Ghana
14. Greece
15. India
16. Indonesia
17. Islamic Republic of Iran
18. Italy
19. Mexico
20. Nicaragua
21. Netherlands
22. Peru
23. Philippines
24. Portugal
25. South Africa
26. Spain
27. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
28. United States of America

UTC Photos

#UrbanThinkers Campus: Education for
#TheCityWeNeed - how do we teach the
#NewUrbanAgenda?
11 photos
UTC Social Media

https://www.facebook.com/UTCTuDelft/
https://www.instagram.com/utctudelft/
https://twitter.com/RobertoRocco/status/872820416024391680
https://twitter.com/RobertoRocco/status/872802876019666944
https://twitter.com/TheodoreKlouvas/status/872734602913296388
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