1. **UTC Title:** The New Urban Normal: Urban Sustainability and Resilience post COVID-19

2. **UTC Date and Time:** 17 JUNE 2020

3. **Lead organizer:**
   Delft University of Technology: Global Urban Lab

4. **Partner(s) organizations**
   Please provide the Names and URL of partner organizations to be associated to the Campus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>URL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fau.usp.br">http://www.fau.usp.br</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)</td>
<td><a href="https://www.ntnu.edu">https://www.ntnu.edu</a></td>
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<td>Pontifical Catholic University of Chile</td>
<td><a href="https://www.uc.cl">https://www.uc.cl</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>TU Delft Global Initiative</td>
<td><a href="https://www.tudelft.nl/global/">https://www.tudelft.nl/global/</a></td>
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5. **Number of Participants:** 40

6. **Objectives of your Campus:**
   This event gave a voice to young scholars from the Global South giving an account on the far-reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their cities and regions, with a focus on innovative responses from civil society and governments. It aimed at discussing the underlying issues of urban development made explicit by the pandemic and to reflect on the long-term impacts of the pandemic, including the possibility to “build back better” while addressing other emergencies such as climate change, growing inequality, and democratic erosion.

   This event was organised by GUL, the Global Urban Lab of the TU Delft University of Technology, a communication and action platform that brings visibility and articulation to TU Delft staff and students doing work on topics of urbanisation in the Global South.

7. **List of Speakers:**
   - Higor Carvalho, PhD Candidate University of São Paulo, former advisor for the City of São Paulo. (São Paulo)
   - Mrudhula Koshy, Urbanist, PhD Candidate, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). (Kerala)
   - George Zaborki, grassroots organizer and former member of the Belarusian Urban Forum. (Minsk)
8. **Speakers’ Key Points:**

**Mrudhula Koshy (Kerala, India):**

Koshy focused on the successful response to COVID-19 by the State government of Kerala and discussed the main reasons for success. Some of the endogenous positive factors contributing to success were the urbanization patterns in the State: polycentric urbanization spread along the coast, with a series of middle-small sized cities. Religious harmony, high rates of literacy, strong tourism economy, revenues from international remittances, and a socially minded government were decisive factors. The communist government of the State operates in a democratic tradition and has stressed social sustainability and engagement, following the “Kerala model”, a series of reforms which also meant decentralization of the health care and investment in education. The minimum daily number of calories is guaranteed by the state government through distribution of rice for people below the poverty line. The government structure is decentralized with distinction between urban and rural areas. Koshy highlighted the “Kerala paradox”, in which there is social development without traditional economic growth.

Some of the challenges include climate change with sea level rise and high poverty rates. Specific responses to the pandemic included: vigorous testing, tracing of infected people, helping citizens to assess their own risk through communication campaigns, and massive information and communication campaigns that included visual aid and “humour”, as part of storytelling that citizens could relate to. Kerala gave special support for marginalized groups, with an abuse helpline and daily wages paid to informal labourers. There was recognition of institutional limitations, which led the state government to rely on both volunteers and prisoners produce a large number of masks.

The results were largely positive, with the State registering one of the lowest rates of infection and death by COVID-19 per capita in the world (20 deaths in mid-June among a population of 35 million), with Kerala Health Minister, KK Shailaja being praised as an emerging hero in times of pandemic. [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/14/the-coronavirus-slayer-how-keralas-rock-star-health-minister-helped-save-it-from-covid-19](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/14/the-coronavirus-slayer-how-keralas-rock-star-health-minister-helped-save-it-from-covid-19)

**MAIN TAKE-AWAYS:** Clear and culturally rooted communication strategy, societal mobilization and local community resourcefulness, socially focused government, engagement, decentralized governance.

**Higor Carvalho (São Paulo, Brazil):**

Carvalho draws attention to the unique position of Brazil as the country with the second highest infection count in the world after the US (mid-June), with a prognosis to being the country with the highest number of infections and deaths in the upcoming months. Official numbers are underestimated, as the country has a very small rate of testing: only 0,6% of the population. Carvalho attributes the failure of the Brazilian response to the chaotic attitude
of the Brazilian Federal government: “the crisis in Brazil is simultaneously a health crisis and a political crisis”. About the specific situation of São Paulo, a city with 11 million inhabitants within its administrative boundaries and around 22 million in its metropolitan area, Carvalho points out that there has never been a real lockdown in the city, but just a flexible quarantine, not respected by many citizens. This happened mostly because low-income working citizens were offered no alternatives or respite. Citizens therefore either risked staying at home and losing their jobs or facing the customarily overcrowded São Paulo transport system, where contamination risks were severe. Therefore, spatial and social segregation are at the center of this crisis. The number of infections is increasing and, besides the crowded public transportation, the impacts of the pandemic are also heightened by housing precarity, with 1.7 million citizens living in informal settlements (slums), as well as more than 24 thousand homeless people living in the streets and more than 80 thousand households in precarious rental housing.

As in other Latin American cities, the coronavirus was brought into the city by higher income citizens returning from business and holidays trips abroad. Because of that, the epidemic was first concentrated in well serviced central areas. However, as inhabitants in these areas were able to self-isolate and work from home, the greatest number of infections and deaths are now concentrated in areas where precarious housing is prevalent. Shockingly, evictions from citizens squatting private or public land has not stopped during the pandemic and just a day before the UTC, 900 families were evicted from an area they had previously lived in, with no alternative offered for safe sheltering, increasing the number of homeless in the city dramatically.

Lack of access to potable water is also an issue, with 6% of inhabitants without access to running water. Carvalho notes that this situation is not due to lack of good plans and spatial planning, but lack of implementation. In light of the dire situation in the city, citizen solidarity has been crucial to mitigate the effects of the epidemic. In favela Paraisopolis, a slum with 100.000 inhabitants, 420 volunteers (street presidents) were assigned the supervision of 50 households each, checking on possible infections and health emergencies, and in charge of contacting health services. The self-organization of slums dwellers comes in the wake of little response from the authorities.

Carvalho indicates the way from the current dystopia to a possible utopia: In the short term, an urban reform is urgent, i.e., implementing the existing urban and housing plans, transforming empty plots and buildings in central areas into social housing, promoting a diverse housing policy according to the diversity of housing needs, and overcoming the dichotomy between central and peripheral areas. Urban reform should entail a complete reinvention of urban governance, with the right to the city as a central element. For a post-pandemic scenario, Carvalho also invites us to consider the risks of new spatial regulations, which might be used as tools for hygienist policies or to promote new waves of gentrification, since the new urban normal might requires bigger and more open spaces which are not affordable to all.

MAIN TAKE-AWAYS: Urban inequality and fragmentation increase the impact of the pandemic, uncoordinated responses from different levels of government result in ineffective and confusing responses on the ground. There is great capacity from local citizens to organize themselves and react.

George Zaborski (Minsk, Belarus):
Zaborski started his talk by reminding the audience about the specific political situation of Belarus, an authoritarian state with a neo-liberal economic orientation. The government of Belarus has completely ignored the pandemic, with unclear results, since the numbers are not transparent. But certainly, negative results in Minsk, a city that has grown from 1 million to 3 million inhabitants in the last few years. There is no real extreme poverty or large numbers of homeless people in the city, but a lot of people live in precarious situations and could easily move into poverty. Quarantine measures were often taken individually by companies or citizens self-quarantining. One the main vectors of disease spread is public transportation and a rethink of public transportation must be done to keep it viable and prevent flight to private cars after the pandemic. This rethink of public transport must
be accompanied by a rethink of home/working arrangements: in Belarus working at home is not common and people have had to adapt their homes for work very quickly. New housing typologies with home/working arrangements must be sought.

Zaborski highlighted the work of grassroots working groups which in 10 days gathered more than 1000 people working on bottom-up initiatives, including the adaptation of snorkeling masks for use against COVID using three-D printed elements. This “sharing initiative” has found obstacles in copyrights use, which demands a rethink of economic organization in economies post-pandemic.

MAIN TAKE-AWAYS: grassroots organization in face of governmental inaction, rethink of spaces and mobility after the pandemic, more attention to work/home arrangements, a new economic scenario after the pandemic, where citizen’s initiatives must be supported.

Javier Ruiz-Tagle (Santiago, Chile):
Ruiz-Tagle started his presentation by showing the street where he lives in Santiago, to show the start of the winter in the Southern Hemisphere and the high number of cars in the street. A chart displaying the evolution of infection rates in several countries shows Chile as one of the countries with highest infection rates per capita, with an accentuated ascendant curve, demonstrating the seriousness of the epidemic in the country. This is clear even in light of the fact that data is also highly politicized and cannot be trusted. The number of infections is likely to be even higher and the amount of infections in Santiago Metropolitan area is growing exponentially.

The patterns of spreading of the disease are similar to other cities in Latin America: the upper-classes brought the virus home from China and other trips abroad and then the virus spread to poorer areas of the city. In upper-income neighborhoods, the infection rates decreased thanks to the ability of citizens to self-isolate and work from home; while low income citizens continued to spread the virus because they need to work and move around the city, bringing the virus to their own neighborhoods.

Ruiz-Tagle sees three main issues in Chile’s response to the pandemic: first, institutional failure meant that the quarantine efforts were not coordinated and there were only partial quarantines in a few municipalities [Greater Santiago includes the commune of Santiago proper and 40 other communes with independent administrations, with more than 7 million inhabitants in the metropolitan area]. While high-income citizens could shelter in place, the working class needs to travel large distances between their homes in the outskirts of the city and the few urban centers where employment is concentrated, helping spread the virus even further. Contact tracing was initially proposed but never really worked. For Ruiz-Tagle, the second failure is a political failure, as the government would not accept accountability and transparency in data collection and dissemination. The strategies to verify cases, and count the number of infections and deaths were not coordinated, influencing the kind of information available to face the pandemic. The third failure is an economic failure, as no social protection for the urban poor was initially offered and the national government even authorized employers to not pay the salaries of workers who were absent from work. Payments for basic services and loans were not cancelled or postponed. Some small grants were offered but very little relief to poorer workers actually reached them. In summary, the pandemic unveiled social/urban inequality and exposed the dramatic lack of social responsibility from the Chilean national government, notoriously known for its adherence to neo-liberal economic principles. All this took place in a context of a severe crisis of political credibility, since the ‘social outbursts’ of October 2019, when millions of Chileans took to the streets to protest the economic policies of the Chilean government. The scale and scope of those protests
put into question neoliberal policies and the resulting growth in inequalities in the country, combined with a serious critique to Chilean political elites.

MAIN TAKE-AWAYS: Coordination is key, metropolitan governance must be coordinated to face emergencies, data and information must be reliable to enable coordinated action, monocentric metropolises suffer further from extended travel patterns, social inequity has a deleterious influence on how the virus spreads and is controlled, the neo-liberal minimal state does not work in such emergencies as strong public action is needed.

Questions from the Audience

The audience asks whether Kerala’s development model is replicable in other Indian States, as Kerala is more dependent on industrial activity and more dependent on foreign remittances.

Answer by Koshy: Not all aspects of the model depend on flow of remittances. The government has a responsibility to distribute resources in a way that benefits then public. This is embedded in the way the government is set up. If basic services are in place, response to the pandemics is more effective.

The audience asks about the situation of women in poverty conditions in times of Coronavirus.

Answer by Carvalho: the situation of vulnerable women has significantly worsened because of the pandemic, with an explosive rise in domestic violence in Brazil, because of house confinement.

Answer by Tagle: the situation of vulnerable women is worsened due to institutional negligence. If women dare to go to the police, they are not taken seriously or not believed. This is a widespread issue.

The audience asks about the lack of reliable data. How to improve?

De-politization of data collection, analysis and dissemination is mentioned.

The audience asks how is it possible to “flatten the curve“ in Latin American cities with their structural problems and inequality?

Answer by Tagle: Some Latin American countries are doing very well: Uruguay, Costa Rica, Argentina is doing relatively well, while Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Peru are doing exceptionally badly, because of distrust in governments and the focus those governments have put on saving the economy, rather than saving people. The politicians are the economic elite and they do not really out for other groups. They are just now starting to realize that a health crisis is a danger for the economy, even when lockdown measures are shunned, because the health of workers is essential for a well-functioning economy.

Answer from Carvalho: In Brazil the political factor is crucial. The Federal government not only does not care about the health of people, but also use their deaths to promote the erosion of democracy and probably precipitate an auto-coup d’état. The federal government in Brazil is using the pandemics to promote a more authoritarian government, making use of necropolitics (the ability to decide who dies and who lives) as a political tool.

The audience asks how should governance strategies between different levels of planning entities change in order to overcome the current situation?

Multi-level governance and coordination are mentioned as possible solutions.
The audience asks: Given the context of a global fight against climate change, and also how COVID has raised questions about public transportation, should mixed-use developments gain more attention, instead of focusing on individual transport modes?

Answer from Rocco: Emphasizes the necessity to couple the fights against the pandemic and climate change, and the need to build back better.

Answer from Zaborski: We must seek solutions balancing climate and health. Around the world, and also in Belarus, there are issues of zoonosis because of deforestation. While scientists are warning us about climate change, the perception of threat to life is not the same: the virus is a much more visible issue to people. How to make climate change a priority for politicians.

Answer from Tagle: The idea of district organization fits into this discussion: semi-autonomous districts in the city would allow for better and more intelligent lockdowns without paralyzing whole cities at once.

Newton: The idea of district organization also fits in to the discussion of genius loci and ideas about the “village in the city”.

Answer from Carvalho: We need cities where less well-off citizens can live in the well-served central districts of their cities, without the need to make very long commutes between home and work, as is the case in most Latin American cities. Less segregated cities can have a beneficial effect on dealing with the pandemics.

The audience asks Koshy about physical distancing in Kerala.

Answer from Koshy: The responsibility of people to keep physical distancing was emphasized and people themselves played a role in not overusing public spaces. Public spaces and parks are less numerous in India, which is a huge problem.

Answer from Zaborski: the situation in Belarus is unique: most cafes and restaurants tried to stop their activities for a month but were forced to open again by the government. With the summer in the Northern Hemisphere, many young people are in the streets again without face masks. Zaborski ponders that it is not only about clear communication, but also about creating a positive image of those who are contributing to stop the spread of the virus by abiding to the rules.

Summary and Reflections by Caroline Newton and Roberto Rocco, Delft University of Technology

Caroline Newton:

• Role of governments and politicians: going back to the idea of real political engagement and political leadership (Kerala X São Paulo).
• Role of civil society: people are able to take responsibility towards society as a whole.
• Both ideas above are arguments to rethink urban governance and what the democratic organization of cities and regions could look like.
• Urban inequality is magnified by the pandemic, and the pandemic is also magnified by urban inequality.
• Low income working citizens are the most affected: they lose their jobs first and when they do not lose their jobs, they still need to travel long distances to get to work, exposing themselves and their communities to infection. We need to reevaluate how [low income] workers are supported during the pandemic.
• Reflecting on the issue of grassroots initiatives in Belarus and problems faced with copyrights: apart from the issues of democratic organization, we also need to reflect on the issues raised by an alternative economic model of the sharing economy.
The importance of local embeddedness and decentralization of responses, not in a parochial or nationalist way, but by evaluating [and making the most of] local potentials and the genius loci.

Roberto Rocco:

- There is a huge difference in TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS in different cities discussed. Effective responses to the pandemic depend largely on the trust in politicians and institutions.
- Equally important are the prevalent IDEOLOGIES in different places: it is mind blowing to see what is happening in Latin America and Belarus, thanks to the dominant neoliberal idea of a minimal state that prevent governments from taking more decisive action to support vulnerable citizens.
- CLEAR AND DIRECT COMMUNICATION is critical for effective responses to the pandemic. The Kerala example shows the importance of a well-informed population that is able to take the right decisions concerning the pandemic. As planners and designers, we have a special role in helping and informing citizens and decision-makers about the best solutions for urban adaptation and development.
- COVID-19 is definitely not the great equalizer we assumed it to be in the beginning. The virus has revealed PROFOUND SOCIO-SPATIAL INEQUALITIES that affect the health of our citizens differently. How are cities are planned, designed and managed matters for the health of citizens.

9. Recommendations:

Provide list of recommendations coming out of the Campus, include recommendations to:

i. National Government(s): (i) Clear coordination and communication strategies, (ii) clear and transparent data collection strategies, including a strategy for dissemination of reliable data, (iii) avoidance of politicization of the response strategy, (iv) national governments must coordinate actions across governance levels and borders: multi-level governance of responses is highly desirable, as most countries have several levels of decision making and geographical administrative borders do not always match life-work and mobility systems, so trans-scalar and cross-administrative borders coordination is crucial. The idea of a minimum state seems laughable in the face of challenges like COVID-19 and the enormous coordinating efforts necessary to deter the pandemic, the enormous efforts in research and dissemination of information, and the funds necessary to sustain vulnerable populations through the pandemic. Further, freezes to rent, loan and mortgage payments and for evictions should be enforced. Most importantly, national governments must harness the knowledge, the creativity and the strength of grassroots movements and civil society organizations to mobilize society to act in coordination. Coordination in urban policy at the national level is greatly facilitated in countries where a National Urban Plan has been elaborated.

ii. Local Authorities: Coordination and clear communication seem to be key issues at all scales, including the local scale. Spatial planning has a special role in adapting cities to the reality of the pandemic and the realities that will emerge post-pandemic, including issues of mobility (public transportation, including slow modes of transportation), new housing typologies that allow for work at home, and polycentric cities that allow for employment in multiple parts of the city, potentially reducing trips. The idea of self-sufficient neighborhoods emerged as a strategy to contain other pandemics: if citizens were able to find employment, leisure, shopping and housing in the same neighborhood, and if neighborhoods were relatively self-sufficient, it would be possible to lock a neighborhood down without affecting all the others. As things stand, neighborhoods in the outskirts of great metropolises of the Global South lack services, employment, green areas, medical facilities and everything else that would make them livable and self-sufficient neighborhoods. The example of Kerala demonstrates there
is great value in coordination at the local level, with explicit pro-poor policies and strategic actions like decentralization of health care and education. The high levels of literacy in Kerala have also proved critical for the success of communication strategies by the state government.

iii. Community Leaders have a crucial role in organizing their fellow citizens for collective coordinated action. As the example of favela Paraisopolis in São Paulo demonstrates, simple organizational measures may have far reaching effects when similar pandemics strike. If anything, community leaders can also organize fellow citizens to put pressure on the authorities and prompt them to take action. The example of Belarus demonstrates there is great potential in innovative digital solutions that help citizens take action.

iv. Other Stakeholders

10. Solutions and Good Practices in addressing the Covid-19 crisis:

Please provide a short description of solutions and good practices, include links to more information:

1. Favela Paraisopolis self-organization:
   https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/14/were-abandoned-to-our-own-luck-coronavirus-menaces-brazils-favelas

2. Kerala Administrative reform:
   http://arc.kerala.gov.in/node/156
   https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/kerala-administrative-reforms-commission

3. Kerala Health Care decentralization strategy:
   https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5127034_Decentralisation_of_the_Health_Care_Sector_in_Kerala_Some_Issues

4. São Paulo Strategic Master Plan: City of São Paulo, Department of Planning. Retrieved from

11. Media:

Provide links to articles or stories published in relation to this UTC.

A complete report and movie registering the whole UTC will be soon available on the GUL website at:
And at the Facebook event page:
https://www.facebook.com/events/3206060886118048/

There have also been a number of posts on our social media pages:
LinkedIn - https://www.linkedin.com/company/37487472/admin/

Twitter - https://twitter.com/globalurban_lab

Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/GlobalUrbanLab/