

Course Name: An Introduction To Urban Ecological Heritage: Theories and Applications

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Conclusions

So, hello everyone. We have come to the end of this course and in this presentation I would try to recap you know some of the things that we had learnt in this course. And basically I would raise this four questions because I want the answers and I want the discussions to be there with you for a long period of time at least whether you are or you would be interested in doing your research and investigations in urban ecology or you know urban heritage or interrelated domains like that. So, it is important for us again to do a bit of a recap about what this course has been all about. And why you know was it important for all of us to really explore urban ecological heritage you know the various theories and applications, testing them, validating them across different and diverse empirical context of applications. So, we had also you know kind of focus mainly on two very important metropolitan cities of India Kolkata and Bangalore and how had we done that.

And you know like the way we had done it can we say that this methodology or the format also has application across scales. So, this is also something that we need to answer and finally, like what now or what next. So, towards what? You know ofcourse, SDGs this is the crux of the discussion like whether we come from economics background, we come from urban studies background, development studies any other different kinds of domain we are affiliated in or we are doing our investigations on. I think SDGs are something which are very relevant in all these discussions.

And so far as this particular course is concerned the focus SDG had been like you know SDG 11 which is making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. So, SDG 11 it is all about sustainable cities and community, but more specifically we had also focused on the target 4. So, far as SDG 11 is concerned and this target 11.4 is very very important I think because it talks about the protection and safeguarding of worlds natural and cultural heritage. And this is very important because you know like we all know that how like cities had always been understood or perceived as antithetical to nature, but it is this SDG this SDG 11. 4 that actually talks about the couple urban and ecological subsystems you know together. So, it is embeddedness between urban and environment is very much there. So, what I would like to say is that

this is the opportune moment which all of us should be tapping and you know harnessing together. And I think that you know this is very important also from the point of view that like some urban ecological research domains you know interdisciplinary domains already started talking about this coupled urban nature systems or you know trying to understand the urban as a social ecological systems or from the social ecological system perspectives because you know the idea is that urban resilience or urban metabolism to a great extent demonstrate and manifest the intersections or the you know the intersecting interactions and intra-actions between metabolic flows, governance structures, institutional arrangements and networks you know diverse range of social dynamics and components and built environment. So, and this diagram I think is very very like apt because it really shows the interactions among all of them.

And you know it is very important for researchers to really you know focus on these interactions across particular or within particular urban context urban ecological context in order to explore urban resilience. So, you know it is important not to just develop and impose designs on the urban system or the urban ecological system, but it is important to really document explore and understand all the different diverse sets of a diverse range of elements and components that are already there. So, the more robust our understanding would be we would be able to do more justice you know to urban resilience. Similarly, like in urban ecology also for a long period of time urban ecology or maybe you know the discipline of ecology was very much dominated by natural sciences understandings and perspectives, but you know like during the 1920s or so, there was the emergence of this Chicago school of urban sociology where the sociology started discussing about you know the different social components that dot the urban system. And from there on I think the discipline of urban ecology had made lots and lots of progress and we see that how historians, political ecologies, anthropologists they have come together in understanding you know these interactions between the urban and ecological as you know like coupled subsystems.

So, and again you know emerging frameworks very recent frameworks such as for example, historical urban political ecology or HUPE they offer very exciting analysis and dimensions you know to urban ecology. And like heritage also is thickly embedded in these kind of frameworks or interdisciplinary frameworks, paradigms and approaches. Why because you know there is lot of emphasis on the historical or the you know temporal trajectories. So, it means that you know this kind of frameworks they provoke us to really focus on the unfolding of the co-evolution of you know the simultaneous evolution of the urban and her wider ecological infrastructures or wider environments right. So, and then what is heritage? Now heritage is not something which is only like hard infrastructures or artifacts or monuments or buildings yes they are part of the heritage narrative and story, but at the same time you know several other intangible elements.

But you know what is very significant about ecology is that ecology is also messy assemblage of multiple tangible and intangible entities. And this recognition this realization is really now coming to prominence and I think SDG 11.4 is all about this. So, I think this is the right time where we can really start you know understanding and applying interdisciplinary frameworks, interdisciplinary urban ecological frameworks to really do justice to this concept of urban ecological heritage. And there could be many paradigms and frameworks towards this and HUPE or historical urban political ecology I think is one of the important approaches which then enable us to understand you know this co-evolution of or this making and shaping of urban nature across long term temporal trajectories where researchers also you know they explore the conflicts, collaborations, negotiations, bargains, mediations you know among multiple actors both human and non-human who you know are part and parcel of the story of the shaping of urban nature.

Yes you know like for a long period of time we all know that you know cities only implied or cities only meant built infrastructures like for example, big buildings and flyovers, high rises, bridges etcetera. And on the other hand ecology only implied water bodies, pasture lands you know forest and all that, but that this particular understanding which you know tries to kind of segregate cities from nature and nature from cities. So, vice versa that this kind of a like perspective is reductionist this is a realization which is which has taken place in the last 2, 2 and half decades or so. And I really like this particular you know picture this is a water color picture this is beautiful because you know to a great extent if you focus you know if you zoom into this picture at least I can see how this urban components the picture shows that how this urban components are actually being built or they are unfolding over the larger ecological settings and configurations. So, that the relationship is actually embedded and this we are discussed throughout this course that like why it is important to really focus on the embeddedness between urban and nature that they are coupled you know that they are an integrated system this understanding is very much it has to be there very much.

And you know when we are discussing heritage when we are discussing inheritance of both ecology and urban then you know this like lens or the perspective of embeddedness also finds like lot of significance I guess. So, it is very important that how then we try to address and understand the relationship between 3 otherwise you know like separate terminologies or concepts like urban and nature and heritage, but again you know how 3 of them are interrelated extremely interrelated and embedded with each other with their different you know dimensional stories and realities. So, far as particular geographical context or urban contours are concerned. And this is something which I also wanted to discuss because I want you I mean I want to I want you to you know keep focusing on all these discussions that had been done or I know all the conversations that took place through this course. And

this should leave an impact and imprint on you and whatever your area of research is whether you are a practitioner or a student or a researcher.

I think these kind of understandings they have their universal like significance to a great extent and they should be applied across different context. And this really this particular understanding again I think is very cutting edge and path breaking because this is a like article by S. T. F. Pickett and his colleagues where they you know floated this idea of why not ecology in, but ecology of and ecology for cities.

And they made this clear cut distinction between what happens if it is ecology in cities and how ecology of cities is different from ecology in cities and why then finally, we should collaborate together towards the collective aim and envisioning of ecology for cities that is the argument over there. So, you know ecology in cities again this is like very top down because what happens here is that the focus is very disciplinary and like from the sustainability application point of view the I mean the entire planning and all the other things I mean there is lot of focus on biotic sustainability. So, it is managed from top and there is little regards or less attention to you know the embeddedness that we were discussing about and with its implication you know for I mean for both theories and application. Then when we move from ecology into ecology of cities there is a larger understanding about again this embeddedness between nature and ecology how they are absolutely from day one integrated with each other how cities have been curved out you know from their larger environmental settings right. And so, again you see that you know this I mean here cities or urban nature is understood as an approached from the point of view of hybrids and mosaics right.

So, hybrid patches and urban mosaic and of course, urban is like understood from or as social ecological systems. Then the final aim should be ecology for cities. So, and this really really involves transdisciplinary actions engagements and exchanges leading to or through co-creation and co-production of knowledge where you involve everyone in planning in resilience understanding resilience planning design and management. And if you know this whole thing you know this like urban ecological heritage theory and application it has that transdisciplinary edge then only long term viability can be ensured otherwise it makes no sense. So, this is I think that is why I find lot of sense in this particular paradigms of ecology in of and for cities and you know the clear cut clearly laid out arguments about like why it should be ecology of towards ecology for cities and not restricted within ecology in cities and this is very important from the application perspective as well.

So, yes you know so, this question of how has to be there. So, we had discussed several theories we had discussed you know like lot of facts and figures that are there in the reports

and documents published by United Nations more specifically you know UNESCO, ECOMOS, ICOM so, far as this you know urban heritage discussion is concerned. But what is important is that personally we felt that a course on urban ecological heritage should emphasize on multimodal methodology. Now multimodal methodology not only to pursue and conduct the research, but also to disseminate the results curate the findings and you know like place it before the larger audience. Because otherwise this urban ecological heritage should or cannot remain just on paper it is something which is very vibrant it is something which is very real and real life right.

So, TD this transdisciplinary you know engagement from day one is very very important. Now so, what we did was that as we were so much motivated with this idea of multimodal techniques and methods and methodologies that we made a bold attempt of also you know making this course or rather you know kind of designing or structuring this course following a multimodal format. So, you will see and you have seen that how this course not only you know was confined within classroom studio lectures, but it also integrated you know different formats together to convey a meta narrative. So, like you know what we did was that we did scoping analysis and scoping exercises and analysis of you know all the facts and findings across the different documents and reports from the agencies and organizations that are now extensively focusing on urban heritage. And then we also you know covered some theories from the secondary scholarship we gave examples we provided like concrete examples to kind of you know validate or verify some of the theories that we had discussed, but again we took those examples from secondary literature or secondary scholarships, but then we took the I think most important and the boldest step to going to the field recording you know the landscapes and interviewing people and then using those first hand narratives making you directly hear their voices their aspirations and the messages that they had to convey.

So, you know we kind of combined and collated all these things together also you know our first hand experiences from this multi stakeholder engagement knowledge co-production workshops and like our also examples from our ongoing transdisciplinary action research projects. So, that is how and that is why I think this course also has lot of meaning in terms of you know in terms of demonstrating why immersive interactive captures and curations are very significant you know for eliciting and forging transdisciplinary awareness, participation, involvement and engagement for a long period of time. So, the final question or the final argument with which I would like to end this course not to end it in an abrupt manner, but just also to say that this is the beginning of our larger understanding and collaboration and maybe like all of us who have overlaps or overlapping you know research and I mean who have overlapping research interests and who have plans to work in this area of urban heritage or urban ecological heritage. I think our like collaboration should go on across our aligned interest of research and domains of

research because this also has to be like you know there has to be mutual learning and mutual learning alliances to really you know put forward our dreams into actions. So, I think like through this course and through those examples through the case studies through the field narratives and by putting before you real life scenarios through which we could also I think pay heed to ground truthing with I am trying to convey we are trying to convey that heritage is for, of and by all by everyone.

And I must I think acknowledge professor Doctor Anuradha Choudhury from our department who beautifully try to work on this acronym heritage fleshing it out as Historically Enriched Right Interventions Through Technologically Aided Grassroots Engagement. And all these words and these words together they really beautifully you know convey what heritage is and what heritage should be when we envision you know heritage across different context whether urban, rural, any geography, any landscape for that matter. So, yes and I feel we feel that you know this understanding is important it is meaningful to forge and craft just quote-unquote just which means you know from justice. So, justice is the root word. So, towards just and inclusive you know knowledge to action pathways.

So, through this course you know we would like to convey that let us not think that heritage or yes heritage is a physical edifice or heritage implies artifacts, but you know the argument is and I think through the different presentations of this course this is clear by now that heritage you know this idea really really is not confined within you know this material physical edifices and artifacts, but heritage exist everywhere and especially as living systems infrastructures dotting urban ecological palimpsests and beyond.