Course Name: An Introduction To Urban Ecological Heritage: Theories and Applications
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SDG(s) 11(.4) – Transdisciplinary Possibilities, Pathways, and Actions

Okay so, in this presentation I will be focusing on sustainable development goals but most specifically on the sustainable development goal 11 and the sustainable development goal 11.4, discussing the transdisciplinary possibilities and pathways, and actions, you know which are actually embedded within this particular possibility. The root map goes like this first I will expose you to sustainable development goals which all of you already know am sure, but then like what is sustainable development goal 11 all about and why is important so far as about topic on urban ecological heritage is concerned and more specifically SGD 11.4, then I would actually be talking about you know this particular notion and action of safeguarding and protecting world's natural cultural heritage and we will also see the interconnection between the use of the HUL approach, I think you remember this HUL approach, HUL is Historic Urban Landscape Approach and we will se how there are lot of convergences and overlaps between SDG 11.4 and the HUL approach and then we will focus on some case studies more importantly you know the pilot implementation projects where the Indian Government and along with some other international agencies and also some private actors tried to implement the HUL approach so far some of the Indian Urban sites are concerned. Then I would introduce you to a concept a recent concept on which you know Patric O' Donnell shed light on and this concept is known as bio-cultural diversity, so I will also inform you know why this particular Lens or this conceptual analysis traction is important for us to make us expand you know this conceptualization of heritage by not only understanding or narrowly focusing on heritage as built infrastructures or you know palaces and taking a site based approach but you know then understanding the intersections between nature culture and all other and several natural cultural social subsystems that to a great extent talk to inform and remain integrated with each other. So am saying this you know so I will give you some examples from what I called Palace based, place-based Heritage and understanding and interventions and this will finally lead us to explore ways through which transdisciplinary possibilities and pathways could be thought upon and enacted. SDG, SDGs, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and this is a decade of SDGs, 2020 to 2030 and there are like 17 SDGs and there are strong overlaps and convergences among some of the SDGs of course, and I do not need to go into the details of it, but so far as this particular course or you know the larger theme of urban

ecological heritage is concerned, the most important SDG is SDG 11 which is you know making cities and human settlements inclusive safe resilient and sustainable and within SDG 11 this is the target 4.

So, SDG 11.4 is about protecting safeguarding conserving the world's cultural and natural heritage. Now, I already told you that you know there are parallels, there are overlaps you know between the HUL approach, the historic urban landscape and SDG 11.4. So, you already know that 2011 how and why it was important so far as this recommendation of this particular approach was concerned and now if we focus on the Indian context we see that in India there was this you know this between 2012 and 2014 this program was initiated and implemented this is the inclusive heritage based city development program.

And you know through this program several pilot innovative mechanisms were targeted to improve the conditions the living conditions of urban poor you know inhabiting historic heritage cities. And the idea was also you know this improvement could actually be measured through improved documentation of facts and also you know mapping assessment and valuation of heritage assets. Then in the year 2015, HRIDAY was launched and this HRIDAY scheme is all about Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana. So, which meant you know the up gradation and augmentation of infrastructure and infrastructural facilities to protect and you know retain urban identities. And what we see during this time is that you know like several states they started coming up with their state heritage centres and heritage management plans more inclusive you know more sustainable heritage management plans also by involving international agencies such as World Bank and also under like larger programs such as the cities alliance program and all along with the collaboration of the ministry of housing and urban development, Government of India.

So, you know these are the so, for example, the state of Rajasthan you know played a very important role in terms of the implementation of the HUL approach and we see the name names of these cities such as Jaipur, Jodhpur, Nagalwar where you know the hull approach was actually deployed. And apart from that we also have like Ajmer Pushkar from Rajasthan again and then there is the northern city of Varanasi. Varanasi is already a very famous historic heritage city and we also have this like very renowned historic city of Hyderabad from the southern part of India. And the outputs of these programs really I mean quite rich because in terms of the you know the we can see the outputs in terms of this vision documents which had been prepared and the preparation of master plans, heritage committees formation of heritage committees and also the preparation of what is known as DPR or Detailed Project Reports. And one can get really lot of information about you know how planning management and execution of various components had taken place to facilitate to advance this idea of you know managing these cities by kind of reviving,

renewing,   revitalizing   and   rejuvenating   them.

So, some pictures from Ajmer Pushkar and also Jaipur, some snippets from Rajasthan again very like it is a very rich historic and heritage state of India where we see like I mean which really kind of manifests rich tangible and intangible heritage assets. So, for example, Rajasthan, Ajmer Pushkar in particular Jaipur again these cities at the sites are quite famous in terms of you know hosting this palace, palatial buildings, havelis, forts you know like very important historic buildings such as the Janthar Mantar or Hawa Mahal and then Pushkar is famous for its Pushkar camel festival or camel fair and then the state of Jaipur again famous for the blue pottery, block painting, fabrics and also you know Rajasthan or Jaipur cuisine. So, what we see is that how several agencies most importantly you know we can actually think about the collaboration between UNESCO and the Department of Tourism State of Rajasthan to also identify and come up with new heritage tourist destinations within the state of Rajasthan to actually you know kind of infiltrate lot of momentum so far as this particular heritage state is concerned. So, we also have definitely Hyderabad. Hyderabad was you know in Hyderabad was enlisted as a heritage city it was included in the list of creative cities in 2019 and Hyderabad of course, is again very very famous for specific typical Hyderabadi cuisine and it is also a city of like I mean very famous with its courts and important you know buildings and sites and clock towers more importantly.

And so, there is like again some collaborations between the department of tourism Telangana and some other agencies including the UNESCO to kind of jointly you know revive and jointly protect some of this tangible and intangible components that make way to the heritage city of Hyderabad.

Varanasi, Varanasi of course, you know it has a very very rich history because you know it has a very long ancient history because it is one of the ancient cities of India of the subcontinent which emerged on the banks of the river Ganga. It has like almost 82 ghats and you know it is famous for many things for even like for example, Kumbh Mela which is a conglomeration of like people from different parts of the world who come and assemble and take taking part in the Ganga festival several festivals that adorn you know the ghats of Ganga. So, there are so, many elements like social religious elements thickly imprecated with the material tapestry of Varanasi and so, Varanasi also like is one city which has kind of encountered this you know the application of the HUL framework or approach. So, you know you I think I am sure that you remember the HUL tools and these are the like so, these   they   are   examples   from   two   pilot   implementation   projects.

  So, here you see the example for the application of the HUL tools in Hyderabad and here you see the application of HUL tools in Varanasi. So, and if you do a kind of a recap then you know the HUL tools they are I mean there are four major components in this approach

four like main tools within this particular framework. So, one is this very very important which is this community engagement tools. I think I personally appreciate this a lot and I really considered these personally as a breakthrough in heritage management planning and execution because it really provides agency to the local governments, it provides agency to the different actors who are part and parcel of the story and it provides lot of you know like agency and empowerment to the to the to the to the I mean to the people to the user groups to the communities themselves. So, these are the details you can go through the slides and you can actually learn the details about how this you know community engagement tools are applied and are activated which of course, include you know like elements such as heritage walks along with the community and then you know the involvement of like specific organizations such as INTAC and then like so far as Varanasi is concerned there was this city-wide mapping of Varanasi's heritage and this was done in a participatory manner which means in a democratic participatory manner involving different actors you know.

And then like local community consultations for identification of pilot project sites under the IHCDP were also conducted. So, you know it definitely ensures a kind of a participatory and democratic character and of course, I am sure that you know when this tool was implemented then several challenges were faced and it was not a very linear and non contested process, but the best part is that at least you know there is there is lot of I mean there are ideas about activating all these tools that I mean that is very important and imperative so far as the inclusive heritage management perspectives are concerned. So, then of course, other important tools or other components in this HUL tools are like finance, finance is quite important because from where can a city expect the funds so far as this urban renewal and revitalization projects are concerned. So, then there is a scope or opportunity of funding from multiple pools including you know the multi donor trust funds and international agencies apart from some funds also being channelized by the national governments and the different departments and ministries of government of India most importantly ministry of housing and urban development. Then knowledge and planning tools. So, here there are discussions, there are processes, there are the demonstrations in terms of you know this like preparation and finalization of a DPRs detailed project reports and then you know like for Hyderabad we can see how historic areas were identified as special areas development projects to include urban design heritage ecological guidelines for overall area improvement. This is another breakthrough you know the move from site-specific like planning and execution to area based heritage management. So, yes then regulatory tools are also very very important because regulatory for example, if you just take these this example from Varanasi this holy city of Kashi, preservation of cultural heritage bill was introduced in the upper house of the Indian parliament. So, yes there is a regulatory framework to manage all of it and to actually you know to practically implement these ideas into action. So, this is there the holy city of Kashi bill was introduced in the

upper house of the parliament in 2019 to provide you know to makes way for conservation, preservation and maintenance of cultural and natural heritage.

So, you know if you combine all these tools all these four components which are embedded in this HUL approach I think this itself is quite robust inclusive and comprehensive. So, now you know that is why I am saying that we there is there has been an expansion in the perception of heritage right from tangible to intangible, a nature culture heritage and dependent economy. So, previously you know heritage only meant this palaces, the palatial buildings, but now heritage means people, community, livelihoods, their cultures, ritualistic practices, belief systems and what not. So, it is also about hence it is also about engaging community and co-producing knowledge you know together. And of course, the weightage is not on palace based approach, but the weightage is on place based specificities and which and in this kind of heritage you know management planning and execution the quality of life and livability of cities components are also given lot of importance.

So, this is a quote this is remark which I find quite important and this I have taken from the report published by NIUA National Institute of Urban Affairs in 2022 where they say that historic buildings are no longer looked at in isolation, but are recognized as a part of an area and urban landscape. So, this is what you know I was trying to point out that a tangible shift a shift from you know site-based approach to an area-based approach encompassing all the various components and entities to actually revive and rejvenate urban space or urban nature. Now this is you know the very recent concept of bio cultural diversity and how you know the all these different elements natural habitats, tangible heritage, human shaped habitats, intangible heritage all of them are interconnected with each other. Very interestingly you know this particular decade that we are encountering now. So, this I mean there is an overlap.

So, on one hand this is this United Nations Decade on Sustainable Developments 2020 to 2030. So, the idea is to achieve most of the sustainable development goals by 2030. On the other hand this is also the decade of United Nations you know Ecological Restoration 2021 to 2030 and I am sure and that this is actually not a coincidence, but you know lot of understandings and lot of like practical thoughts and prudent decision making and expansion of our ideas have really gone into it. So, you know this makes this really makes a lot of sense. So, United Nations Agenda or United Nations Decade of Sustainable Development 2020 to 2030 and United Nations Decade on Ecological Restoration converging you know with each other.

So, here thus the idea is that you know there is a shift in the idea from resource to asset. So, asset is something which is our existing reality which is very much embedded in the history or the historical tapestry and on the other hand resource is something which can be

degraded, misused, used and you know like and resources I mean it has little less longer term sense than an asset has. So, O'Donnell for example, while you know while kind of floating this idea of bio you know biological diversity and you know kind of combining biological diversity with cultural diversity when she floated this idea of bio cultural diversity, she actually you know tried to kind of focus or make us focus on the interconnections, the inextricable intricacies and interconnections between you know this cultural subsystem and ecological or biological subsystem. So, and she talks about Negi and she derives like from Negi. So, deriving from Negi she tried to you know kind of use or place this term biological diversity as a sim I mean as something which really help us to understand the symbiotic relationship between all these things like between habitats, cultures, ecosystems, cultural identities, religious rules, rituals and how this relationship can be strengthened by a greater weightage on the intersections and the interconnections.

This particular example you know the restored Humayun's tomb again I have taken this example from O'Donnell's you know book chapter which has recently come out just last year end of last year where you know she talks about the how you know from the 1990s the early 1990s there were initiatives there were like attempts to restore Humayun tomb in Delhi, but it was it was not only about the restoration of you know this particular structure of the built heritage, but also the entire complex which is a complex of 27 hectare you know garden area garden complex. So, it is not only about the you know the revival of the structure, but also the revival or the renewal of the entire site and the complex, but the story is not limited to this because the you know initiative also included the rejuvenation and renewal of the Nizamuddin Basti which is a neighborhood you know cycling this area. So, the idea was that if you know this neighborhood is not renewed if this neighborhood I mean the people living in this area the people from the Basti or the slum you know the poor people the urban marginalized communities and households in this area if they keep suffering from access lack of access to basic you know infrastructural sanitation utilities or you know urban facilities. Then you know heritage preservation of this particular site will not have much sense because it is also about you know feeling how do I say like feeling pride about one's own inheritance. So, how can you know a particular site be revived if you do not take into consideration or if you do not kind of design renewal plans for the entire area and the neighborhood and the community.

So, you know it is a fascinating example of the like of how urban renewal undertakings you know were kind of crafted in the form of like improvements in education and health and sanitation waste management and vocational trainings were also imparted to the community. And it also included several community mobilization measures and schemes including you know like a street plays and performances paintings like several other visual modes and methods to you know kind of revive this entire area. So, here we find really a kind of a very like tangible outcome of the HUL approach or of the activation of the HUL approach in actually advancing the concept of a sustainable city. Now, this is the final

example and one of my favorite examples where you see you know this is the like it is the largest intertidal mud flat ecosystem, mud flat wetlands encircling you know the coastal area or the coast of the yellow sea and you know the Bohoia Gulf of China. And this is a location of the migratory bird sanctuaries and this was kind of it got the heritage tag from the UNESCO because you know this entire area it comprises of mud flats, wetlands, shorelines, seascapes comprising of like almost 650 varieties of species including you know mammals, reptiles, fish and amphibians and like some of which also have become rare if not extinct and so, the ideas also preserve you know these some of the rare species.

And this particular stretch is very important in terms of you know in terms of actually you know kind of I mean hosting age old natural and cultural like inheritance for example. So, the idea is that you know that also one has to I mean remember that the bank or the land surrounding this area it is also thickly populated with villages, with roads, with you know urban areas and thus this also poses some threat or threats to the critical environments. So, the idea is that you know the installation of the world heritage inscription in 2019 it is actually not a panacea, but an attempt to increase or raise awareness among the national and international you know audience people because making all of us understand you know the significance the hydrological, topographical, biological, ecological, cultural you know significance of this area. So, I would like to conclude you know this topic by saying that this is the opportune moment that has all plunge into it because you know like I mean the HUL approach one of the like achievable outcomes within this HUL approach is actually achieving SDGs of the new you know urban moment. So, there is lot of scope of integration of HUL with the SDG 11.4 agenda and you know integrating this agenda we can actually do lot of justice to this you know emerging or the budding concept of what I call Urban Ecological Heritage. And the need of the hour is like more and more interdisciplinary approaches, transdisciplinary or you know multi-sectoral involvement, inter-sectoral coordination which would also activate not only SDG 11 or 11.4, but also several other SDGs which are associated or interconnected with each other and with SDG 11 and SDG 11.4 as the core or the thematic thrust of you know this larger SDG sustainable development goal agenda of the United Nations. And these are some of my favorite you know quotes or remarks.

So, the first one is from Shakespeare who said like what is the city, but the people. So, you know so, I mean immediately this then draws or this you know make us understand that how society and the urban and how like I mean community and the urban ideas aspirations. So, city is not only about buildings and bridges and infrastructure, but it is about the people for whom you know all these different material components or aspects make sense. Then you know like this is from UNESCO 2016 report which talks about like why sustainable options you know about actually the sustainable options that balance the urban course with their hinterland a very very important idea that in which immediately make us understand

and think or rethink that what are cities like if we want to define cities the very definition of cities remain incomplete you know without an attempt to include like beyond the urban within the urban discussion. Because cities by their very definition are not you know self sufficient   by   themselves.

So, it is important to understand this relationship and the sustainable options you know balancing the urban course with the larger you know hinterlands human and physical both. And, thus if like we are focusing on safeguarding natural cultural heritage, we are doing this to ensure continued dynamism of our cities, but the heritage of yesterday provides both the touchstones of our memory and the wellsprings of our imagination. These are some important references for this topic. So, we have discussed SDGs, SDG 11 and SDG 11.4 in this lecture. And, we have discussed I think I have been able to lay out the context that why this discussion is important and why it is an opportunity moment right now, why the contemporary times is an opportunity moment to preserve you know to really work together to preserve and safeguard urban ecological heritage. So, we have used examples from pilot implementation projects in some Indian cities along the deployment of HUL and collaboration of national programs with international agencies in you know activating these implementation programs and projects. We have also learned bio cultural diversity as an analytic traction to expand ideas of heritage preservation mainly again targeting intersections and overlaps between biological and cultural diversity is very very important. And finally, we have established why and how again this is an opportunity moment to activate the idea of urban ecological heritage through transdisciplinary involvements engagements and actions. Thank you.