



Programme

Friday, 6 June 2014, UNU-IAS, Yokohama Office, Seminar Room A, 11:30 –

- 11:30–11:55 **“Let’s Talk About the SDGs: The Challenges in Global Planning for Sustainability”**
Casey Stevens, USA
JSPS-UNU Postdoctoral Fellow
- 11:55–12:30 Discussion
(Chair: Norichika Kanie, Tokyo Institute of Technology/UNU-IAS)
- 14:00–14:25 **“Climate Change and the City: Urban responses to a global challenge”**
Csaba Pusztai, Hungary
UNU-IAS Postdoctoral Fellow
- 14:25–15:00 Discussion
(Chair: Jose Puppim de Oliveira, UNU-IAS)
- 15:00–15:25 **“Climate Change and Urban Settlements: A spatial perspective of carbon footprint and beyond...”**
Mahendra Sethi, India
UNU-IAS PhD Fellow
- 15:25–16:00 Discussion
(Chair: Jose Puppim de Oliveira, UNU-IAS)



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UNU-IAS PhD/Postdoctoral Fellows' Final Presentations 2014

“Let’s Talk About the SDGs: The Challenges in Global Planning for Sustainability” – Casey Stevens

Abstract:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent the first global effort to collectively construct a planning agenda for all countries. However, the ambition of the agenda is also confronted with significant political challenges: different value systems, divisions between developed and developing countries, limited international institutions, a multilateral system weighted down by many ongoing stalled processes, and ongoing crises in the world. As a nonbinding international effort, the success or failure of the SDGs may very well be their ability to change the ideas of policymakers around the world. Integrated thinking on sustainability which works across institutional silos can make significant social transformations possible. Unfortunately, the ability of sustainability thinking to influence negotiations and political processes is shaped by a number of factors. This presentation will briefly explore how these ideas have shaped the construction of the SDGs and on how these ideas are likely to shape the final negotiations on the issue and the early implementation of efforts. Utilizing the social learning perspective, this presentation will evaluate the space for sustainability thinking in the negotiations and the limitations on that which may be significant in producing a particular outcome. The conclusion will reflect on what potential spaces exist for widening the impact of the SDGs in the next few years.

Casey Stevens joined United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability in September 2013 and since that time has worked on research on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The empirical research has included analysis of the social and idea networks which are animating the negotiations, attendance at two rounds of negotiations, interviews with key stakeholders, and other textual research into the processes of formation. Much of his research has focused on the existing ideas for sustainable transformations and in the ways in which these ideas are constructed and used by policymakers and negotiators in the United Nations. Focusing on the ideas undergirding the conversation, he is working on a book chapter “From SDGs to Sustainability” (with Peter M. Haas), and two articles “Unravelling the Silos: Bureaucracy, Sustainability, and Ideational politics” and “The Construction of Social Learning.” In addition, while he was at UNU-IAS he was co-author for many of the newly established UNU-IAS/ESG policy brief series on the Sustainable Development Goals.



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UNU-IAS PhD/Postdoctoral Fellows' Final Presentations 2014

“Climate Change and the City: Urban responses to a global challenge” - Csaba Pusztai

Abstract:

The principle of local action in response to global problems has been strongly advocated since Agenda 21. Cities in particular have been recognized as powerful players in creating change and facilitating transitions towards more sustainable regional, national and global economies. Cities typically have considerable control over and experience with urban socio-technical systems and human behaviour. Therefore they are in a good position to experiment with new policies and solutions. How far have cities around the globe come in terms of responding to local environmental problems and climate change challenges? What are the differences across cities in terms of their approaches? And what are some of the possible reasons for the variation? How much can we expect cities to learn to address environmental problems at their scale?

Csaba Pusztai, a Hungarian national, earned his PhD in Environmental Sciences and Policy from the Central European University (CEU) in Hungary. His thesis focused on organizational factors of developing capacity for governing urban sustainability at the level of local governments (cities).

As a member of the Sustainable Urban Futures team at UNU-IAS, Csaba was involved in the development of a suite of decision support tools to evaluate the climate co-benefits of potential policies in urban transport, energy, and waste management. He specifically focused on governance tools that assist decision makers in assessing policy options in terms of the challenges they pose in implementation and governance. Csaba also conducted research on how urban responses to climate change around the world are shaped by the socio-economic performance and innovation in cities and their ability to draw on the experiences of other cities. In addition, Csaba also ventured into modelling policy discourse networks in the Indian forest sector (non-timber forest products) as a collaborative research effort with Dr. Yasmeen TelWala.



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UNU-IAS PhD/Postdoctoral Fellows' Final Presentations 2014

“Climate Change and Urban Settlements: A spatial perspective of carbon footprint and beyond...”

- Mahendra Sethi

Abstract:

The earth is increasingly becoming vulnerable to rampant use, misuse and abuse of natural resources by the anthropos, carbon being the most critical. Across the globe, there is an unprecedented demand for resources to fuel national economies, while it is the cities that act as the guzzling engines of energy and fossil-carbon. As the world further experiences urbanization, the 21st century poses a challenge in deepening the internationally evident disparities in access and allocation of carbon across the urban-rural gradient.

This research aims to examine the role of cities in their contribution to global change. It empirically co-relates national and global carbon footprints to local spatial transformations like urbanization. At the national scale, it spatially disaggregates emissions by India, from one of its most significant contributing sectors- electricity generation from 454 thermal power plants - underpinning how substantial footprint is attributable to cities and rapidly urbanizing areas. At the international level, this research presents a first of its kind investigation to plot carbon inequities of countries against an urban-rural spatial framework, which is more pertinent to localized earth systems governance and action. The research builds on a strong hypothesis that the existing dualities in international environmental policy, evident in the so-called global 'North-South' economic divide, is actually an 'Urban-Rural' spatial disparity in the making. The methodology includes an intensive literature study of the prevailing debates in global climate governance, various proposals for allocation of the carbon space and growing importance of ethics and justice to bring about change from the status quo. This is followed by formulation of an alternative analytical framework to plot carbon emissions of over 200 countries/territories, supported by reporting on energy access and consumption; presenting some striking spatial patterns of carbon inequity. This research concludes by presenting a future pathway that is committed to procedural justice and sub-nationalization of carbon governance that fairly acknowledges carbon flows at the local level through standard emission inventories based on consumption criteria.

Mahendra Sethi is a Doctoral Research Fellow in the Sustainable Urban Futures team at UNU-IAS. He is an urban-environment expert and his field of research explores the role of cities at the interface of global environmental change and local governance, with a particular focus in Asia. He is also associated with the National Institute of Urban Affairs, India, as Editor for the research journal *Urban India* and other publications of the Institute.

Prior to joining UNU-IAS, he was involved in research studies, development consultancy, appraisals and formulation of urban, regional and environmental plans for national governments, statutory bodies, and international/ multilateral funding organizations, including the World Bank and WWF.

Sethi has been a guest faculty in postgraduate courses and has supervised dissertation and thesis students. In addition to inquiries of global environmental governance within the urban sphere, he has keen research interest in themes of megacities, sustainable transport, optimization models, climate resilience, green habitat, evolution of settlements, and ecological development in mountain and hill areas.

Born and brought up in India, Sethi attained a Masters in Planning, specialization in Environmental Planning, from the School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi and a Masters in Mass Communications from Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology, India. He has authored numerous journal articles and book chapters, and has also disseminated research through national and international conferences. In addition to organizing conference/ workshops in the inter-disciplinary field of Cities & Climate Change, his research during his PhD Fellowship at UNU-IAS focused on the growing contribution of urbanization and urban settlements in global change, particularly by analysing their carbon footprints spatially and temporally. One of the most interesting works reveals, for the first time, disparities in carbon emissions between global North-South and local urban-rural.