By Lilian Kato

Cities as Spaces of Memory, Change and Sustainability

Walking through Berlin and Wittenberg was like stepping into a living textbook on how cities evolve through history, conflict, and renewal. Each place told a story not only of its past but also of its search for sustainable futures.

History and Memory

The excursion through Berlin's historic core showed how the city's landscape is shaped by memory. At the Holocaust Memorial and the Berlin Wall, I felt how division and violence remain part of the urban fabric. Even rebuilt squares and churches carry symbolism, serving as both reminders of trauma and signs of resilience.

Planning and Transformation

The excursion in West Berlin revealed how planning can shape identity. The Memorial Church symbolized reconciliation, while Potsdamer Platz showed how destroyed areas can be reimagined. Social projects, such as housing for the homeless, reminded me that planning must meet human needs as much as physical renewal.

Sustainability and Participation

In Wittenberg, the focus shifted to current challenges of a mid-sized city. What struck me most was the integration of sustainability and participation. From zoning plans that prioritize commuters to the transformation of former industrial areas into green public spaces. Wittenberg is testing how cities can reconnect with their natural landscapes. Projects like the upcoming "State Garden Show" and community-driven park initiatives underscored the importance of involving citizens in shaping their environment, ensuring urban change is not just top-down but rooted in local voices.

Reflections

These excursions taught me that cities are landscapes of memory, adaptation, and imagination. Berlin emphasized the need to face history, while Wittenberg showed how smaller cities can innovate. In Tanzania, rapid urbanization poses challenges of balancing growth with ecology and inclusion. These lessons inspire my academic journey, reinforcing that sustainable cities depend on weaving together history, people, and the environment.