Journeys into Everyday Urban Wicked Problems

Exploring how everyday actions become complex urban challenges

SMUS

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INTRODUCTION

This reflective workshop presents 'everyday urban wicked problems' as an ongoing chalenge rooted in daily lives, intertwining with social, political, and environmental factors. It included a series of sessions designed to unpack these problems, examine them from transdisciplinary perspectives, and context-specific strategies for building possibilities for the urban futures.

Regional Everyday Urban Wicked Problems

Participants were divided into regional groups - America, Africa, and Asia - to discuss everyday wicked urban problems specific to their respective world regions. They examined current mitigation efforts, categorizing them as effective, somewhat effective, or ineffective, and proposed potential solutions for the future. Participants cited current mitigation efforts ranging from public housing programs and slum upgrading initiatives to education and expanded infrastructure provision. They proposed future solutions, including civic education, policy reforms, intensified recycling, increased youth involvement, and inclusive planning.

The Americas

Homelessness and Housing
Organised Crime
Water Governance
Climate Hazards
Climate Emergency
Negligence

Africa

Waste Management
Climate Hazards
Informal Settlements
Inaccessible public space
Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Asia

Air Pollution
Socio-economic Inequality
Inefficient Transportation
Climate Hazards (Flooding)
Inefficient Urban Infrastructure

Transdisciplinary Approaches

Participants engaged in a transdisciplinary 'role play' exercise where each person represented a key stakeholder. This activity encouraged us to view WUPs and explore collaborative solutions. By embodying different roles, they highlighted these challenges and the need for integrated, cross-sector approaches to address them effectively.

The image on the right, illustrates the transformation of everyday problems into wicked urban problems as they evolve from the micro to the macro level. It demonstrates how seemingly minor, localized concerns can escalate into complex urban challenges due to neglect, fragmented responses, or the failure to recognize them as socio-ecological concerns. To exemplify this shift, the case of Indore, India, was presented. In this context, routine practices such as dumping household waste and immersing religious offerings into the Khan River were not initially perceived as socio-ecological problems. However, over time, these everyday actions collectively contributed to the river's degradation, transforming it into a drain and ultimately representing how micro-level practices can intensify into macro-level ecological crises or "wicked problems."

Transdisciplinary Approaches

Roles debated access to safe, affordable housing and basic services.

Transdisciplinary Approaches

Roles examined waste collection, disposal practices, and recycling solutions.

Transdisciplinary Approaches

Roles explored community safety and crime prevention.

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