

**REIMAGINING UNIVERSITIES AS
DRIVERS OF SUSTAINABILITY**

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

Summer School

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TABLE OF CONTENT

1 CONFERENCE REPORT	3
2 STUDENT VOICES	8
2.1 WORKSHOP GROUP EDUCATION	8
2.2 WORKSHOP GROUP GREEN CAMPUS	12
2.3 WORKSHOP GROUP ECONOMY	14
2.4 WORKSHOP GROUP MOBILITY	17
2.5 WORKSHOP GROUP FOOD	20
2.6 WORKSHOP GROUP SOCIAL JUSTICE	23

1 CONFERENCE REPORT

By Olivia Logan

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Universities are influential social institutions with a responsibility to reckon with the current and near-future challenges brought about by climate change and biodiversity loss. This week-long student-led summer school, hosted at Humboldt University in Berlin by Circle U European University Alliance, asked students and staff how universities can contribute to tackling the climate crisis. Attendees represented seven universities in Circle U's alliance; Aarhus University, University of Belgrade, Humboldt University, UC Louvain, King's College London, University of Oslo, Paris Cité University, Pisa University and Vienna University. There were also representatives of five Balkan region universities attending; University of Ljubljana, University of Prishtina, Saints Cyril and Methodius University Skopje, Tirana Center of Technology and the University of Zagreb. On one end, the schedule offered talks on the fundamentals of climate science and the possible climate outcomes for the next 100 years. On the other end, the conference asked; what is the role of universities in how society responds to the climate crisis?

In her opening address to students, organising professor Anne Enderwitz (HU), outlined the three main aims of the summer school. First, to raise awareness and discuss the attitude in European universities towards tackling climate change. Second, to develop solutions to overcome the obstacles universities face when seeking to address their environmental impact. Finally, to give students a uniquely central role in shaping their universities' responses to the climate crisis. The students were tasked with finding solutions which will be presented at the university rectors' conference in November 2022. Throughout the week, students participated in one of six workshops which focused on different intersections of university life and climate politics. The workshop themes were; Green Campus, Mobility, Food, Social Justice, Economics and Education. The workshop groups met three times over the course of the week, first to identify problems at their university in relation to their specific workshop topic. Second, to develop possible solutions to these problems and third, to prepare a poster presentation on their findings and suggested solutions. The participation of students from almost every corner of Europe meant that a diversity of knowledge and experience came together in the conference group discussions, both in workshop groups and subsequent talks or panels. Throughout the week these discussions often mirrored the workshop aims to identify problems and develop possible solutions. As such, this report will outline the most pertinent problems and creative solutions which were discussed and developed by students throughout the week.

1.2 PART ONE: IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS

The summer school intended to identify areas in which universities function unsustainably. The week's official opening included a talk from HU's climate protection manager Wiebke Hampel, which outlined the university's goal of climate neutrality by 2030. Changes to mobility, specifically the method of transport used by academics and researchers to travel to scientific events such as conferences or field trips, was identified as the most effective way to reduce CO2 emissions. In the discussion that followed the presentation Christian Wilhelm, Circle U consultant at HU pointed out that when it comes to making sustainable changes, the university must not punish people for what they do but rather persuade people to make sustainable choices. In response, Sue Wright, Professor of Educational Anthropology at Aarhus University, suggested that the commercial relationships universities have with travel companies often make the possibility to "make sustainable choices" difficult. This example set a tone that the week-long summer school discussions should not focus on what universities should encourage students and staff to do but rather on the institutional changes required by universities.

On Monday afternoon students attended their first workshop on a topic of their choice and set about identifying related problems. In the Food workshop participants discussed their respective university's relationship with food. Questions raised included; did their university have a cafeteria which served vegan and vegetarian options? Did the cafeteria have single-use plastic or porcelain plates and cups? Did their university recycle packaging? Most students in this working group, who studied in Belgium, Croatia, England, Kosovo, Norway, and Serbia, agreed that, because their country's culture was closely tied to eating meat and animal products, it would be difficult to encourage their university cafeteria to offer more vegan and vegetarian options. However, this relationship should be interrogated and such a change was considered to be a necessary step that could have a great impact in reducing the university's CO2 emissions. One student from Kosovo also pointed out that her university, the University of Prishtina, used single-use packaging and did not have any recycling system because students were not trusted to separate items properly for recycling. This point exposes the reluctance of universities to invest time in making sustainable changes, perhaps reveals institutions' tendencies to make excuses and contrasts Wiebke Hampel's observation that many HU sustainability initiatives are often a result of student demands for change in the university.

Multiple panels and presentations in the summer school also asked questions about where people get their understanding of climate science and politics, and how they psychologically and emotionally process this information. In a joint event with Circle U's Climate Knowledge Hub Summer School, HU's Climate Geography professor, Christoph Schneider presented a history of climate change and outlined some possible futures. Schneider's presentation highlighted how our view of the climate change timeline is often limited to the past fifty and future eighty years. However this perspective does not recognise that the effects of greenhouse gases have been known since their discovery in 1824 and that the 2100 end date often cited in climate models fails to account for climate change in the next century. Such limited time scales perhaps reflect many people's incapability to process the magnitude of the climate crisis. This issue was discussed in the Science and Science Communication panel discussion and Paris Cité professor Natalie Blanc's individual workshop "From the Ecological Feeling to the Map". The panel discussion, chaired by Prof. Enderwitz (HU), included Prof. Natalie Blanc, climate journalist Sara Schurmann, HU sustainability office member Vero Pinzger and HU economics professor Klaus Eisenack. Much of this discussion focused on the role of the media in reporting on climate change. Sara Schurmann made it clear that she believes most people are yet to grasp the urgency of the climate crisis and that journalists should convey this urgency by discussing climate science, in particular CO2 budgets and climate tipping points. While "facts are always coloured with values", Schurmann said, "it is important that the facts are clearly presented". Vero Pinzger, a HU philosophy student and climate activist, added that journalism on climate activism in Germany is very one-sided and often doesn't report on the urgent messages that climate activists want to share, but rather the politics of activism itself.

Pragmatically, Pinzger also pointed out that, "We have to acknowledge there is something we will never get back but we have to think bigger and be creative", a sentiment which was explored in Prof. Natalie Blanc's workshop, on how we process our emotions toward the climate crisis. Blanc suggested that in order to engage in the problem collectively, we "must not ignore each other's feelings" and that we can "mourn the planet but we must seek to understand the science behind relationships in nature". A student from the University of Belgrade expressed how she felt this summer when she saw burnt leaves and the low water level of the Danube. This was followed by a contribution from an agriculture student from North Macedonia, explaining to the group why increased temperature causes leaves to burn. This exchange in Prof. Blanc's workshop helped to demonstrate the value of inviting students from scientific and humanities disciplines to the conference, which facilitated conversation about emotional and practical responses to climate change.

1.3 PART TWO: DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS

The conference's workshops and panels aimed to develop smaller, immediate solutions and bigger, long term solutions to enable universities to effectively engage with the climate crisis. Throughout the conference it was recognised that many of the sustainability initiatives which exist at HU, exist as a result of student demands. However, it was also recognised, specifically by Wiebke Hampel, that there is a low rate of student participation in projects set up by HU's climate protection management department. Consequently there were discussions about changes that could be made to engage students further. Prof. Sue Wright (AU) suggested that MA graduate students should be hired to work in their university's climate protection management bodies, as a way to engage students and remedy graduate employment problems.

Professor Ivanka Popović of the University of Belgrade suggested that students should be given credits for participating in sustainability projects in order to "convince people that their engagement is worthwhile". This is a measure that already exists at HU, where the sustainability office offers a 'Studium Oecologicum' seminar series which students can take as their elective module. The option aims to engage students in the topic of sustainability who would otherwise lack the opportunity to do so within their course of study. On the second day of the summer school the sustainability office members presented this idea to the international participants, with many agreeing that it would be a very effective way to engage more students in sustainability discussions who may otherwise not have time to participate. Many of the international participants said that this was an idea they would propose to their home universities on their return.

The Integrative Research Institute on Transformations of Human-Environment Systems (IRI THESys) , which finds alternatives to areas of HU's infrastructure which are currently unsustainable, presented their suggestions to the students. One suggested transformation was to introduce carbon offsetting options to compensate for work-related air travel by HU staff. More specifically, five options for CO₂ offsetting were suggested, including the NatureOffice project which combines "reforestation in the Global South and local climate protection programs". To this, a student from Aarhus University raised concerns about the effectiveness of carbon offsets. First, many reforestation projects by carbon offset organisations do not account for newly planted trees taking at least 20 years to capture the amount of CO₂ offset companies claim is captured by customers' offsets (Al Ghussain). Second, the reforestation projects can overlook the fact that the Global North produces 90% of global excess carbon dioxide emissions, making such reforestation a form of "carbon colonialism" (Hickel). Carbon offsetting means that countries in the Global South are often responsible for hosting carbon offset projects but are not necessarily able to claim emission reduction, which is often granted to Global North institutions and countries linked to such projects. As such, students agreed that this was not an effective solution to radically minimising European universities' CO₂ production.

1.4 PART THREE: SUGGESTIONS FOR TRANSFORMATION

On the final day of the conference, students from every workshop group, Green Campus, Mobility, Food, Social Justice, Economics and Education, presented the outcome of their discussions and put forward concrete ideas about how their universities could act as drivers of sustainability. The main ideas addressed travel, student housing, cafeterias and sustainability courses. As Wiebke Hampel, HU's climate protection manager, mentioned at the start of the conference, one of the areas with the most potential for the university to reduce CO₂ emissions is academic and student travel to conferences. This was a point considered by both the Mobility, Green Campus and Education workshop groups, who suggested approaches such as; low conference fees for those who travelled sustainably, a ban on air travel within the university's home country, an annual rotation of which university faculties can attend conferences that require air travel or a five year ban on air travel to international conferences. While the groups agreed that the final suggestion was quite extreme, they believed such extreme measures were necessary in order to tackle the climate crisis and plan for effective long-term ways that the university can reduce CO₂ in this area.

Many of the students from Italy and Balkan region countries commented that the housing situation at their home universities was inadequate. Much student housing was often difficult to find, expensive, lacking in space and too far away from the university campus. This is a problem shared by students in Berlin, a city in the middle of a housing crisis. The obvious solution to this seemed to be to build new, affordable housing for students that was owned by the university and not by private companies. However, Prof. Sue Wright (AU) suggested that students should also look at housing cooperatives, such as those at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, as a possible solution.

Of all the issues raised at the HU conference, many international participants considered that changes to university cafeterias and courses on sustainability seemed to be the most realistic suggestions they could take back to their home universities. The HU cafeteria, which is 68% vegan and 98% vegetarian, was identified by students in the Food and Education workshops as an example that participants could present to their universities to suggest a “climate plate” being added to the menu. Participants also wanted to ask for more information about how their cafeterias deal with food waste. In the discussion, waste was identified as an area where HU cafeterias need to improve, as they do not currently participate in any food sharing programs to tackle food waste. Linking Food and Education, the cafeteria was also mentioned as a possible location for educating students and staff about the connections between food production, particularly of animal products, and climate change. One student mentioned that the university cafeteria would be a good place to display posters with information on this topic, or to hold events where people could learn how to cook vegan and vegetarian meals or about the health and environmental benefits of vegan and vegetarian diets. This step would develop the idea shared by almost all participating students, that education about sustainability should be further integrated into degree programs. In the Education workshop group, it was suggested that, in addition to the ‘Studium Oecologicum’ seminar as hosted at the HU, first year students would be able to attend a sustainability seminar. Seminars could be either a general, foundational seminar, or be linked to their degree subject. For example, literature students could attend a climate fiction class or medical students a seminar which explores how the climate crisis will change global health.

Students agreed that they should have more of a say in how their universities teach on the subject of sustainability. In the Social Justice workshop group, the importance of peer to peer learning was suggested as a solution to tackle hierarchical knowledge structures in the university setting. The group put forward the idea of inviting climate activists, from within or outwith the university, to talk to students about taking part in non-violent protest. Since, as Vero Pinzger mentioned in the Science and Science Communication panel discussion, the goals of climate activists are often simplified by the media and activists groups are demonised, the involvement of climate activists could make the climate movement seem like a more welcoming place for students interested in joining direct action groups.

1.5 CONCLUSION

The summer school acted as an incubator, allowing students to develop diverse and practice-orientated ideas about how their universities can act as drivers of sustainability. In order to curb the impacts of climate change, universities should try to reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the summer school and recognise sustainability, not as an additional discussion topic, but rather a topic which lies at the heart of all issues. This conference report has outlined many examples of successful student-led sustainability initiatives implemented throughout European universities. If universities recognise the urgency of the climate crisis then they should seriously consider students’ suggestions.

1.6 SOURCES

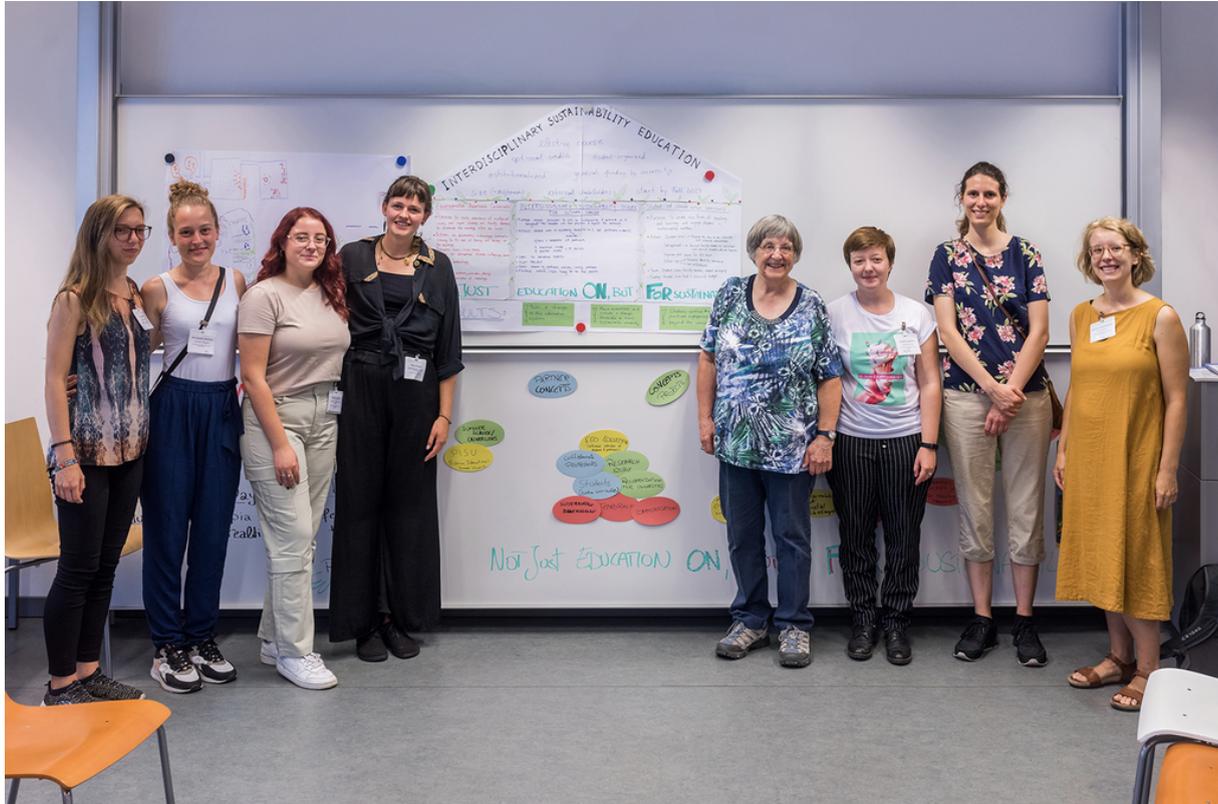
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2 STUDENT VOICES

2.1 WORKSHOP GROUP EDUCATION



2.1.1 Introduction

Before the summer school, we did a research assignment where we looked into what existing sustainability programs existed at our universities. Having done this, we began the first workshop by mapping best practices and projects across our institutions, who the involved partners were and what challenges were present. This was combined with an exercise where we had to imagine our ideal vision of sustainability education at the university. In the second workshop, we divided ourselves into three teams. Each developed an idea for a sustainability program inspired by descriptions of existing sustainability programs provided in a report on sustainable university programs from the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research and the student organization Netzwerk N.

It should be emphasized that our proposals are not enough and cannot stand alone. To achieve the integration of sustainability in university education, we will need more than just one or a few elective courses. Still, the implementation of an optional sustainability elective course can be an essential first step.

2.1.2 Interdisciplinary Sustainability Education - Main Pillars

In developing the proposals, we identified common themes and characteristics across the three programs. The first six commonalities can be read as basic criteria or principles for what constitutes education for sustainability but also as preliminary goals or milestones for a more general transformation of our universities.

Elective course: All proposals were conceptualized as electives in terms of how they fit into the study program. In most universities, students have a certain number of ECTS credits reserved for elective

courses. We want the sustainability elective to be open to all students regardless of their program, and as such, it should be cross-disciplinary and cross-faculty.

Optional credits: Getting credits for taking a course can be an important motivation for students and grant the course more legitimacy because it becomes equal to other courses. However, the need for students to have a certain number of free credits in their study program in order to be able to take a course can also sometimes be a hindrance for interested students. Therefore we want to make the credits optional, so students who do not have space in their program can still participate in the course. The proposals differ a little in how the examination should be conducted, but a shared idea is to have either no exam or a downscaled exam for the students who do not get credits for taking the course. Instead, they may just get a diploma for participating.

Student-organized: The course should be organized by students and maybe also have student instructors. The students who organize the course should get compensated either as credits in their study program or monetary pay (i.e. their student job is to organize the course). The reason for this is that it creates a different dynamic in the learning environment because it becomes much more peer-to-peer-based and more open to continuous innovation. Moreover, the students who organize the course also learn from the experience they get organizing the course.

Institutionalized: To ensure that the course does not just take place one semester and then stops again, the course should be institutionalized within the general course structure of the university. A system should be implemented so that some of the first students who take the course are recruited to organize it for future semesters and so forth. Also, the new course should be integrated into the routines of the administration so that it is continuously promoted in the course catalogue and evaluated to further improve it.

General funding by the university: While the course could initially be funded externally, it is important that it, at some point, is integrated within the general funding scheme of the university. This means that money should be allocated to the university budget to fund the course's teaching, examination and organization. In addition, since the course should be accessible across faculties, it may necessitate changes to the existing budget structure.

External stakeholders: The course should involve external stakeholders in the learning process. These can, for example, be external lecturers, project partners for exam projects, or external sponsors.

Size (~100 students per semester): Our universities differ very much in size, so the approximate number of participants in the course will probably be very different for our institutions depending on factors such as the amount of funding, physical capacity, the total number of students etc. However, to set an ambitious starting goal, we aim for around 100 students per semester. This number could perhaps be divided into smaller classes (e.g. 4 classes of 25 students each) to facilitate more peer-to-peer interaction.

Start date: Our goal is to have the course start in the Fall/Winter Semester of 2024.

2.1.3 Proposal 1: Environmental Awareness Certificate

Purpose: The idea was to develop an introductory university course that would enable students to get familiar with the basics of ecology and sustainability and subsequently use the knowledge gained to make a change in their respective countries. The main objective would be to raise awareness of the existing environmental issues, as well as to inspire both students and faculty members to disseminate that knowledge after the completion of the course. Feeling that the existence of a formal exam would discourage people from signing up for the course, we decided that this program should be based solely on participation in projects and workshops. It would span two semesters, after which the participants would be awarded 3 ECTS credits and a certificate of participation.

First Steps: Since this would be a student-led initiative, the student union would first need to discuss the idea with the Dean and some faculty members. Upon obtaining their approval, the next step would be to find

several experts in the fields of ecology and sustainable development who would be willing to give lectures on these matters. In addition to expert lecturers, the student union would have to find a certain number of volunteers who would be willing to organize and host various workshops. The funding from the university would be used to buy the materials needed for workshops, as well as to pay expert lecturers for the work they did.

Team: The team required would consist of the Dean, the student union, local NGOs which might be willing to provide some extra funding for the project, faculty members and students, expert professors, as well as volunteers (non-experts).

Resources: The resources would include university funding, in addition to some possible external funds, as well as the materials needed for workshops and human resources (lecturers and volunteers).

2.1.4 Proposal 2: Interdisciplinary Sustainability Studies for Climate Change

Purpose: The main idea behind this elective course is to encourage students to become more active in sustainability issues by engaging in community impact projects. We believe this would best be done if the course were offered at all faculties under one university, as we want students to think about the project they want to incorporate into their communities and the issue they want to address with it through many different fields. That is why the goal is that the members of a specific group are from many different fields.

The course would start with theoretical classes with lectures provided by professors and also NGOs regarding sustainability issues in general. The practical courses would follow, in which groups would be formed, and they would start working on an idea of a community impact project. The goal is to raise awareness of sustainability issues in the classroom and outside of it by sharing knowledge, ideas and solutions with the local community. The goal is also to become more aware of local sustainability issues and address the need for change in that specific environment. The course would take place in the first semester, but the projects could also be extended throughout the second semester. In the end, students would write a paper with their proposed project idea, and the papers that would have the highest grades would get some start-up money in order to develop their ideas even further. The students would get 5 ECTS credits with this project, and there would also be an option to take it as an extra-curricular course.

First Steps: Firstly we would discuss the idea for this course with the student union, and then we would approach two professors (one of which should be from the ecology field) and present the already set idea for the course. Then, with the support of the professors, the course would be presented to the deans of all the faculties of one university and the rectorate, who would provide financial and technical support to incorporate the course. We would also contact NGOs that work in sustainability issues for financial support and also to give host lectures at the beginning of the course. The two professors would-be leaders of the course, but they would also have a team of students for support in carrying out the course and helping students develop their ideas.

Team: The course team consists of two lead professors, a few working students, and some outside support from local NGOs. For the course to take place, the student union, the deans and the university's rectorate would also be involved in providing the funding and the implementation scheme for the course.

Resources: We would need university funding and some funding from local NGOs in order to provide the best students with some start-up money. We would also need local communities to accept the proposed projects and provide space and time for their incorporation.

2.1.5 Proposal 3: Student-led Climate Action Seminars

Purpose: This type of seminar aims to create new forms of teaching and learning and engage students in innovative approaches to sustainability matters as organizers, experts, and learners. The general idea is to implement a student-led seminar with input lectures by experts on sustainability topics and student-led workshops that give space for peer-to-peer learning and opportunities for hands-on action. The

challenge-based interdisciplinary seminar should extend over the entire duration of a semester and, after a pilot semester, be offered every semester in order to gain increased visibility at the university as well as to allow a larger number of students to benefit from participation.

First Steps: Embedding it into the existing university structures is a crucial success factor in developing a sustainable and longer-term seminar. As a first step, the student union (or student group already involved in sustainability matters) at the university will propose the idea to the university management and the university administration.

Upon approval, a faculty member will be recruited as a consultant to the organizational team. The supervision of a faculty member serves simultaneously as a support in the process of organization and as quality assurance to guarantee the expected outcome of the organized seminar and ensure the impact on the participating students.

A monitoring process will be established in order to ensure the quality of the critical processes and key results, as well as to identify possible bottlenecks and enable corrective activities. The quality assurance process will be based on clearly defined goals and feasibility markers. This way, the project evaluation can clearly indicate whether the goals have been met.

Team: The team consists of members of the student union (or other organizing student organizations), a faculty member (acting as "consultant/advisor"), external guest speakers and students conducting the workshops.

Resources: The funding stems from university funds allocated for this type of future-oriented educational offer. The Circle U European University Alliance could also be a basis for funding. The consulting faculty member shall receive a reduction in teaching obligation to allow for time and space to support the cause.

Final Remarks

Universities play an essential role in the implementation of sustainability matters and make a positive contribution to social development at several levels with their students, staff and graduates to make a difference locally, nationally and globally. As educators and faculty members, we need to advocate for sustainability with urgency, as we are a bastion for it.

Therefore, with the proposed courses, we want to implement change in university education for sustainability. We aim not just for education on but for sustainability, to raise awareness and initiate a change towards a more sustainable university in general.

By participating in the courses, students shall be provided with the knowledge, skills and values necessary to pursue sustainable visions for the future. In addition, we want to get students engaged and motivated to continue their practical engagement beyond the course and thus become advocates for change in the global community.

A sustainable future is possible, but it needs all of us to achieve it!

2.2 WORKSHOP GROUP GREEN CAMPUS



The Green Campus Workshop focused on finding solutions for making our campuses greener and more sustainable to reach climate goals and improve the campus environment.

We discussed topics such as greenery, open spaces, food, mobility and social engagement. Using experiences from our home universities and highlighting advantages and disadvantages, we created a timeline mapping out the steps needed to reach our desired future. Some ideas we suggested are achievable in a short-time period, while some require cooperation with faculties and investors, and maybe even the cities where the universities are based.

2.2.1 Problems

In terms of greenery and biodiversity, these are not topics at the forefront of any of our universities' agendas. Across our universities, there is a lack of green surfaces, especially in the vicinity of university buildings, and a lack of spaces where students would be able to study or spend their free time outside. Some universities have already made adjustments to make them more sustainable and energy efficient, but these are in the minority. Most buildings across our universities are neither energy-efficient nor otherwise future-proofed through sustainable renovations. For example, none of our university buildings had solar panels, proper insulation, sustainable heating or AC systems, or used rooftop spaces.

At some universities, there are also no drinking water taps that would encourage students and professors to use reusable water bottles to reduce the use of plastic.

Concerning food, the canteens in our home universities often do not provide diverse options such as healthy, vegetarian or vegan food. Moreover, considerable amounts of food are being thrown away. Also, our universities' food infrastructure generates vast amounts of plastic waste, which should be avoided.

Regarding transportation, students and professors are not encouraged to use more sustainable modes of transportation, such as public transport or bicycles. Many participants also complained about an abundance of parking space for cars but no bike racks at their home universities.

The common factor for all the above issues is that they result from an insufficient allocation of financial resources. Also, students and administration show very little interest in making changes. Reasons for this

could be insufficient education in this area and the fact that no one feels responsible. Environmental protection and sustainability classes are taught only at some faculties and are primarily optional and uncredited.

2.2.2 Solutions

We believe that progress can be achieved, and solutions can be found through the cooperation of students and administration with outside agents such as sustainability specialists and sponsors.

When talking about food diversity, there are differing opinions. Within our group, most universities are from the Balkans, where the tradition is to include meat in almost every meal. Therefore, there is a cultural barrier. We propose to conduct a questionnaire and see how students and teachers feel about the current choices. After taking into account the wishes of students and also in cooperation with the university, food options should be broadened. Having the opportunity to choose between one regular, one vegetarian and one vegan meal is our proposed first step.

The problem of food waste is an ongoing long-term issue. Therefore, giving students the possibility of choosing their meal size themselves, deciding how much they want to eat and not preparing it in advance is a massive step towards cutting back on leftover food.

Plastic cups and bottles are the most common waste on our campuses. Buying coffee and bottled water is an inescapable part of our daily life. To tackle this problem, drastic actions, adjustments, and alternatives are necessary. Cutting all plastic cups for coffee and replacing them with reusable ones, as well as increasing water quality by introducing filters at taps, will help people buy less single-use plastic, also saving money in the process. This will have an immediate and immense impact on our waste problem.

Mobility around campus and to the campus depends on the distance between faculties. Some of our universities are scattered all over the city, and commutes between the buildings sometimes are inconvenient and lengthy. Sustainable means of transport, like public transport and bikes, can be used for this purpose. We, therefore, believe that a good bicycle infrastructure and cheap or free public transport for students are both essential. Making sustainable options more convenient is essential for our fight to replace cars as the first choice of transport to and from campus.

Our next goal, establishing more green spaces, can be reached through renovations of buildings and outside spaces. Transforming parking spaces into gardens could be an easy first step. This would also lower the need for ACs in summer because green spaces have been proven to reduce the surrounding temperatures. Additionally, the shade provided by greenery would create new spaces for students and staff alike to study or relax when it is too hot in the sun.

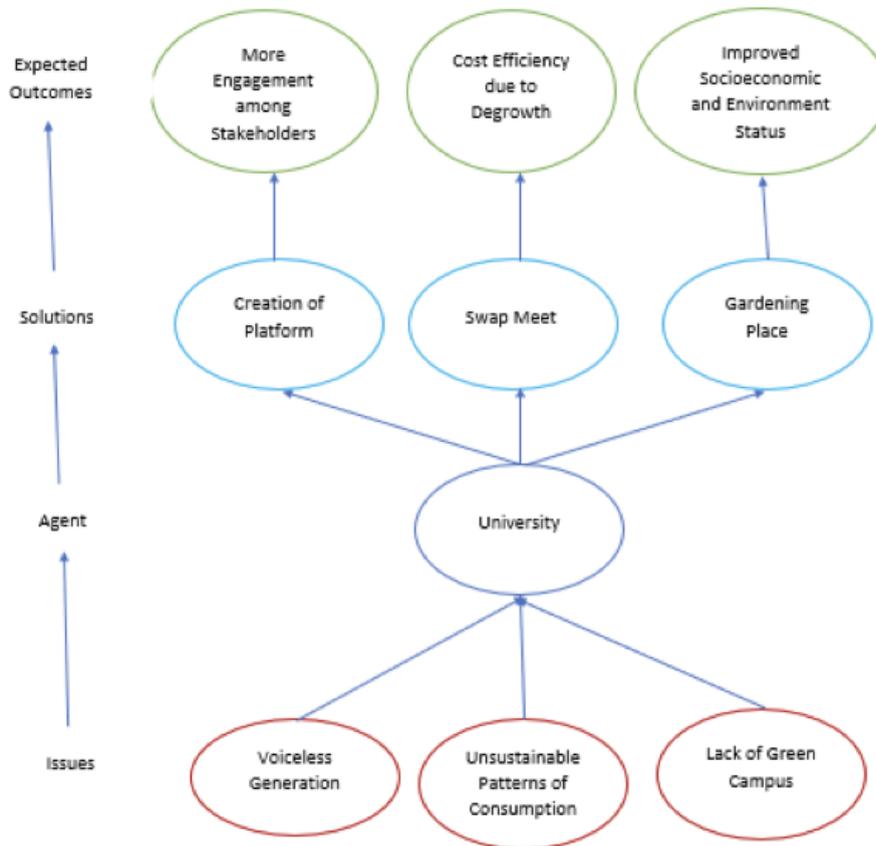
Since most of our universities are in city centres, many do not have the space to create idyllic outside greenery and parks. However, even though space limitations can be an issue, ways to utilize existing structures and expand on them sustainably. One of them is the usage of rooftops for vegetation and solar panels. Unfortunately, this practice is currently under-utilized at all of our universities. Another option lies in covering existing facades with vegetation. This practice is a stunning combination of technology, architecture, and agriculture that reduces heating and cooling costs and is great to look at. For instance, the architect Stefano Boeri has implemented this idea into one of his best works, 'Vertical forest of Milan', which was presented at the COP21 International Climate Conference in Paris in 2015. Sustainable solutions for climate control inside buildings, such as vertical gardens, could be implemented in study programs. The maintenance of these structures could also happen with the help of student jobs.

2.2.3 First Steps

For a start, we believe that awareness and education form the fundament of our universities' journeys towards sustainability. Therefore, forming a sustainability team consisting of hired staff and student assistants is essential. Presently, only one of our universities has personnel whose sole task is to help us achieve our climate goals. Sustainability has to become an integral part of university life, from the campus to the student life to the curriculum. We can only achieve this goal with experts who feel responsible for changing the university for the better.

2.3 WORKSHOP GROUP ECONOMY

UNIVERSITY – AN AGENT OF CHANGE FRAMEWORK



Sustainability is a concept targeted at meeting the needs of the present without jeopardizing the future. In the 21st century, researchers have shown various global challenges that we face daily, which have been a primary concern to sustainability and humanity. Some of the issues identified by the sustainable economy group are vulnerable people, such as students and the communities not heard, unsustainable consumption patterns, and lack of a healthy campus. With universities being on the front line of researching and communicating sustainability, the sustainable economy group believes the university is a crucial agent in tackling these issues and could help to render social justice tangible due to its ability to interact with different stakeholders globally.

2.3.1 Issues

Voiceless Generation: Ideas and solutions do not only reside with the academic experts or within the four walls of the campus. However, ideas and solutions can come from students or those outside the academia whose voices might not be heard due to their status in the academic setting. Young people feel voiceless in the university's decision-making processes and lack ways to impact the local community. Tools and programs that support upskilling, entrepreneurial development and social service are weak and not linked to the curriculum. Often sustainable development courses are not efficient in creating agents of change.

Unsustainable Patterns of Consumption: Young people/students are one of the most influential user groups of fashion, and we want to deal with the constant overuse of especially fast fashion. Unsustainable

consumption and production patterns are the root cause of the triple planetary crisis, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Regarding our topic, sustainable economy, we want to practice degrowth on a bigger scale where we focus on the value and utility of the garment itself rather than mass production and increasing cost efficiency.

Lack of Green Campus: It is no doubt that young people today face several challenges. On the one hand, there is a climate crisis, but poor nutrition and a lack of freedom for their hobbies are also problems. These challenges left us thinking about how having a green campus could reduce or eradicate the issues related to socioeconomics, nutrition and the environment.

2.3.2 Solutions

Creation of Platforms: For the voiceless generation, we propose to create a comprehensive and homogenous digital and offline platform that functions as a launchpad for projects to support the local third sector. For digital platforms, associations, NGOs, and student organizations can apply for this program and prepare a critical burning question to revamp and amplify their local impact. Subsequently, young students can onboard an organization of their choice to work closely with, learn from, and thereby help the local community. Students can gain credits from this work. For offline platforms, there can be ideas and solutions boxes within the vicinity of the campus for students to identify issues and propose solutions. Also, ideas and solutions boxes should be within the city for those outside the university to share their thoughts. These boxes would help those not on social media or who can not reach the university boards to voice their concerns.

Implementation: We need multiple NGOs on board for this program just like the university's support and approval. Funding is requested for experts and mentors unless professors can translate their lessons into coaching hours. Also, we need to create a regional joint program supported by partners to fund projects that are born from these brainstorming sessions. Lastly, in partnership with school authorities, engineering students can make boxes and fix them within the campus and city.

Resources: Human capital, capital from the side of mentors and NGOs who want to implement those projects, website hosting, advertisement budget, theatre rental for a demo day at the end of the semester, and design-thinking frameworks from consulting organizations (not-for-profit).

SwapMeet: We imagined physical events at the university where the students could bring their clothes and swap them for other clothes from other students. If many students change clothes, we are already on a path of degrowth since our main issue is having clothes exchanged in value and utility instead of sold for profit. Additionally, since the clothes are used, it affects the behavioural sphere: reuse promotes sustainable choices. Furthermore, exchanging clothes causes waste prevention as the clothes are reused instead of thrown away. It is also socially equalizing since it is accessible for all students regardless of finances.

Implementation: The changes we would initiate to implement the suggested transformation is to engage students' attitudes towards sensible clothing with a focus on reuse. We will appeal to them at the beginning of each semester by having informative stands promoting our events. To do our events, we need to ask the local university if they can offer us premises to hold the swap/exchange events. We would also ask for grants from the university and start-up initiatives to support the up-development and outreach.

Resources: We would need a room, clothing racks, and hangers. At the same time, the outreach involves student engagement both by exchanging their clothes and volunteering for the event. Promotion and advertisement will mainly happen through fliers, social media, and word of mouth.

GardenPlace

The basic idea is that the university will provide a place where students can grow food. This can be realized as an urban garden in an urban space and a classic field in the countryside. Students will have the opportunity to grow healthy fruits and vegetables and then harvest them. The harvested fruit and vegetables will then be used in the University mensa, where the students working in the Greenhouse and garden place

will get a reward - a daily free meal. This concept simultaneously offers solutions for several problems- a greener campus for all students, and it is a perfect opportunity for students to learn about sustainable food and participate in the process.

Implementation: The biggest challenges in implementing this concept are financial. Land in the city is relatively expensive and rare, and universities are usually not in a position to purchase additional land. The first option would therefore be to work with the student council and the university's facility management to identify open spaces that could be planted with edible plants. Another possibility would be to make areas available on the land because this is cheaper and easier to obtain here. This could be done in cooperation with the agriculture departments. The agriculture departments either already own and use farmland themselves, or they could at least talk to local farmers to find and acquire suitable land.

On the other hand, the students themselves need to be convinced in the beginning to be part of the urban gardens. For this purpose, the university should provide low-threshold cultivation areas free of charge or for a small fee, and the students, on the contrary, should commit themselves to growing food in these areas.

Resources: Financial capital is needed to design and acquire suitable cultivation areas in this case. However, this problem can be circumvented by creative use of the existing regions (e.g. equipping courtyards or flat roofs with beds for growing vegetables or replacing classic trees with fruit trees). Last but not least, students need to be informed and convinced. In this case, the student council can raise awareness with posters, social media and word of mouth.

2.3.3 Expected Outcomes

With the solutions and implementations above, we expect more engagement among various stakeholders, especially between university boards and the voiceless generations, such as students and those outside academia. Also, cost efficiency due to the swap meet solution and socioeconomic and environmental status improvement.

2.4 WORKSHOP GROUP MOBILITY



2.4.1 Vision

To drive sustainable forms and practices of mobility within (and by) the university through education, student activism, inside-campus mobility support and travel restrictions.

The fundament of our suggestions for transformation perhaps lies with education, as shifts in what people value (through pedagogy) will drive the most "sustainable" patterns of change concerning mobility (as university actors will feel intrinsically motivated to travel as "stewards of the environment").

Mobility is central to the whole of society. It allows people to connect with places and shapes how we live our lives. Mobility accounts for around one-fifth of global carbon dioxide emissions (generally, not only academic, but it still shows how crucial it is to think about). Achieving sustainable mobility remains one of the most significant environmental challenges, despite it being at the center of attention of many policymakers in recent years. It requires a people's mind shift, especially in the academic community, where the use of air travel and private vehicles should be substituted by different modes of transportation.

2.4.2 Problems

We must categorize the problems universities are facing today to then be able to contemplate the solutions that are attainable for our causes. After careful consideration, we have concluded that the problem areas are campus mobility, international travel for both academic conferences and exchange programs and education on sustainable mobility.

To begin with, members of the university community are sometimes not given the option of traveling sustainably to and from the university campus. This could be due to an inadequate public transport system and cities not offering the same infrastructure for bicycles or scooters. For example, in Tirana, Albania, it is only possible to travel by bus. Another reason is that affordable quality housing is often far from the university. Even when housing is offered by the university and on campus, the living conditions are often

poor. As a result, many individuals opt for farther ways and maybe even choose to commute by car in exchange for better living conditions.

Furthermore, it is clear that international travel is the biggest problem we need to tackle, as most of it is by air travel which is significantly contributing to carbon emissions. The issue seems to lie in the academic culture, where success is associated with the number of international conferences one attends. And then, even when these conferences are attended, academics mostly use air travel. Flying is often cheaper, the journeys generally take less time, and many universities do not even consider other travel options for longer journeys.

On the other hand, students participating in exchange programs also opt for planes, often for the same reasons. However, they sometimes travel with several suitcases, so air travel is undoubtedly more comfortable.

Finally, we believe the community is not educated enough, or sometimes at all, on the costs we as members of the university face should we fail to make changes in our commuting behaviour. Individuals sometimes cannot see the bigger picture of how every choice they make affects our community and world. Moreover, there is still not enough attention and information on incentivizing people to travel sustainably.

2.4.3 Solutions

Starting with campus mobility, the goal is to make sustainable traveling easy and favored by the community. In order to minimize commuting, building nearby, affordable, and quality housing for students would be a good start. Sometimes, something as small as a renovation of already existing buildings is enough. In addition, universities or organizations within the university can host bike services, including sale, rent and repair services or even a car-sharing app for students who have no choice but to take a car to travel. Furthermore, universities should guarantee discounted or even free transportation services for students, and a more utopian solution would be a student-only transportation service throughout the city. On a bigger scale, universities should push for city-wide public transportation transformations and frequently hold workshops on city planning.

Moving on to international travel, the goal is to lessen it, thereby lowering carbon emissions. The best solution, in our opinion, would be to ban international conferences for the next five years and to host local, interdisciplinary conferences as an alternative. Although drastic, one must remember that extreme situations call for extreme measures. One less radical initiative would be to hold hybrid conferences and improve the technicalities of the digital experience by using a mandatory 'pre-check' technology-oriented guideline. When traveling internationally cannot be avoided, it should be limited to 1000km. Universities should compensate for train travel fully while lowering the compensation rate for air travel and include additional compensation for amenities while traveling by train to make it more attractive. Another way can be to push for contracts with train service providers to subsidize international travel by train. We strongly believe that the organizers of international conferences significantly impact reaching our common goal. It is in their hands to communicate the importance of traveling sustainably. A practical measure that can be taken is minimizing the participation fees if said participant agrees to travel sustainably.

Regarding education on sustainable mobility, our goal is to shift personal values towards wanting to travel sustainably. We also want to prompt an increased awareness of norms within the research community that contribute significantly to high carbon emissions, empowering people to act and travel differently. For this, we have developed two necessary measures: mandatory undergraduate classes on sustainability tailored according to student interests and university-held, community-wide workshops on sustainable mobility.

2.4.4 Next Steps

As we were analyzing the problems, we came to the conclusion that transforming to sustainable mobility requires fundamental changes in the cities' plans and infrastructure. However, students can help change our universities' approach to sustainable mobility. Turning ideas into viable plans is difficult but not impossible. We as a group have thought of some ways of how students, with the proper help, can impact and start initiatives to supplant the mobility of our universities and community in a more sustainable way.

First of all, our primary goal is internal motivation. Students are an important voice in university organization and politics. So, first of all, we can focus on student activism for sustainability. Raising awareness among students and university organs, with different forms of activism, should be the first and foremost step to approach changes in sustainability and mobility topics.

On the other hand, universities should work as drivers of sustainability. Universities are also part of the societies in which they are placed. Therefore, they cannot deal with all the challenges by themselves, and they do not have the power to change everything that needs to be changed. Instead, it is a crucial and, in our opinion, a mandatory role for universities to work towards changing the structures and influencing the politics in society that needs to change with regards to making sustainable travel more accessible. In this case, universities can take inspiration from the grassroots movements and the activist movements and work together in order to try to advocate for better transportation options in Europe - e.g. international train services that are frequent and reliable.

Other ideas include university-hosted workshops on city planning, pedagogical research, and courses on the topic. Changes should be made to the way our universities approach this topic. Giving the proper importance to sustainability, not only by university organs but also by students and the community, is essential right now. Everyone should know their impact on this cause and the ways to make a change. Mobility is one of the main aspects of how people can make a real difference in sustainability. So with the correct information on the cause and movements and the right infrastructure, we can be on the right path to a more sustainable mobility.

2.5 WORKSHOP GROUP FOOD



2.5.1 No-Waste-Fridays and Solidarity Fridges

Concerning food on our campus, a significant problem that we raised in our workshop was not only in which way we consume food but also in the way we waste it. Food waste is a concerning topic when you realize that, each week, an enormous amount of food goes to waste in our canteens and homes.

In addition to that, another problem that we face is food poverty. Although so much food gets thrown away, many students and people in our general community still struggle to find filling and nutritious meals. At the end of the month, it becomes difficult for students who live on campus to buy good quality food after paying for their other priority expenses (rent, studies, books, ...). Besides that, we also noticed the lack of awareness concerning food waste and responsible food consumption, contributing to the problems we mentioned earlier.

To solve these issues, we elaborated on two solutions we can implement on our campuses on our own. The first one we call "No-waste Friday". It is a dinner organized every Friday with the leftovers that are still edible from the University canteens. It is easy to set it up as it would take place in the canteens. Food would be offered as long as there is food to donate. It would be free and open to students that are in need. The second, we call "solidarity fridges". The concept is that the canteen would store its remaining food in them and let the students in need collect them anytime. These two solutions are imagined on a small scale and can be extended to broader organisms with leftovers like supermarkets, restaurants, and individuals on and off campus.

We would also like to encourage the canteens to collect data concerning the food served and the leftovers depending on the number of customers. Then, with a statistical program, it could be possible to anticipate and reevaluate the amount of supply and limit the waste.

The first steps would begin with a collaboration between us and the university canteens. There should be an introductory event in the cafeteria which elaborates on food consumption, waste, and its impact on climate change, where the students can become more informed. The goal is to inspire individual change and project acceptance. Afterwards, we would, alongside volunteers, help organize "No-Waste Friday", get donations

from the government or NGOs for the "solidarity fridges", and speak to other relevant organizations/individuals to get them on board to support the project.

The central resource needed is the cafeteria since our activism relies on an easily accessible and food-safe location. Our group is more than motivated and willing to provide their organizational and cooking skills, management, and networking capabilities. After that, we would need volunteers to set up and organize the logistic of the project. Next is getting the funds for the fridges. The cafeteria could also be a space for community involvement through lectures and other regular events. Student Parliament is also a big part of the University picture, and having their support would help bring the project to a larger scale-reach more students (get more volunteers, expand).

2.5.2 Social media - Climate Food

When promoting vegetarianism and veganism, public misconceptions can become a massive obstacle. Many people believe that a vegan diet is unhealthy and untasty. Vegan food, of course, can be both nutritious and delicious. A plant-based diet is beneficial for individuals and the environment. On the other hand, some people are generally interested in a vegan lifestyle but do not know where to start. The food industry's impact on climate change is tremendous. Immediate action is required if we want to halt climate change and achieve the Paris climate targets.

In the face of the above problems, we have come up with three solutions:

1. Platforms concerning education, community, and social media can be created to strengthen awareness.
2. Strategies should be more detailed. For example, creating recipes for vegan and vegetarian food; providing video tutorials on urban gardening.
3. We can influence people through video compilations of changes and talks on the environment.

Our project intends to change people's eating habits. According to what our project intends to accomplish, we will create recipes that promote healthy and happy eating, meaning colorful meals, pure vegan and vegetarian, with nutritional facts for meat substitutes. We will also do tutorials on how to lessen food waste by recycling it. We will also create video tutorials for urban agriculture for beginners.

Since our project will use a social media platform, we do not need big spaces to do our video tutorials. Instead, we will use our own space to create videos and photos for the recipes and urban agriculture. In this way, people will be encouraged that carrying out the challenge does not take ample space and expensive resources. So for this matter, the resources we require are social media platforms such as youtube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Twitter. We also need help from influential people to spread awareness of the challenge.

2.5.3 Issues that could arise from creating vegan canteens and cafeterias:

1. Transportation and finance: while animal products are expensive, some vegan substitutes are even more expensive and might be harder to obtain on a large scale.
2. Storage and food waste: While plant-based products are often easier to store and do not spoil quickly, ensuring that no food goes to waste is still a top priority.
3. Students that insist on eating meat: The university canteen should still be able to accommodate everybody. A compromise would have to be found.
4. Menu and chefs: The choice of food on the menu should satisfy everybody's needs. The staff's familiarity with preparing the food provided is essential.

2.5.4 First Steps:

1. Connection with local providers and volunteers to create large-scale networks for sustainable canteens.
2. Workshops and questionnaires about food preferences and diversity.
3. Climate Plate Day: Like meat-free Mondays, one day a week where all meals are carbon-neutral.
4. Student participation in all parts of the supply chain.

2.6 WORKSHOP GROUP SOCIAL JUSTICE



2.6.1 Problems

What do climate change and sustainability have to do with social justice?

We cannot move beyond the fact that universities use resources – for their facilities, staff, supplies, research, teaching, and day-to-day operation. As the climate crisis is becoming drastically more urgent, we must consider how to use these resources effectively and sustainably. However, we also see the danger of making cuts that reduce emissions at the cost of the marginalized groups that suffer from the combined effect of climate change and disenfranchisement. Universities are responsible for providing access to social and cultural capital that increases social mobility and amplifies vulnerable voices. If they fail to do so, they reproduce and exacerbate the existing structural inequalities that already put a disproportionate share of the burden of climate change on populations marginalized because of their race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, or disabilities. This compounds unsustainable social structures and those mechanisms of privilege that have caused much of the climate inaction thus far.

Social justice and climate justice are interdependent. Both rely on intersectional thinking, highlighting who is responsible for climate change and who suffers from it. Both require actions that go beyond reductivist plans for reducing car traffic or planting more trees, demanding efficient system-wide measures. And both have the potential to germinate at universities as social innovators and role models for sustainable and participatory systems. Unfortunately, although student committees and associations try to be inclusive and just, they fall prey to lack of representation and a hierarchical system. White upper middle class students are the most privileged group in the student body hierarchy. They do not have to worry about making ends meet, paying for tuition, supporting their family or other external issues; hence they can run the student committee/associations without trouble. This also means that when it comes to climate change or climate injustice projects, these exact student bodies can control these projects and how well they can or will do.

As a group, we have developed proposals for advancing climate education while simultaneously empowering initiatives that support the interests and concerns of marginalized groups. We also advocate formalizing structures that empower student-led learning and other projects, redistributing the resources at the university's disposal to create a fairer, more inclusive, and ultimately more sustainable institution.

2.6.2 Solutions

1 The familiarity with the causes, impacts and solutions related to climate change is uneven among students, which hinders individual engagement in climate action and resilience. As a solution, we have proposed to set up a new curriculum for bachelor's and master's degrees with a compulsory course on climate change impacts and solutions through the lens of intersectionality that would be spread over two semesters. This course should be interactive and go beyond the traditional aspects of a university course by being organized in unison by students and teachers. The aim is to establish a joint base of knowledge and to combine theory and practice according to student academic orientation.

In the first semester, the course would be based on a theoretical dimension and follow a general program where fundamental notions of climate change and intersectionality will be addressed to enrich the knowledge spectrum for all students. It should also be relevant to address climate change and intersectionality through different theories (ecocriticism, gender studies, critical race theory, environmental justice studies, ecofeminism, and postcolonialism). In the second semester, the course would consider the students' academic orientation and be combined with the practice. To validate their ECTS, students would be required to work with community members most affected by climate change, discussing challenges and possible solutions or being involved in sustainable projects. For example, at California State University, Northridge (CSUN), urban planning students worked on a project to increase campus and community resilience. Therefore, this is only feasible if universities support students in research, outreach and the implementation of their projects.

2 We need safe spaces to allow students of marginalized groups to feel supported and to be able to express their concerns freely. A student constitution built by students for students will act as a middleman between students and the university. A student constitution is a place where we can sign petitions, initiate local outreach projects, network, and, essentially, propel change where needed. The constitution would help amplify the voices of the people that do not have a seat at the table.

3 We have proposed that we use the university's funding to ease the lives of students who are a part of marginalized groups or minorities. We can ensure their participation and inclusivity in the student body by freeing up their time by providing financial security. We also proposed that minorities and marginalized groups elect a representative amongst themselves who then can take place in the student body and be able to voice their respective groups better.

Although student body committees and associations exist, their power is low or close to none regarding the decisions that affect students the most. We understand that being able to take our power back from the education system would mean protesting and putting pressure on the people that make the structure so unyielding in the first place. Universities have become more of a business than a place where the exchange of knowledge happens, and as with all businesses, they tend to fail when there are no customers. Students are the biggest population that makes up the university biocenosis yet the least powerful. Using a bottoms-up approach, we insist on taking action to ensure that the student's voices are heard in academic establishments.

2.6.3 First Steps

We either want to talk to the administration to plan and organize a class/course that teaches about climate change or, in its refusal, we plan to either make a petition or lead a protest. Finally, we want to get a professor specializing in the field or, with enough work from the students and enough research, create one on our own.

To achieve social justice in our climate change and sustainability action, we must provide students with the safe space necessary to work on these goals. Students are at the heart of most initiatives in university. Providing this safe space will allow students to negotiate and exchange ideas on how we can make the university a comfortable place for everybody—a place where we all belong. Without students' creativity, will, and motivation for change, we won't be where we are today.

2.6.4 Resources

We intend to use funding from the university or outside sponsors to finance scholarships targeted towards minorities/marginalized groups to diversify the student population. Another form of resource is fundraising. We can do so by holding special events.

To develop resources, we could also appeal to public generosity through donations or a crowdfunding project.

The safe space could be made and built into a room that the university does not use and that the student initiative can nest in. We can promote the initiative and the new changes through marketing tactics in social media and the university page or newspaper.

Regarding immaterial resources, we need to acquire/complete knowledge or cooperate with scholars in jurisdiction, politics, sustainable development and climate crisis, social justice, sociology, psychology, and social entrepreneurship, among others. This knowledge will enable us to develop skills in these different areas and to develop our projects effectively (e.g. skills in communication, organization, and financial management).