World Urban Forum: Education for the City We Need

Teaching the New Urban Agenda

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Publication date
2018

Document Version
Final published version

Citation (APA)
Rocco, R. (2018). *World Urban Forum: Education for the City We Need: Teaching the New Urban Agenda*. Delft University of Technology.

Education for the City We Need

Teaching the New Urban Agenda

World Urban Forum 9
TU Delft Side Event Report

Kuala Lumpur, 7-13 Feb 2018

TU Delft BK Bouwkunde

IMPLEMENTING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

WUF9 Event


WUF9
Event

Education for the City We Need: Teaching the New Urban Agenda

Launching of TU DELFT Urban Thinkers Report Education for the City We Need: Integrating the New Urban Agenda in Higher Education Curriculums

World Urban Forum 9, Kuala Lumpur, 7-13 February 2018

Colophon

Launching of TU DELFT Urban Thinkers Report: Education for the City We Need: Education for the City We Need: Integrating the New Urban Agenda in Higher Education Curriculums

World Urban Forum 9, Kuala Lumpur, 7-13 February 2018.

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ISBN: 978-94-6366-025-9

Partners:

The World Urban Campaign
ARCADIS
Delft Global

All photos by R. Rocco

Read the Full Report on the Urban Thinkers Campus at https://utctudelft.org

TU Delft BK Bouwkunde

IMPLEMENTING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

URBAN THINKERS CAMPUS
THE CITY WE NEED

WORLD URBAN CAMPAIGN

Summary

Participants of the World Urban Forum 9

SUMMARY

This side event discussed results from the Urban Thinkers Campus (UTC) organised at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the Delft University of Technology (BOUWKUNDE) in June 2017 on the topic of 'Education for the City We Need: Integrating the New Urban Agenda in Higher Education Curriculums'.

The objective of this UTC was to discuss how to integrate the New Urban Agenda into higher education curriculums and research for the built environment. The UTC had 39 active speakers from academia, the public sector, the civic sector and private companies, and 92 participants from all over the world. It produced a set of guidelines and teaching points that might help schools around the world structure curricula that embrace the New Urban Agenda enacted in Quito in October 2016.

The full report is available at: http://www.worldurbancampaign.org/education-city-we-need-exploring-how-integrate-new-urban-agenda-higher-education-curriculums

TU Delft wishes to partner up with other higher education institutions, local and national authorities, NGOs and business who wish to develop ideas about education and research for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, especially in areas of water management connected to urbanisation and regional planning, energy efficiency, mobility, housing and slum upgrading strategies. This side event is both the launching of the UTC report and a networking event for institutions interested in cooperation for education and research for the NUA.

The event organized by the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the TU Delft at the World Urban Forum 9 in Kuala Lumpur gathered around 50 people from academia, local governments, NGOs and UN-Habitat to discuss how higher education institutions can contribute to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.
This event was moderated by Roberto Rocco (TU Delft) and had as discussants Costanza La Mantia, senior urban planner at UN-Habitat and Marie Huchzermeyer, professor at the School of Architecture and Planning of the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Education for the City We Need

A civil servant speaking at the side event

EDUCATION FOR THE CITY WE NEED

Now that the New Urban Agenda has been enacted, the question on everybody's lips is: HOW TO IMPLEMENT IT? In order to be able to implement the New Urban Agenda, we must be able to teach it, enabling young professionals to work with its concepts, ideas and frameworks. The New Urban Agenda is a binding document, that is, all signatory countries must implement its principles. In this sense, it is a victory of negotiation and diplomacy fueled by the urgency to harness the energy of rapid urbanization into sustainable development.

The New Urban Agenda seeks to create a mutually reinforcing relationship between urbanization and development, with the idea that urbanization processes allow for rapid transformation of socio-economic processes and fuel development. The challenge is to make urbanization and development both sustainable and inclusive.

The NUA acknowledges urban design and planning as crucial tools to steer, organize and shape urbanization processes , and recognizes the role of sub-national and local governments in steering these processes, as well as the role of civic society and grassroots in participatory practices that will deliver inclusive and fair outcomes. Although the expression 'right to the city' didn't make it to the final text of the agenda, it is clear that crucial ideas of participation and democracy building play a central role in the NUA.

The NUA also recognizes the importance of legal frameworks, innovative planning tools and the role of innovation, data and technology in helping plan and design the city we need.

But there are important challenges ahead.

The Challenges Ahead

The Challenges Ahead

TU Delft presented a set of premises that should guide education for the built environment in general, and the discussion about the implementation of the NUA specifically. These premises were derived from the Urban Thinkers Campus organized at TU Delft in June 2016 and were extensively discussed during this event. Here is a summary of the premises and the discussion:

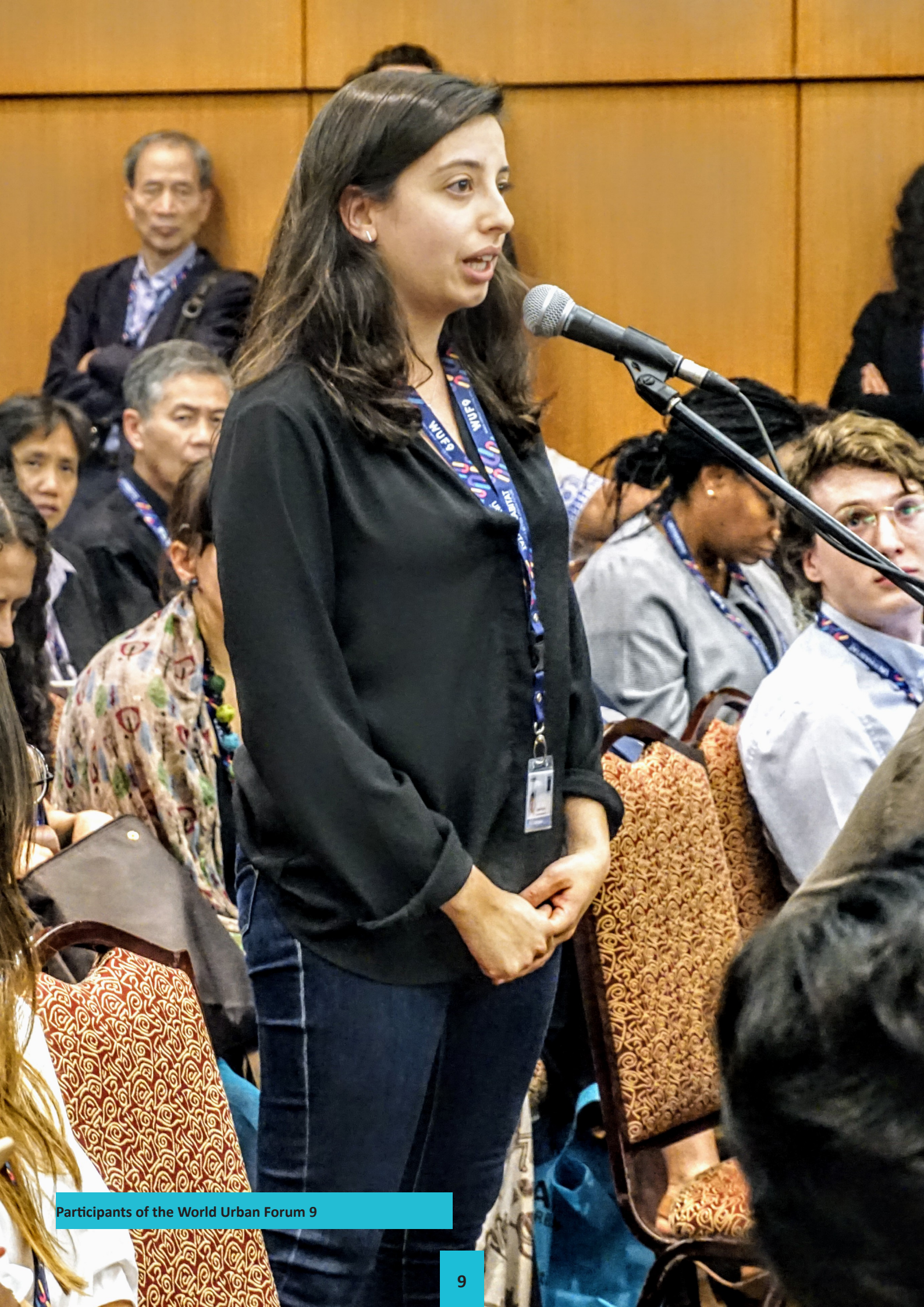
1. **Every city must be planned and designed "from the ground up" and education must enable students to plan and design with the natural systems as their point of departure.**

This is because of the urgency to manage natural resources (and especially water resources) in a rational and fair way. This sounds obvious, but every project, every neighborhood, every city must be planned and designed having its water resources as the first and foremost concern. Planners and designers are often ignorant of how water systems work, and dwell in an old fashioned paradigm of "taming nature". A new paradigm of "working with nature" should be pursued

Not coincidentally, this premise comes from the Dutch context where the UTC took place. Difficult environmental conditions have led the Dutch to create a societal model that allowed people to work collectively in order to ensure life in an area constantly threatened by water. Even more importantly, the Dutch were able to shape their land and build prosperous and healthy communities in an area with extremely sensitive environmental conditions where resources were scarce. This is called "the polder model", a societal model based on consensus seeking, collective action and trust in institutions that lead to shared visions for a desirable future that allows citizens, governments and businesses to work collectively for the common good. The realization that we must "work with nature" has resulted in national policies such as the "room for the river" policy, which allows for the re-naturalization of river beds and the creation of floodable areas in cities, in order to allow for natural seasonal flows to happen.

The conditions that led to this specific societal model now exist everywhere: all cities around the world must deal with water issues, scarcity of space, threats from a changing climate and from an uncertain economy. In summary, we must create the political and social conditions for sustainability transitions to happen. And we must incorporate this discussion into education, which leads us to the next point.

Academic and activist speaking at the side event



Participants of the World Urban Forum 9

2. **Transition strategies must embrace the three crucial components of sustainability: environmental, social and economic.**

This discussion is crucial for education in planning and design for the built environment because the future of our cities depends on the realization that in order to achieve sustainability, there must be a political and social base on which those strategies can operate. In other words, inefficient governments that lack accountability and transparency are unable to deliver effective sustainability transition strategies. This is because the checks and balances and the incentives to deliver sound policy are not there.

Issues of spatial justice (the justice delivered by the fair allocation of resources and opportunities but also the justice delivered by inclusive planning processes) are central in this discussion. The right to the city implies the creation of public goods (goods from which no one is excluded and whose consumption does not decrease their availability). But the creation of public goods demands a serious discussion about who is responsible for regulating, governing and steering resources and spaces in order to guarantee the availability of and access to public goods.
It is clear, however, that planning and design students must be able to understand the politics of policy and design, in the words of Marie Huchzermeyer. They must also understand concepts like public goods and spatial or environmental justice in order to be able to deliver effective policies and projects that tackle these issues. This leads us to the next point.

3. **Governance is key to social sustainability.**

Through the understanding of real governance structures, planners and designers can deliver politically feasible, socially acceptable and economically viable solutions. By understanding the underlying relationships between the public sector, the private sector and civil society, planners and designers can better define the roles and the obligations of a multitude of stakeholders involved in policy and projects. Hence, an understanding of governance is essential for planning and design education. It is easy to see that these relationships are regulated by formal institutions (legal frameworks and planning systems, for instance) and informal institutions (to use an expression coined by the ever so great Elinor Ostrom). Informal institutions are typically unwritten rules, ingrained practices and informal societal norms that shape and influence how stakeholders relate to each other. Spatial planners and designers tend to ignore these informal structures and practices, which may lead to unrealistic solutions being proposed. This leads us to the next point.

4. **We must work hard to deliver EVIDENCE- BASED and CRITICAL education that embraces CRITICAL THINKING.**

This is related to the challenge to the need to deliver evidence-based solutions, adopting a rational attitude towards problem-solving and avoiding at all costs magical thinking. Urban design and planning cannot rely on creativity only, but must be based on solid data and research, and education must reflect that.

The abundance of data and the primacy of technology lead us to believe that more than smart cities, we need smart citizens and governments and in order to have them, we must educate our young planners and designers to have a positive but critical attitude towards data and information. In this sense, we must emphasize values and ethics that must guide the activity of planning and designing for citizens. In summary, the emphasis on studio based education, design solutions and connection with real world stakeholders CANNOT prevent universities from emphasising an ACADEMIC attitude based on the understanding of THEORY, CRITICAL ANALYSIS and rigorous RESEARCH. Emphasis on problem-based education cannot prevent students and teachers from trying to ask the right questions.

5. **Education must involve real stakeholders not only in the definition of the problems to be tackled, but in the research and design processes**

The proverbial ivory tower in which academics are said to live has fallen a long time ago. It is now widely recognised that successful education is not only evidence-based, it must also incorporate multiple perspectives. The city is not the product of one single world-view, but the interplay between an endless number of different perspectives, mediated by power structures. This means that, while some voices are amplified, others are silenced or disregarded. This has a huge impact on how we build knowledge about cities, and how cities are governed. The knowledge of children, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, racial, religious or sexual minorities must be integrated into how cities are planned, designed and governed.

Effective inclusive education should be able to embrace a large variety of worldviews and types of knowledge. Multi-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity are key elements of successful education. While everybody seem to agree that education should be both, the reality is that education is often offered in silos and disciplines still seek to distinguish themselves from each other by affirming differences rather than looking for commonalities.

It is desirable and necessary to seek innovative partnerships between schools of planning and design and local governments, NGOs, advocacy groups, companies and

other stakeholders. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as multi-stakeholder design studios, institutional partnerships, problem-based research and design, and so on. TU Delft is experimenting with Living Labs, through its partnership with the newly formed Amsterdam Metropolitan Solutions Institute in Amsterdam (AMS: https://www.ams-institute.org) a partnership between the City of Amsterdam, TU Delft, Wageningen University and MIT. According to its website, "AMS is centred on applied technology in urban themes such as water, energy, waste, food, data and mobility, and the integration of these themes. AMS will develop a deep understanding of the city – sense the city -, design solutions for its challenges, and integrate these into the city. In that, Amsterdam is its home base and test bed (…) AMS is built by a unique consortium of public and private partners. AMS advocates an open model that lets others that share its vision participate in its research and valorization activities, make use of its infrastructure, and contribute to and benefit from AMS." The city of Amsterdam is simultaneously a source of funds, data and also provides the institute with real-life challenges that are tackled by its researchers and students.
The concept of living-labs is relatively new and is being perfected. However, it is possible to distinguish some defining characteristics. Living labs are generally conducted in a "real-life" urban setting and tackle existing challenges or problems of contemporary cities. They integrate a large range of stakeholders from different sectors of society and try to close the gap between ideas, practices and implementation. In order to do so, living labs need institutional embeddedness, so that ideas generated in close communication with users can facilitate implementation and upscaling. This not only enriches the creative process, it also reduces risks of policy and business failures. On the downside, living labs are not a direct path for short-term solutions and stakeholders' direct involvement is not always a guarantee for success. Generally, living labs require large investments in terms of time, coordination, organization and management.

To this description, we add an emphatic red alert and refer the reader back to point 4. The emphasis on studio-based education, design solutions and connection with real world stakeholders should not prevent universities from emphasizing an academic attitude based on the understanding of theory, in critical analysis and rigorous research. Students must be able to, first and foremost, ask the right questions. Additionally, we argue for a better understanding of the role of theories in urban design and planning. A strong theoretical framework is a shortcut to better practice.

It is our perception that different academic traditions understand the roles of practice and theory differently. Because many planning courses suffered from being excessively theoretical in the past, there is resistance among a small community of planners and designers to the idea that theory can vigorously inform practice.

These points were extensively discussed during the World Urban Forum event organized by TU Delft. Moreover, the following points were highlighted by participants:

6. **Problem-based design studio experiences often offer one-off solutions.**

In order to have real impact, problem-based design studios should connect to larger institutional frameworks that are able to scale-up or generalise solutions found. The lack of connection between educational institutions and local or national governments is reflected in the lack of impact experienced by the former. A clear plan of dissemination and impact must be formulated by both parties from the on-set. Problem based design and planning studios, living labs and the like must find clear links to the users of solutions found.

7. **University education is long, expensive and disconnected from implementation.**

Although we argue for the importance of quality higher education, it is true that university education is not accessible to all. Courses are long, often prohibitively expensive and are often disconnected from the challenges of implementation.

Many countries in the Global South suffer from chronic lack of capacity to plan and design sustainable cities and communities.

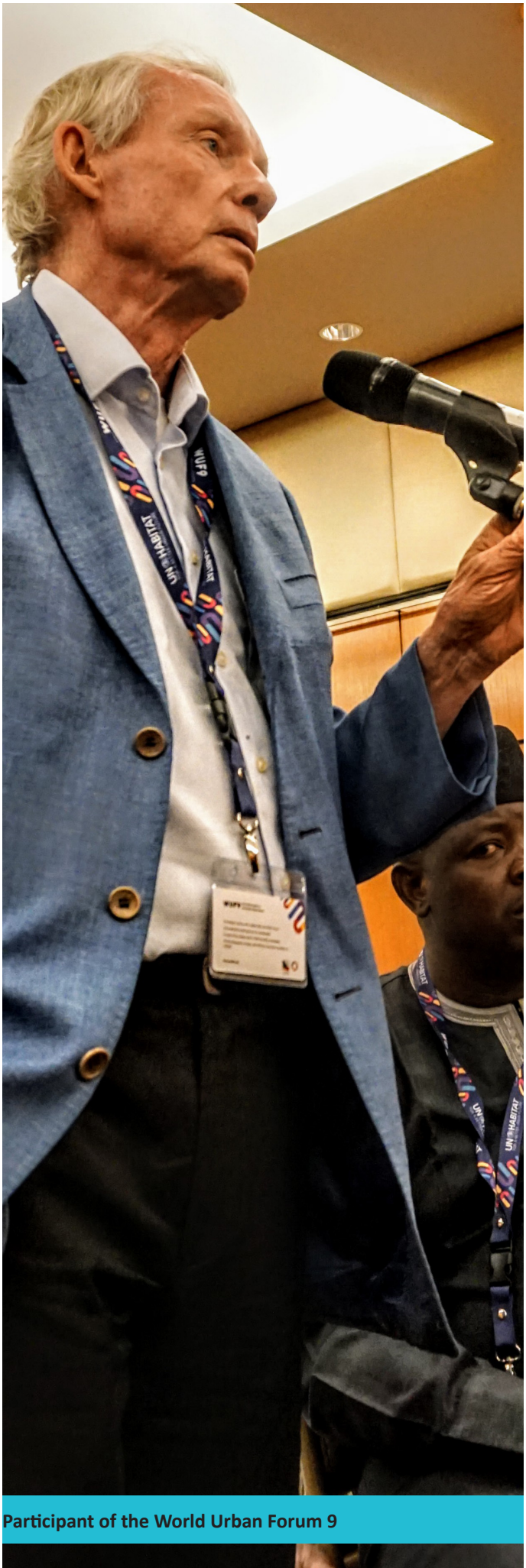
Firstly, let us argue for public education that is accessible to all. We are determinedly against commodification of knowledge and education. Higher education should be treated as a public good and efforts must be made to make it accessible, including subsidies, scholarships, and the like. This is crucial for the achievement of the goals expressed in the New Urban Agenda.

Secondly, we must recognise that many countries in the Global South desperately need people with the necessary skills to plan and design sustainable cities and communities, which begs for shorter, agile training courses that are cheaper and accessible. While planning and design professionals leaving university in Western countries find it sometimes difficult to find a job, the truth is that many regions in the world are desperately short of professionals. There is a mismatch between offer and demand of planning and design professionals at the global level.

This brings us to the issue of on-line education. Although online education has a series of drawbacks and nothing can replace face-to-face learning, there are obvious advantages concerning the costs, reach and accessibility of MOOCs and other forms of virtual education.

We also would like to argue education must be continu-

General view of the World Urban Forum 9



Participant of the World Urban Forum 9

ous: on-the-job training and continuous life-long learning are required in a world that is changing rapidly, which also begs for new ways of teaching and learning.

8. **Education is too Western centric**

The richness and variety of human experiences around the world is not reflected in planning and design theory and education. While countries in Africa and Asia are urbanising at record rates, literature remains resolutely Anglo-Saxon, with French, German and Spanish scholarship following suite. Diversity must be sought in the classroom, but also in the types of knowledge that are taught in universities all over the world.

In fact, the problem of colonised knowledge runs much deeper than academia: entire planning systems in countries in the Global South are issued from English, French or Spanish models that are often ill-suited to respond to the local culture and to local informal institutions. We must resolutely look for indigenous knowledge and give a voice to groups whose voice is barely heard in the debate about sustainable inclusive urbanisation. The study of local traditions, vernacular ways of city-making, and the social and cultural foundations of spatial planning is highly desirable. This opens up a myriad of possibilities and new research. Last but not least, this perspective also calls for a deeper understanding about informal ways of city-building, which are predominant in many countries in the Global South.

These are some of the questions we would like to address[1].

Q1 #TheCityWeNeed learns and innovates, and is a laboratory for experimenting with alternative scenarios for a future. Which role do educational institutions play in this regard?

Q2 What are the main issues in the #NewUrbanAgenda that planning and design students and teachers should focus on to achieve #TheCityWeNeed ?

Q3 #TheCityWeNeed recognizes that cities are changing, which calls for continuous learning, reflection and more flexible planning. Which innovative approaches do you know which can contribute to this?

Q4 How can educational institutions move towards an education that embraces the complexity of urban development and incorporates issues of justice, ethics and social sustainability?

Q5 #TheCityWeNeed uses systems thinking to understand urban complexity and the sources of unintended policy consequences. How can universities engage students to focus their studies on these issues?

Q6 How can the public sector, private sector and civic society be brought together to form collaborative alliances for the educational aspects of teaching the #NewUrbanAgenda? #TheCityWeNeed

1 These are the questions used in the Twitter Chat promoted by the World Urban Campaign and TU Delft on Education for the City We Need.

Costanza La Mantia,
UN-Habitat, Nairobi

There is a general consensus around the idea that planning education should deliver knowledge rather than (only) deliver skills. Most of all, it should help form a thinking framework, a mindset, a capacity to frame the world under a certain perspective and help students apply knowledge and skills within that framework.

It emerged from several interventions how planning education is particularly needed in underdeveloped contexts, but at the same time it is difficult to access proper education in these contexts. Professional planners are scarce in number and have financial constraints preventing them from accessing quality education.

To fill this gap, there is now a tendency to offer short professional courses for practicing professionals that are good for specific technological skills but – in my view - not good enough to trigger the above mentioned change in mindsets and not good enough in building critical thinking frameworks.

Laboratory based experiences are fundamental in doing so, as they manage to go beyond the pure delivery of skills and technical knowledge. In fact, through experiential learning and the possibility of interacting and confronting both different expertise and interests, interdisciplinary and participatory laboratories are able trigger the needed change in perspective and therefore to start building a new thinking framework.

Lastly, another important theme merged from the discussion, concerning the fact that education is often western-centric and not totally suitable and pertinent for non-western, underdeveloped contexts. Again, laboratorial experiences are key in counteracting this western-centric education, especially when bringing together teachers and students from different parts of the world, with local specialists, community members and activists, as the shared knowledge produced within these experiences is potentially able to push for a contextualization of knowledge and approaches that are fundamental for making education locally relevant, therefore, effective in overcoming local challenges.

Costanza La Mantia

Marie Huchzermeyer, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

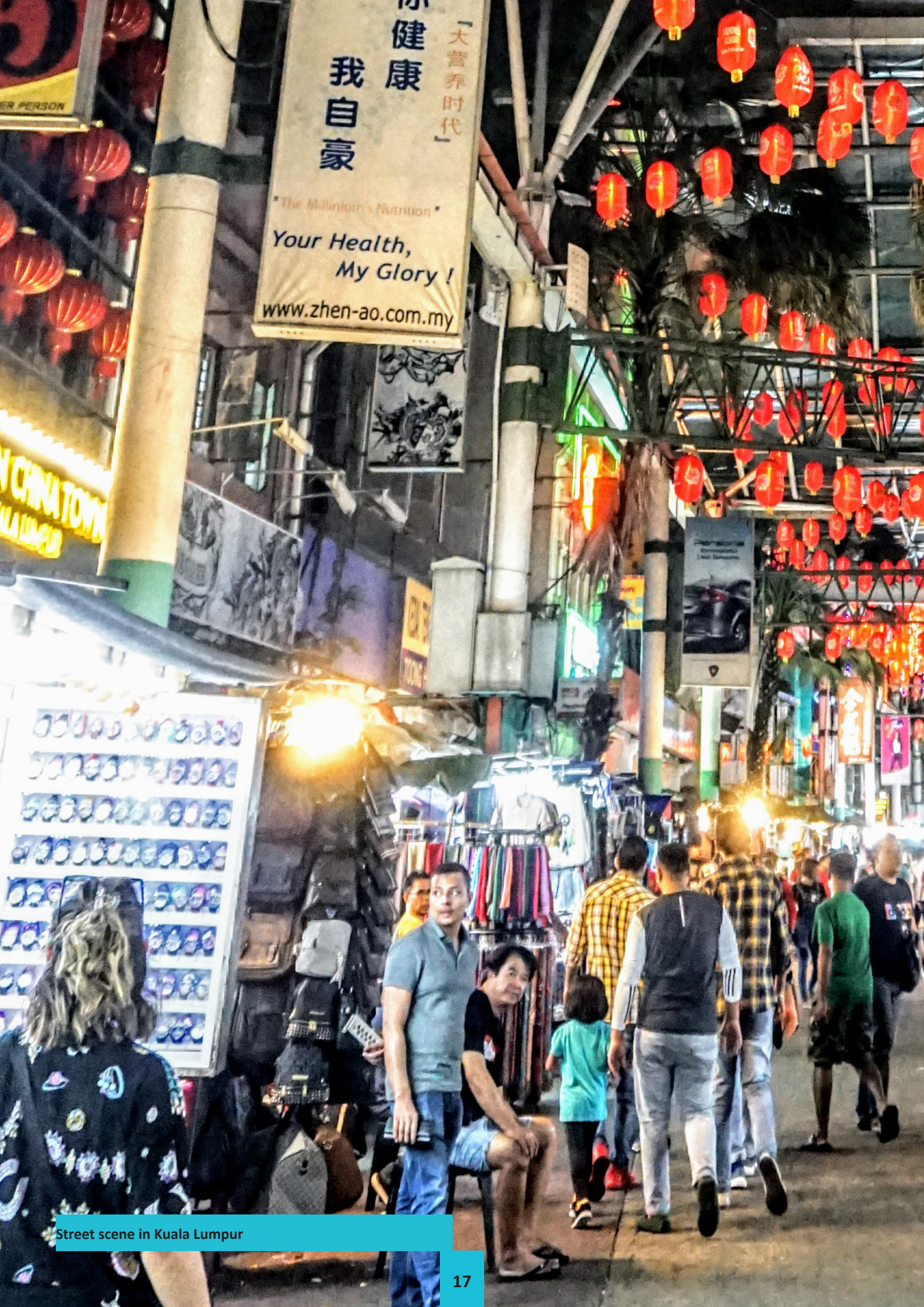
It was very useful to hear about the Urban Thinkers Campus approach, as I had not engaged with this so far. The attendance was diverse and the discussion very rich. It became evident how universities in the north and south share similar challenges in relation to pedagogic approaches around what is loosely termed 'urban labs'.

The points of debate were familiar to me, given our own reflections in the School or Architecture and Planning at Wits University, our participation in a U Lab+ network for several years that included universities in the north and south, our current reflections in the Wits TU Berlin Urban Lab, and indeed our own Africa-focused networking event in WUF9 on a very similar theme. There appear to be many different ways of going about 'urban labs'.

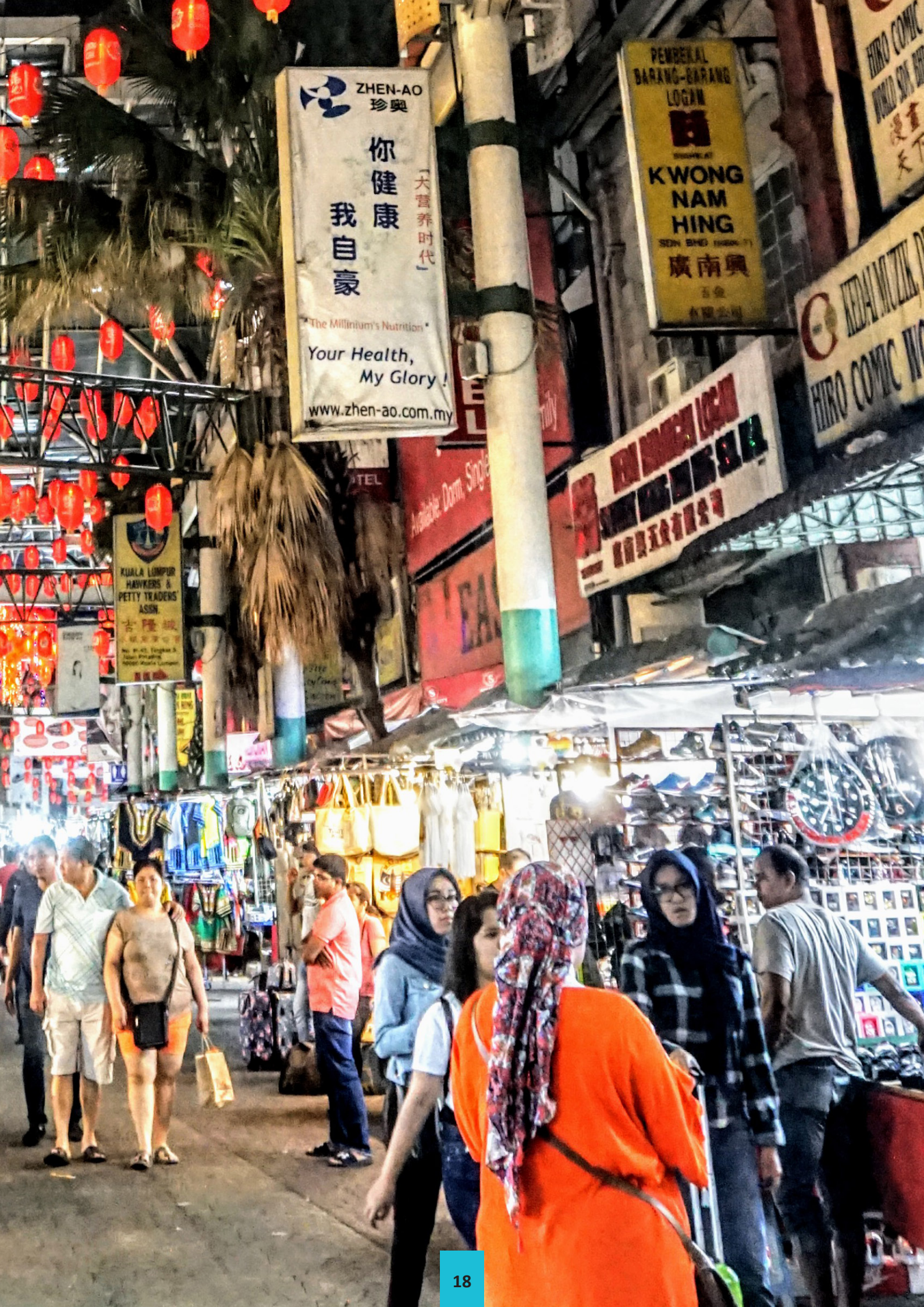
Perhaps we need to discuss what defines an urban lab (I mentioned the example of ACC not involving classes of students, only individual PhD candidates, in their 'Urban Labs'). And we need to also discuss the limits of such labs. There is a tendency to want to portray them in a positive light as a tool to attract students or funding, to demonstrate impact etc. In real terms, sometimes the impacts are overstated and many other processes and not the urban lab alone led to the acclaimed outcome.

I also think we need to grapple more seriously with the pedagogic limits of this form of teaching, and better consider the other forms of teaching that have to accompany it in order to prepare candidates adequately for diverse careers. Also we need to consider the implication of poorly prepared urban labs, parachutist type labs, how many get away with poor preparation because students still end up having fun and speaking positively of it. And how does one actually measure the real learning, given all the complexities and often fraughtness of group work.

Marie Huchzermeyer



Street scene in Kuala Lumpur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ISBN: 978-94-6366-025-9