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UN-Habitat ETH-CASE Housing at the Centre workshops: From the new urban agenda to systematic approaches

In partnership with UN-Habitat, ETH-CASE organizes Housing at the Centre workshops for students to work on real housing challenges alongside national and UN-Habitat experts to support newly issued National Housing Plans

The Idea: This Innovedum project offers innovative educational events to ETH students to work on actual housing challenges and ongoing housing sector reforms. The aim is to train a new generation of built environment professionals which, according to UN-Habitat officials, is needed to successfully implement the New Urban Agenda. Between 2018-2020, three housing studios are developed by ETH CASE and in partnership with UN-Habitat that bring together ETH students with housing experts of a partner country. During these one-week events, a recently elaborated national housing plan, which lays out the broad system of housing delivery and government interventions in a country is translated into more concrete strategies and design proposals. Students not only receive the unique opportunity to work on a real case application and see their ideas eventually manifest, but also get valuable insights into transnational policy making, current urban development challenges in the Global South, and transdisciplinary working environments. Results will be displayed in Zurich, the UN-Habitat headquarter in Nairobi, as well as the partner countries and additionally published through online and print documentations. The long-term aim is to fully integrate the ETH-UN-Habitat collaboration into the curriculum offer of ETH-CASE as well as other collaborating departments.

Current Status: In Spring 2018, a pilot workshop was organized to adjust to a modified implementation timeline. During this event, a small group of MAS in Housing students guided by ETH CASE staff and an UN-Habitat expert reflected on the specific housing challenges in Mozambique and developed project ideas based on incremental growth. The workshop has been published in the social media of UN-Habitat and results post-produced into an UN-Habitat presentation. The learning experience of students were captured in short video statements and used to create a promotional video for the Housing at the Centre initiative. For the academic year 2018 -19 all activities are integrated into the curriculum which include a lecture series on housing issues of the Global South, a preparatory seminar more specific to the particularities of Mozambique and a seminar week visit to the partner country.

Next Steps: In Spring 2019, a large workshop is organized aiming at uniting different ETH departments and, eventually, different universities. In a combination of on-site and skype lectures, as well as interdisciplinary group work, students learn to think across disciplines and scales and develop reflective competences that enable to connect architectural decision-making to its broader effects (such as affordability, resilience, urban patterns,...).