

Perspectives on Global Issues Workshop – Sustainability

European Academy of Otzenhausen (EAO) Germany, May 2019

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Report + Reflection [Sept. 2019]

The opportunity to attend the “Perspectives on Global Issues Workshop” at the European Academy of Otzenhausen (EAO) in May 2019 was certainly the highlight of my 2018-19 academic year. I am sincerely thankful for the experience of attending the workshop and meeting colleagues from different colleges and departments of Kennesaw State University, which provided real potential for collaboration and interdisciplinary research in the realm of sustainability. The workshop enriched my understanding of sustainability from various perspectives through informative lectures, group activities, and discussions. To summarize the benefits of the workshop, which fostered my professional academic career, some highlights of the experience include but not limited to:

- **Seminars.** The presentations offered by the EAO team were very informative, mind-opening, and inspiring for me as an architect to broaden my understanding of the concept of sustainability concerning various issues such as political structures, energy security, climate challenges, global learning and education, and population and food supply. In particular, I enjoyed very much the presentation by Dr. Ulrike Schinkel on “Governance and Challenges of Climate Change”, which elaborated *mitigation* and *adaptation* measures to reduce/prevent greenhouse gas emissions. The strategies covered various initiatives in different areas such as energy supply, water resources, health, food production, and transportation and education systems.
- **Collaboration.** The workshop experience was a great opportunity to meet with other colleagues from various colleges at Kennesaw State University. Although the timing of the conference was very intense, there was a good balance of lectures, discussions, and group activities to reflect both collective and personal perspectives. Some of the workshop activities required us to partner with people from other disciplines and respond to some of the challenges within the KSU campuses to address specific issues related to the advancement of sustainability.
- **Observation.** The EAO campus was very peaceful and it was a focused environment for learning about the issues of sustainability. As part of the workshop experience, we visited the European Parliament (EP) and the Council of Europe as well as receiving a great tour of the beautiful, historic city of Strasbourg in France. It was nice to see examples and the real application of the concepts learned in seminars and how they can be reflected in society.
- **Hospitality.** The hospitality at the EAO was simply amazing. All the people that we met were very welcoming, informative, and professional. The food quality was also terrific with a great variety of recipes during our stay at the academy. The events and workshops were scheduled in a great seminar room which offered both indoor and outdoor activities.

The opportunity to participate in the workshop is already contributing to my academic research and teaching within the Department of Architecture at Kennesaw State University. I am benefiting from the experience and reflecting upon that in a variety of ways including:

- **Teaching.**
ARCH 2311: *Environmental Technology I: Systems Selection, Materials and Methods*: I am the coordinator of the three Environmental Technology sequences in the architecture program. After attending the EAO workshop, I worked with other colleagues, who teach the same class, to expand the

“Sustainability” chapter. Additionally, I added a new two-week-long, group project in my class this year. After attending the EAO workshop, I brought several books from the workshop such as “*Costing the Earth?*”, “*Feeding the Planet*”, “*Climate Change*”, “*Energy*”, and “*Overcrowded World*” (Fig. 1). Since the second day of the class, students formed eight groups of four students and prepared presentations exploring ‘*the role of architects in advancing sustainable design in the context of the given book*’ (Fig. 2). The final results were presented to all the three sections of the class, including 104 students total, in the Architecture Building’s main auditorium (Fig. 3). The experience was very successful in drawing other students’ attention while being educational and informative. As the semester goes on, I plan to continue enriching and expanding the content of the class by adding/updating materials based on what I learned and observed during the EAO workshop.

ARCH 5015: *Focus Studio*: Another course that I am teaching this semester (Fall 2019) is a 5-credit design studio, which will focus on the design of the “Museum of Interactive Technology” in Atlanta’s Midtown area. For this project, each student will focus on a site condition such as *wind, light, sound, water, or vegetation*, which will become the main theme for the museum. The goal is to design museums that will promote the concept of sustainability with regard to the museum theme. The final museums will showcase technological advancements about the sustainability issues and in relation to the museum theme.

- **Collaboration.** During the EAO workshop, I met with a colleague from the KSU School of Arts and Design with extensive experience in curating and facilitating museums. I am planning to enrich the *Focus Studio* and the students’ projects with consistent input and feedback from him. This will also advance an interdisciplinary approach, which is in alignment with the Architecture Department’s and University’s vision.
- **Dissemination.** The end results of the *Focus Studio* will be published in a conference with all students as coauthors. Additionally, with input from the colleague from the KSU School of Arts and Design, we will showcase students’ projects in the Architecture Gallery in Marietta campus’s N-Building at the end of the semester. The exhibition will be open to the public from late Fall to early Spring. An invitation with more details will be sent to everyone through ‘KSU Today’.

I would like to thank everyone who helped to make this great opportunity possible, in particular, Dr. Matson, for his compassionate support of faculty from Kennesaw State University. I hope, at some point, every colleague from our university will benefit from this unique opportunity and reflect their experience within their career. I believe that this is a great experience to cultivate sustainability for the betterment of our planet Earth.



Fig. 1: Adopted books



Fig. 2: In-class group activities



Fig. 3: Final presentations