

Rethinking Sustainable Cities from Uruguay's Interior

Dr. Paula Enciso

Technological University / Sustainability for Development Program, Uruguay

Abstract

The course Thinking Sustainable Cities, developed by the Sustainability for Development Program at the Technological University of Uruguay (UTEC), is an educational experience focused on urban sustainability, the right to the city, and territorial planning from a perspective rooted in Uruguay's interior regions. The course is framed within the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, and seeks to strengthen the relationship between the university, the territory, and civic participation.

The course promoted a critical understanding of sustainable cities through dimensions such as equitable use of urban space, urban planning, mobility, green infrastructure, and territorial governance. It also encouraged students to recognize the role of universities and citizens in building more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient territories.

The experience is particularly relevant in the context of UTEC, a university with strong territorial roots in Uruguay's interior. Students analyzed cities, towns, and neighborhoods connected to their own daily experiences, bringing visibility to challenges often overlooked in national urban debates — including urban vulnerability, unequal access to services, mobility, territorial fragmentation, and lack of public spaces.

As part of the final assessment, students developed territorial diagnostics integrating concepts of urban sustainability, territorial planning, and the SDGs, including spatial representations through maps and sketches.

The results demonstrate how higher education can foster critical reflection on local territories and strengthen capacities for civic participation, highlighting the need for integral and participatory approaches in which citizens play a central role in building sustainable communities.

Keywords: Sustainable Cities, Higher Education, Territorial Planning