

Urban Futures Workshop, the case of Abu Dhabi

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Abstract

Abu Dhabi has embarked on a formidable challenge, that of turning the city into a sustainable urban model. The Urban Futures Workshop brought together graduate students, Faculty members and researchers of University of Geneva, Zayed University and UCLA to study and reflect the sustainability aspirations of Abu Dhabi, the many advancements towards this goal as well as the challenges ahead.

The Urban Futures drew a general map of processes by which cities switch from urban planning as usual to sustainable urban planning in the context of scarcity of natural resources and vulnerability of ecosystems. Challenges to develop a sustainable planning model are numerous, from policymaking and implementation, environmental assessments, public involvement, to research and development. Urban Futures Workshop introduced to the participants the case study of Abu Dhabi by organizing a series of site visits (including the visit of Masdar City), lectures with experts in related fields (Renewable Energy for example) and an investigation of downtown neighborhood(s) of Abu Dhabi (organized in collaboration with Al-Hosn University, School of Urban Planning).

The material collected as outcome of this workshop will serve as the basis for a case study analysis of Abu Dhabi to be presented over a joint final review (over video conferencing) during the fall semester of 2011. The results of the discussions are research questions which would be interesting to study such as: Saadiyat and Masdar ; How to reconcile two different visions of sustainability and place making.

