

Report on Participation in the U21 School of Sustainable Policy Leadership Lund, Sweden | 9th – 13th June 2025

Participant:

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Yashaswini Bahuguna, a postgraduate student from the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi was selected to participate in the U21 School of Sustainable Policy Leadership held in Lund, Sweden from 9th to 13th June 2025. Representing India among approximately 44 participants from 15 different nationalities, she was awarded a USD 500 grant. The programme brought together emerging young leaders to explore interdisciplinary approaches to sustainable policy-making, climate change challenges and community-led solutions.

Day 1

The programme began with a warm welcome from Professor Per Mickwitz, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Sustainability and Campus Development at Lund University. After the opening, we moved into a session on participatory visual arts as a research method. Emma Johansson, a researcher at the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies, shared her work in Tanzania, where she used *Tinga Tinga* (a traditional tribal art form) to engage local communities in dialogue around land use patterns and forest cover.

Later in the day, we were divided into small interdisciplinary teams to co-design sustainable community-based solutions. My team explored the idea of a community garden which incorporated seasonal calendars and strategies to support bee populations. The day concluded with a campus tour of Lund University, where we were shown various impressive sustainability initiatives.

Day 2

Our second day focused on sustainability leadership and strategic communication. Professor Kezia Dugdale and Hannah Salamon from the University of Glasgow led a session on how to effectively engage stakeholders and the public in sustainability efforts—something I found especially relevant.

We then heard from Carl Dalhammar on EU climate policies, particularly the *Right to Repair*, and its place within broader EU environmental law. This was followed by a session with Luis Mundaca, who used behavioral economics to help us unpack global sustainability challenges and policy responses.

Later, I participated in a creative workshop called *Images of Hope*, where we envisioned and illustrated a world in which two Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) had been achieved. It was a powerful exercise in visionary thinking and optimism.

The day ended with group project presentations. My team had the opportunity to present our community garden initiative, and I was proud of the collaborative thinking we brought to the table. We wrapped up the day with a networking dinner at the Institute for Design Sciences.

Day 3: Visit to UN City, Copenhagen

On the third day, we traveled by train to Copenhagen for a visit to UN City. Representatives from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) gave engaging presentations on projects like *Net Zero Gujarat* and *Climate Mitigation and Adaptation in Africa*. These talks highlighted the crucial role of international policy in tackling local climate challenges.

Afterwards, we took part in a sustainable photo hunt around the city. I chose to photograph bicycles for daily commute, one of my favorite sustainable features in Copenhagen and explained the local issue it addressed, why it worked well in that context, and whether it could be adapted to my own city.

Day 4: Power Dynamics, Values, and Climate Spillovers

Day four opened with a session on the power dynamics of sustainability leadership and the international spillover effects of national climate policies. It was eye-opening to understand how interconnected our actions are and why global cooperation is so essential.

Later, we had a reflective workshop that focused on our core values and how these influence our approaches to sustainability. It was a space for personal introspection and meaningful peer-to-peer learning on the ethical dimensions of environmental work.

Day 5: Student Panel and Reflections on Hope

The final day began with a student panel on *Sustainable Mobility*, moderated by Llewellyne Deleis. I was honored to be one of the four students selected to speak. We discussed the environmental trade-offs and opportunity costs of short-term international travel for academic and policy programmes—an especially relevant topic in the context of sustainability education.

Following that, Maja Essebo from the Centre for Sustainability Studies led a session on *Pedagogies of Hope*. It encouraged us to reflect on whether the programme—and our education more broadly—had instilled hope and a sense of agency in addressing climate change.

Debs McAllister delivered the closing remarks, stressing the importance of global alliances like Universitas 21 (U21) and laying out pathways for future collaboration and leadership in sustainability.

Concluding Reflections

The U21 School of Sustainable Policy Leadership was a deeply enriching experience. It provided a unique platform for interdisciplinary learning and hands-on problem-solving. Through interactive workshops, field visits, and collaborative projects, I built global peer networks and walked away feeling more committed than ever to inclusive, community-driven environmental change.

