

## MURCS Cohort 2021 Biographies

### **Shoaib Amin**

Jhelum, Pakistan

I did my Bachelor's in Environment Engineering from NUST, Pakistan. Followed by 3 years of working experience in the construction sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During my professional career, I realized that any complex problem requires an interdisciplinary approach. The correlation between urban environment, societal behaviors, and climate change have always intrigued me. MURCS program provides me the opportunity to develop the versatility I require to be able to contribute more to my work.

I am confident that as well as developing a competent professional through academics, I will also grow as a person moved by experiences that this program will provide and that I will share with my colleagues. I believe that the journey ahead is amazing, and I am excited about it.



### **Joseph Anderson**

Seattle, USA

I grew up surrounded by the rich forests of the Pacific Northwest, which helped develop my passion for the natural world. During my Bachelor's, I studied sustainability, with an emphasis on community development and agriculture. In that time, I got into a 1-year intensive inspired by Buckminster Fuller, focused on developing systems-level approaches to sustainability in the built environment. This experience catalyzed my interest in sustainable cities. I found myself working on a variety of sustainable housing projects across North America, from off-grid tiny homes in suburbs to Earthships in alpine deserts.

After college my careers have focused on nature-based solutions to climate challenges. I worked for the city of Seattle, designing and installing sustainable storm water infrastructure that supported local food systems and native pollinators. For the last three years, I worked in biotech developing microbial solutions to climate-related environmental and agricultural challenges.

I consider myself a lifelong learner and have continued my education during my professional career, including certifications in LEED green building and different practices in sustainable land management. I hope to use the education I receive from the MURCS to integrate my multidisciplinary background in sustainability with the pressing needs of the world's cities. I am grateful for this educational opportunity and intend to use it to make the world a better place.



**Oluwaseun Samuel Apenuwa**  
Akure, Nigeria

I was born and raised in the southwestern part of Nigeria. My first and second degree was awarded by the Federal University of Technology, Akure in Urban and Regional Planning. About five years ago, I started my career as an urban planner and environmentalist where I was engaged in urban planning projects such as urban renewal, master plan design, and environmental impact assessment for several developmental projects. Academically, I have delved into areas of resilient housing provision, GIS and urban planning, climate change and African cities, access to social amenities during covid-19, and infrastructure planning. I have also carried out studies on planning for sustainable cities within and outside Nigeria. The concern about the complexity of the threat posed by climate change in the face of unprecedented urban growth motivated my application for the MURCS programme, which understudies urban climate and sustainability from a multidisciplinary perspective. At the end of this programme, I hope to join other urban professionals across the globe in building a sustainable evolving urban environment for the future.



**Yasmin Atienza**  
Batangas, Philippines

Yasmin is a Filipina architect and LEED Green Associate with a passion for arts and design. Her 5 years of practice in both the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates has greatly influenced her to the role of responsible designers and the urgent need to protect our planet and environment for future generations. Her goal of gaining more knowledge in sustainability, especially in relation to architecture and making it a powerful trend in the future motivated her in pursuing the MURCS program.



**Mayuresh Bhadsavle**  
Mumbai, India

Mayuresh is an Urban Policy Researcher and Development Practitioner from Mumbai, India with seven years of experience in Urban Governance, Participatory Spatial Planning, Community Engagement and Capacity Building, Urban Livelihoods, Urban Heritage, Housing and Urban natural resources across different urban geographies of India. Starting with a Bachelors Degree in Computer Engineering from University of Mumbai, he switched over to social sector after completing MSc (Urban Policy and Governance) from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS Mumbai), the premier social sciences institute of India. He has worked with NGOs, Think-Tanks, Academic Institutions and has also contributed to mainstream media on varied topics of urbanism. His last professional engagement before joining MURCS 2021 cohort was with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the foremost organization that brings together the Industry, Government and Civil Society for sustainable development. Mayuresh enjoys Photography, Cinema, Nature-trails and writing and has a keen interest and commitment towards seeking inclusive and participatory climate adaptations across cities of Global South. He firmly believes that an interdisciplinary program like MURCS 1.5 would be highly catalytic in building his capacities to address the urgencies of climate change in a nuanced and enriched manner.





## **Olutayo Ebenezer Ekundayo** Okitipupa, Nigeria

Olutayo Ekundayo is an environmentalist who believes that we should be clear about the decision we are making, even if we're only making it by not making a decision.

For him, Okitipupa, a district with 15 years of continuous blackout is home. Olutayo completed his bachelor's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the prestigious Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria where he graduated as the overall best student in Planning studio. He earned a master's degree from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria where he carried out studies on transportation and regional development planning and neighbourhood/new town design. With over five years' experience as an urban planner, he has worked on masterplan, building and urban design plans, landscape design plan, planning research and demographic analysis, and environmental impact studies. He volunteered as part of the World Bank - Ibadan Urban Flood Management Project team and as a green educator for GreenSchoolsAfrica (GSA) in the 'Plant-a-tree-today' campaign where he built a network of eco-conscious individuals in African Schools. He launched an initiative 'SustainedOrNot' to sensitize people on environmental sustainability. Olutayo likes networking, researching, and dancing and he hopes to advance the field of urban sustainability and climate change with skills and knowledge gained from the MURCS programme. He is very worried that 2 degrees will be much worse than 1.5.



## **Lorena Gebran** Beirut, Lebanon

Hello! My name is Lorena Gebran and I graduated from the American University of Beirut with a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture and a Diploma of Agriculture Engineering.

I have been working for the past 3 years with private offices on a range of international projects. Working as a landscape architect allowed me to feel the tangible effect that design and planning can have on a place. I have also worked as a researcher and conducted studies touching on multiple themes such as participatory approaches in planning, landscape character assessment, and spatial analysis for aging-friendly communities.

Climate change has always been one of my main concerns. The urgency of this matter has become more apparent to me with the rise of the planetary crises that we are facing every day. Being part of the MURCS program is an amazing opportunity for me to be an active actor of change and contribute to the best of my abilities to mitigate the effects of climate change and come up with sustainable solutions.

I am very grateful to be part of this experience and to meet all the amazing people with whom I am sharing this journey.



**Aminath Maiha Hameed**  
Malé, Maldives

Maiha works at the Ministry of Environment in Maldives where for the past 7 years she has had the opportunity to explore the linkages of pollution to climate change and human health. She recognizes the need to formulate sustainable, science-based national policies and led the development of the first Maldives National Chemical Profile in 2015 and the first National Action Plan to Reduce Air Pollutants in 2019.

She appreciates how MURCS is uniquely tailored for her to understand what sustainable development means in the context of climate change, what it can mean for Small Island States and how to plan for it. She graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Biotechnology in 2012.



**Najma Yusuf Lelei**  
Mombasa, Kenya

Najma has a bachelors degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Erciyes University in Turkey. Prior to joining the MURCS program she was working as a physical planner at the County government of Mombasa in the Department of Lands, Physical Planning, Housing & Urban Renewal. Her roles mostly involved around the aspect of physical development and control, formulations of development plans and policies of the county.

Moreover, her interest in climate change lead her to pursue the MURCS programme while she hopes to contribute towards adresssing the impacts of climate change. Najma loves to travel, explore new place and to learn about different cultures and people. In her free time, she enjoys creating graphic designs and listening to audio books.



**Sruti Modekurty**  
Sacramento, USA

Sruti has a wide background in computer engineering, from robotics to data visualization to mobile apps. She has a BSc in Electrical & Computer Engineering from Carnegie Mellon University. Prior to joining MURCS, she was the Platform Lead at OpenAQ, building open source technology to help communities around the world fight air pollution. She was also a fellow at Blue Ridge Labs and New York City government, working on tech-enabled solutions for New Yorkers facing housing instability. In her free time, she likes to read, sing, climb and explore new places. Through the interdisciplinary approach of the MURCS program, she is excited to explore new ways technology may aid climate change and urban sustainability solutions, all while traveling and learning from her diverse and talented peers!



**Muhammad Abdullah**  
Lahore, Pakistan

My name is Muhammad Abdullah and I am from Lahore, Pakistan. I did my bachelors in Environmental Engineering from National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad. After finishing my studies, I got the opportunity to serve as Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Engineer in Baba Fareed Sugar Mills. During my job, I obtained "International General Certification in Occupational Health & Safety" from NEBOSH, UK. Following the completion of my international certification, I was selected as Assistant Manager (Operations) in Albayrak, Lahore. The Government of Pakistan has entrusted Albayrak with the responsibility of setting up the system of waste management in Lahore. In 2018, I got the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) scholarship for Master's program in Land Management and Land Tenure in Technical University of Munich (TUM), Germany. During my master's, I did an internship in Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Eschborn in the Department of Sustainable Land Use.

I believe the MURCS Erasmus+ programme will polish and enhance my skillset. I am hopeful that interdisciplinary nature of MURCS will make me able to contribute to and learn from the academically challenging international environment.



**Natasha Picone**  
Tandil, Argentina

I was born in Buenos Aires and lived in Tandil for the last 25 years. I have a bachelor's degree in Geography from Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires and a PhD degree in Geography from Universidad Nacional del Sur, both in Argentina. For the last 5 years I have been teaching at the university: GIS, Remote Sensing, Physical Geography and Climatology. Until I have dedicated my time to research about urban climate and the applications of new technologies to improve urban planning in middle cities of Argentina. I applied to MURCS because I wanted to learn how to work closely with urban planners and help them incorporate urban climate and sustainability issues into the agenda. This allows us to improve the quality of life in cities, especially in developing countries.

Travelling is one of my biggest passions and trying to capture throw photos is an important part so I can share the experiences with my loved ones. My hobbies are watching and playing football and listening to pop music. This MURCS experience is amazing to know and learn about different cultures and at the same time the possibility of travelling around Europe is a great opportunity to develop networks that will impact my future growth as a professional but most important as a person.





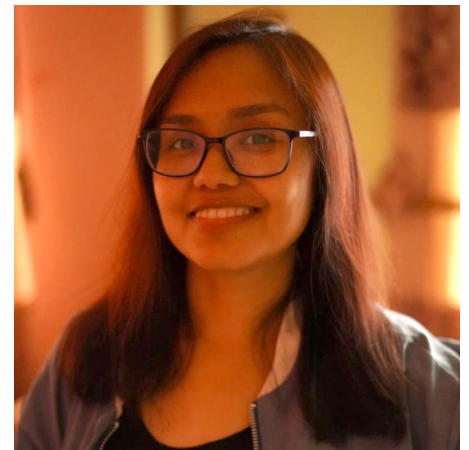
**Navoda Udari Rathnayake**  
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Navoda has been practicing as an Architect in private architectural companies since completing her bachelor's degree in Architecture and her research interest is mainly in the built environment and how it affects the urban climate. Growing up in a developing country and travels to other developed and developing countries have shaped her thoughts on the need for long-term planning and progressive implementations to promote sustainable practices and to mitigate adverse effects of rapid urbanization. She also has a strong appreciation for nature, conservation and adaptive reuse of existing built spaces. Her desire is to explore how sustainability can be approached in a holistic manner, alongside community awareness, urbanization and the continuous growth in the construction industry. The MURCS programme is therefore an opportunity to develop the necessary technical skills and to learn from peers and professionals with different backgrounds, perspectives and expertise on various approaches towards urban sustainability.



**Pragya Raut**  
Bhaktapur, Nepal

Pragya Raut is a young and passionate architect from Nepal interested in socially responsible and environmentally friendly design. She practiced as a regular architect in private consultancies immediately after her graduation. A trained social entrepreneur, she runs a social initiative called 'Aankura' that promotes traditional and vernacular architecture as well as sustainable practice/systems in Nepal. She also works as an author for the column 'sustainable housing/urban planning' for the e-magazine 'theecopreneur.in' where she features eco-friendly projects from all around the world. She believes MURCS is a superb opportunity for her to reflect her earlier experiences of working in urban & rural communities of Nepal while exploring further avenues & international connections to collaborate in future. Pragya graduated in Bachelor of architecture from Purbanchal University in 2017. Anything close to nature, life & philosophy attracts her.



**Maria Elisa Bernal Reino**  
Cuenca, Ecuador

Architect from the University of Azuay in Ecuador. Master in Urban Project from the Pontificia Universidad Catolica of Chile. Worked as a researcher at the University of Azuay on urban mobility and heritage issues. She was a citizen overseer for the Bike Sharing System in Cuenca. She was a mobility technician in the Mobility Management Department of Cuenca's Local Government, where she participated in projects such as: Sustainable Mobility Plan, Complete Streets, Superblocks, Electromobility Development and Low Emissions Historic Centre. Currently, she is enrolled in the ERASMUS Master in Urban Climate and Sustainability (MURCS). Her experience is in urban-architectural design of public spaces and transport-oriented development; and she is interested in urban issues related to public policy, citizen participation, urban segregation, and mobility in intermediate cities.



**Diana Reyes**  
Manila, Philippines

Diana Reyes practiced architecture in the Philippines and UAE before applying to the MURCS program. Growing up in the Middle East has influenced her to pursue a career in the built environment while her home country has made her realize how rapid cities can grow. With experience of living in different cities, Diana witnessed how the built environment can influence life quality and how the MURCS program can play a crucial role in shaping perspective on various urban issues.



**Mst. Mahbuba Shabnam**  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

I was born and raised in Meherpur, the smallest and historical district of Bangladesh. I have completed my graduation in Environmental Sciences from Jahangirnagar University of Bangladesh, where I worked on water quality degradation due to unplanned and rapid development of coal mine project. My professional interest is in environmental consultancy related field. I found, sustainable city management is a timely discipline and I applied for MURCS where I can learn to balance a country's desire for growth with environmentally friendly practices.

As hobby, I love to waste my time in crafting and sewing. Moreover travelling is also a great fun where this Erasmus program is giving a huge opportunity to not only travel, but also to know about different culture and possible solution of different environmental problems. Hope, along with my previous experience, this MURCS program will help me to dedicate my professional life to build sustainability in my country.



**Bianca Borelli da Silva**  
Passo Fundo, Brazil

I am an Architect and Urbanist in Brazil and I have worked with companies of the private sector developing urban and architectural projects of multiple scales. I continued my education in the field of sustainability and being able to improve my skills in Urban Climate with MURCS is an amazing opportunity. The relations that people have with the urban and natural environment are principles that I consider essentials to design more creative and human places. I love traveling, meeting new cultures, cities and landscapes and I also love outdoor activities as hiking and camping.





**Muhammad Tariq**  
Peshawar, Pakistan

I am Architect & Lecturer CECOS University Peshawar. After graduation I worked in different organizations, Private Practices & Projects focusing on Sustainability. I have a start-up called ecokoor which works for the built environment, promotes eco friendly homes & products in local communities. Always passionate about Climate resilient Architecture, Smart Cities, High performance buildings & Bioinspired design. Murcs is really a good opportunity to explore & experience many aspects of sustainability practically in different locations along with people from diverse backgrounds.



**Dechen Pema Yangki**  
Thimpu, Bhutan

I am DECHEN PEMA YANGKI from Bhutan. I have an undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering and I joined the government sector as my first employment in 2012. I have been working with the Department of Renewable Energy, Ministry of Economic Affairs since then. My work area has mostly been in the formulation of plans, policies and programmes partly for renewable energy but mostly on Energy Efficiency in Building, Transport and Industry sectors. MURCS is an opportunity for me to delve into my area of interest in Climate change and I sincerely hope that I will be able to address the climate change impact during the development of the local/national plans. I enjoy outdoor activities like hiking and camping. I enjoy music from all around the world and learning about the cultural diversity that our world has. I like the interdisciplinary of professions from different parts of the world that MURCS brings together and being a part of the current cohort is an opportunity.

