

MURCS COHORT 2023 BIOGRAPHIES



Nancy Zhou is passionate about applying her engineering specialization in energy and sustainability to create healthy and circular built environments. For the last two years, Nancy has been a sustainability consultant in Vancouver, Canada. Working with the real estate sector, Nancy helped clients to achieve their sustainability goals by delivering projects related to climate resilience, green building certifications, corporate ESG reporting, asset and portfolio decarbonization plans, as well as sustainability framework visioning.

However, Nancy has realized that solutions aimed at addressing the climate crisis often ignore social impacts and results in environmental gentrification. To ensure that environmental benefits are distributed equitably, Nancy aims to leverage MURCS' multidisciplinary nature by examining science, management, and planning from an equity lens in various economic contexts.

Nancy holds a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering from the University of Waterloo.



Ramazan Dausov, an **Environmental Specialist** from **Kazakhstan**, has a distinguished background with a Bachelor of Science in Ecology and Environmental Management from Lomonosov Moscow State University. His experience includes significant roles within the Committee on Water Resources of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, where he led efforts in **water resource monitoring and management**. Utilizing **GIS technologies**, Ramazan has been instrumental in developing and executing strategies for sustainable water monitoring and usage. His leadership in these roles has contributed to the advancement of **environmental and water policies** and practices, demonstrating a strong commitment to sustainable resource management and environmental

preservation.



Thotsaphon Wanphen is a Thai environmental professional dedicated to urban nature-based solutions, water management, and wetland restoration. With experience at IUCN Asia Regional Office, Thotsaphon has extensively developed community-level climate change adaptation strategies, leveraging wetland ecosystem services, local economies, and biodiversity for the mutual benefit of people and nature. Thotsaphon firmly believes that addressing fundamental environmental challenges requires integrating socioeconomic perspectives with the best available scientific solutions, and this necessitates collaboration across disciplines.

Thotsaphon holds a bachelor's degree in Southeast Asian Studies from Thammasat University and a master's in political economy from Chulalongkorn University. The Master of Urban Climate and Sustainability (MURCS) will provide him with the in-depth knowledge and leadership skills necessary to become a leading expert on the complex urban climate challenges of the 21st century.



Have you ever experienced that sense of disappointment when you realize that no matter how hard you try, a bright future seems out of reach? What if I tell you that "you have the power to write your own destiny and independently pave the path to success"? By following your passions and honing your skills, you can finally take control of your lifestyle. And being awarded an Erasmus Mundus scholarship is a testament that your values and aspirations are recognized.

For **Arsalan Makinian**, this value lies in sustainable urban development. As an experienced urban designer in Isfahan, Iran; He has grown a critical perspective on urban environments. He believes designing a sustainable city begins with identifying its problems and this process starts by stepping out of our studios and immersing ourselves in the city itself - listening to its citizens, stakeholders, and understanding its context through field studies, site analysis, and direct measurements.

Bringing his scenario building and strategic thinking skills into "MURCS" programme, Arsalan is hoping to grow his understanding of the global trends in technology, innovation and climate change and the interplay of different forces in the city. His work also includes how creativity enhances mobility and livelihood of a place, ultimately fostering chance encounters and creating lasting physical and social connections among people.



Ismail Bouhaloua is an Architect, holding a Bachelor's and master's degree in architecture from the esteemed National School of Architecture of Rabat (ENA). Recognized as one of the premier institutions in the country, ENA provided Ismail with a robust academic foundation. Throughout his academic journey, Ismail garnered invaluable practical experience through diverse roles in various architectural firms. Following his graduation, Ismail transitioned into a role as a Junior Project Manager at the Regional Center of Investments of Guelmim Oued-Noun. Here, he spearheaded the redesign initiative for the administration office of the Regional Center's annex in Guelmim, Morocco. Ismail demonstrated his adept project management skills by meticulously crafting comprehensive project plans, encompassing timelines, milestones, and resource allocation for initiatives.

In addition to his professional endeavors, Ismail's academic and practical experiences in urban planning have instilled in him a profound understanding of the complexities in modern cities. He recognizes that traditional planning methodologies often fall short in addressing these complexities and advocates for an integrated, multidisciplinary approach. This realization led him to pursue further studies in **MURCS**, where he aims to refine his expertise and contribute to the development of urban environments that coexist harmoniously with nature.



Moushan Fatima is a development and humanitarian professional from Bangladesh with over eight years of working experience in multiple sectors. She has worked in several reputed United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations including the World Food Programme (WFP), Cordaid, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and ActionAid Bangladesh. Her long career includes leading projects to manage large teams focusing on climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, digital solutions and innovation, and emergency response management. Moushan holds a Bachelor of Urban and Rural Planning (BURP) from Khulna University and a Master of GIS in Environment and Development (MSGED) from Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh.

For the past four and a half years, Moushan has worked in the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar to mitigate climate risk, bring back reforestation, and ensure safe shelter for the refugees and the host community of Bangladesh. Throughout these years, Moushan has been involved in numerous joint-UN projects where she led the plantation, safe fuel distribution, technical settlement planning, mass awareness building and partnerships among the UN organisations and the government.

Moushan believes Master of Urban Climate and Sustainability (MURCS) will help to enhance her knowledge of sustainability, adaptation, and mitigation so that she can provide strategic policy advice to the country offices and regional centres, and use her expertise to support the countries most affected by climate change around the world.



Ewonny Tito Moya is an Environmental Engineer from Peru, dedicated to the Environmental Management, Control of Pollution and Climate Change focused on mitigation and urban climate actions. During the last year, Ewonny has been a Technical Support in Climate Change at UNDP Peru Country Office. Working in the Environmental Sustainability Program, where she was involved in the design of initiatives and implementation of projects on climate and environment through GEF funding, in favour of the Peruvian Government. Likewise, for the past 7 years, Ewonny has worked at the local level of the government, focused on environmental management, and climate action, promoting measures to improve the environmental quality of cities, for the benefit of their citizens and livelihoods, with additional technical and financial support of C40 Cities and Korean Agency Koica.

Ewonny strongly believes that approaching the main climate and environmental challenges requires joint work of the scientific community, society, economic alliance and involvement of decision-makers to succeed.

She holds a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering from Federico Villarreal National University and a Master's in Climate Change Policy from Hallym University, South Korea. To obtain a better understanding of the mainstream of nature based on solutions, along with planning and management focus in cities, Ewonny is pursuing the Master of Urban Climate and Sustainability (MURCS) to cope with the current urban climate challenges.



Rand Hamdallah is a passionate architect from Palestine. She holds a bachelor's degree in Architectural Engineering from An-Najah National University. With a strong belief in architecture's ability to advance the quality of life, Rand has garnered experience in firms working both in the private, public sectors and community projects. While working at her last office, Rand led a team in an architectural competition to design the Jerusalem District Electricity Company Building with a sustainable and climate-conscious approach, earning them first place. Also, Rand worked directly with local communities on developing sustainable housing units based on the inhabitants needs and resources, and spearheading initiatives to revitalize communities through modest design solutions.

Rand's hands-on experience in the field, and witnessing the complexities and shortcomings of existing urban environments motivated her to seek further education in urban sustainable environments through MURCS Master's program. Guided by a vision for progressive urban development and a commitment to preserving Palestinian identity using sustainable tools, Rand aspires to contribute significantly to shaping more inclusive urban landscapes using innovative solutions aimed at fostering eco-friendly and resilient cities.



Sana Azeem, possesses a diverse background in architectural engineering, coupled with a Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning from the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, and a Bachelor of Science in Architectural Engineering from the University of Engineering and Technology (UET), Lahore. Notably, she served as an Architect Engineer at Telenor HQ, where she meticulously analyzed construction plans and spearheaded project management efforts, contributing to a significant reduction in project completion delays. Her innovative approach to sustainability is evident in her endeavors, such as implementing green technologies like Aquaponics and advocating for the adoption of green building practices, as highlighted in her research paper. Throughout

her career, Sana has maintained a commitment to excellence, evident in her dedication to client satisfaction, collaborative design processes, and continuous professional development through certifications and participation in seminars and workshops.

Additionally, her research paper "Examining barriers and measures to promote the adoption of green building practices in Pakistan" was one of its kind in Pakistan as the topic under discussion was innovative in its on manner and was being researched for the first time in the country. Her

paper thus got international recognition and achieved “Outstanding Paper” award in smart and sustainable built environment journal by Emerald Publishing in 2018.



Ma. Jennalyn O. de Luna is a Professional Filipino Forester from Laguna Philippines. She graduated cum laude from the University of the Philippines - Los Baños (UPLB) and placed seventh in the 2021 Forester Licensure Examination. She is currently an Instructor at the Institute of Renewable and Natural Resources (IRNR), College of Forestry and Natural Resources (CFNR), UPLB.

With a foundation in forestry, Jenna has demonstrated a strong commitment to environmental stewardship. Her commitment to environmental advocacy extends beyond the borders of the Philippines, as she has participated in international conferences and seminars, fostering global collaboration and knowledge exchange. Notably, she has engaged with esteemed organizations such as the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and the Arboricultural Association - United Kingdom, further enriching her understanding of international environmental practices.

Driven by a desire to address pressing environmental issues in urban settings and understanding the importance of green spaces in mitigating climate

change and enhancing urban livability, Jenna has chosen to pursue a Master of Urban Climate and Sustainability. By bridging her expertise in urban forestry with a broader grasp of climate science and sustainability principles, she aspires to make significant contributions towards a greener and more resilient future.



Nancy Viridiana Lázaró Lembrino is a Mexican biologist who is keen to apply multidisciplinary knowledge and nature-based solutions to address today’s environmental challenges.

For the last four years, Viridiana has collaborated with Greenpeace Mexican Regional Office spearheading the development of innovative public procurement strategies aimed at safeguarding biodiversity and mitigating climate change. Throughout her tenure, Viridiana has cultivated extensive national and international alliances, forging impactful partnerships with key stakeholders across various sectors.

During her career, she has worked in the public and private sectors, gaining invaluable insights into diverse approaches to environmental protection. She is interested in the conservation of the world's natural resources while improving the quality of life for current and future generations.



Maria Florencia Bianchini, originally from Patagonia, Argentina, is a Natural Resources and Environmental Engineer, having graduated from La Pampa University. Her passion lies in issues concerning climate change and the circular economy, spanning across both public and private sectors. Currently engaged in the pursuit of a Master's degree in Urban Climate and Sustainability, Maria Florencia aims to cultivate a profound understanding of urban sustainability intricacies, emphasizing the necessity for local initiatives in combating global climate change. Drawing from her rich professional background in local government agencies, she has identified deficiencies in climate change and sustainability integration within policymaking frameworks, propelling her towards a deeper exploration of evolving environmental challenges.



Magda Chogadze is an environmentalist from Batumi, Georgia, with over four years of experience in the public sector. She has actively participated in climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives and projects, collaborating with organizations such as the EU, UNDP, GIZ, KFW, and various non-governmental organizations. She played a significant role in the development of Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan for Batumi. Magda's primary focus is on developing sustainable and low-emission transportation systems. She served as the first Cycling Coordinator in the South Caucasus and led the working group for the

implementation of the Cycling Masterplan for Batumi.

By pursuing the Master of Urban Climate and Sustainability (MURCS), Magda aims to contribute to evidence-based planning and implementation of projects for the sustainable and climate-oriented development of urban areas.



Pratibha Ruth Caleb is a dedicated sustainability professional from India with close to 7 years of experience in policy research focused on urban sustainability and climate resilience. In her latest capacity as sustainability officer at ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability, South Asia she applied Systems-Thinking and Circular Economy approaches to address contemporary environmental challenges in local municipalities in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Her adeptness in fostering collaboration is evident through her

effective liaison with government officials, donor agencies such as UN agencies, GIZ, FAO, IDRC, World Bank and other stakeholders in facilitating the implementation of sustainable initiatives. She is committed to creating resilient urban environments through innovative strategies and inclusive engagement of local communities.

Pratibha holds a Bachelor's degree in Geography and a Masters degree in Urban Policy and Governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai (India). By pursuing the Master of Urban Climate and Sustainability (MURCS) she aims to complement her current skills with a deeper exploration of climate models and future scenarios to develop robust and actionable climate mitigation and adaptation plans for cities.



Avgusta Chiriaeva is an urban development and construction planner from **Yakutsk (Russia)**. For the last 4 years, she has worked in the development and construction sector in such companies as Hyundai Engineering and LIIS Engineering as a planning and procurement engineer in Saint-Petersburg. She was in the management and planning part of St. Petersburg's most transformative projects – Lakhta Center Skyscraper and Hyundai Motors' plants. She is interested in planning and developing such impactful urban projects in a sustainable manner, which could invest in urban climate resilience in the long run.

With a Bachelor's degree in Architecture from North-Eastern Federal University (Yakutsk) and Master's degree in Urban Development and Governance from the Higher School of Economics (Moscow), Avgusta wanted to learn more about climate change combating through environmentally conscious urban designing and planning. Pursuing MURCS Master's program was an ideal scenario to enhance her knowledge of ecological issues, and climate mitigation methods in the urban spectrum. She is interested in planning aspects of urban climate and sustainability building that can provide local communities with a better quality of urban life and raise their awareness of environmental issues.



Jonie G. Agas is a Filipino **architect** with a diverse exposure to the Architecture, Engineering, & Construction (AEC) industry in the Philippines, including projects in Australia and the United States. She is particularly interested in exploring how technology, such as Building Information Modeling (BIM) and Geographic Information System (GIS), can be leveraged to make built environment practices more sustainable. Her field experience has been established by working as a Project Architect, leading architectural projects from schematic phase to completion, and as a BIM specialist, delving into parametric modeling, visualization, and sustainability analyses. Alongside her professional journey, her passion for education has led her

to go back to academia as an instructor and inspired her to establish an educational brand, where she delivers valuable content to at least 20,000 architecture students and graduates. Driven by her passion for teaching and advocating sustainable practices, she has decided to pursue a Master of Urban Climate and Sustainability (MURCS), intending to gain a deeper understanding of urban climate and explore what built environment professionals can do about it. Jonie holds a Bachelor's degree in Architecture from the University of the Philippines - Diliman (UPD). As a student, she has been a consistent recipient of excellence awards for outstanding academic performance and she graduated with Latin honors.



Levani Vachiberidze is a human geographer from Tbilisi, Georgia, with expertise in public administration and environmental governance. With over eight years of professional working experience in governmental and non-governmental sectors, he has made significant contributions to promoting sustainable development at local and central levels of the country. In the past two years, he worked as a climate change consultant and helped more than 10 Georgian cities develop Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans under the Covenant of Mayors initiative. He also played a pivotal role in establishing the Integrated Transparency Framework to increase the state capacity of taking climate action under

the Paris Agreement.

Driven by a passion for addressing the climate crisis and effecting positive changes in people's lives affected by climate change, he decided to pursue the MURCS program intending to gain a deeper understanding of urban climate change resilience.

Levani holds a Bachelor's degree in Human Geography from Tbilisi State University and a Master's degree in Public Administration from the German University of Administrative Sciences Speyer.



Lewi Lisanework studied his BSc. in Architecture at Addis College and started his career as an expat spatial plan preparation officer at the Addis Ababa City Planning Project Office as a junior member of the influential team that prepared the 10th structural plan of the capital city. He continued working on the implementation phase at the headquarters, monitoring district-level offices and other stakeholder organisations. He then got the opportunity to study for a master's in Urban Administration and Planning at the University of Seoul in South Korea, where he also got the chance to do a brief internship in the Seoul Metropolitan Government, Housing Division.

After graduation, he got into the private sector, working collaboratively with a world-renowned consulting firm like SASAKI, as an architect/planner on the developmental master plan of Eagle Hills La Gare, a \$1.5 bn large-scale mixed-use neighborhood. He also worked on a local development project with Addis Ababa University, and as lecturer teaching architecture and urban planning to graduate students at a government university and a private college.



“The woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep”.. this oft quoted stanza from Robert Frost aptly sums up the state of initiatives to combat threats from unsustainable development practices and climate change which being significant yet require much more efforts and sensitization.

This was the driving force behind **Hari Bisht** opting for the prestigious Erasmus Mundus Joint Master in Urban Climate and Sustainability (MURCS). Hari's professional journey reflects his passion for creating resilient and environmentally conscious urban spaces. His work as Associate Town Planner for Kumaon Region with the Town and Country Planning Department in Uttarakhand, the Delhi Development Authority and the Association of Municipalities and Development Authorities (AMDA) in New Delhi, India involved crafting master plans and local area plans for various cities under Ministry Of Urban Development of GoI, where he emphasized the integration of sustainable development principles like ToD with environmental conservation and climate resilience. He has also been a part of state representations for

sustainable development practices in urban policymaking like the High Level Committee on Urban Planning under Niti Aayog.

Hari Shankar Singh Bisht is a dedicated urban planner with Associateship Examination in Planning with Distinction from Institute of Town Planners, India and Bachelor of Planning with distinction from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi. Beyond professional achievements, Hari's involvement with organizations like The Energy and Research Institute (TERI), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Niti Aayog, Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), Institute of Town Planners, India demonstrates his commitment to fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange in the field of sustainable urban development. With a diverse skill set that includes expertise in software tools like ArcGIS and strong communication skills, and the knowledge gained from MURCS, Hari seeks to actively contribute to initiatives aimed at addressing climate change and promoting sustainable urban development.



Tasnim Alam Nishat, an **Urban Planner** from Bangladesh, is practitioner of urban planning, humanitarian and development works. She earned her bachelor's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Chittagong University of Urban and Regional Planning (CUET) and pursued a Master's degree specializing in GIS for Environment and Development. With a career spanning 4 years, Tasnim has played integral roles at BRAC, a prominent international non-governmental organization. Notably, she was involved in disaster risk reduction efforts within world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, emphasizing the critical importance of informed decision-making rooted in geographic insights.

Tasnim's professional trajectory is marked by various contributions such as project management, strategic documentation, emergency response, training, monitoring and evaluation, disaster risk assessment, and risk mapping. She performed number of technical assignments and research endeavors involving

Geographic Information System (GIS) applications. She significantly contributed to research designs aimed at enhancing evidence-based planning and shaping national policy documents.

Driven by her belief in continuous growth, Tasnim sees the MURCS programme as an opportunity to enhance her expertise in climate resilience sustainable planning and leverage modern technologies to bridge the gap between natural processes and contemporary solutions.



Era Desku is a dedicated and passionate architect who holds a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture and Spatial Planning with a specialization on Sustainable Architecture from the prestigious University for Business and Technology in Kosovo. During her studies, she seamlessly translated theoretical knowledge into practical skills through her involvement with an esteemed architectural and engineering private firm in Prishtina, Kosovo. Simultaneously, she demonstrated a keen interest in community development by applying her Architectural problem-solving skills to various administrative schemes. This included active participation in documenting heritage monuments in her city, fostering collaboration with governmental entities to create safe and satisfying communities for the residents. Recognizing the importance of continuous learning and exposure to varied

experiences, Era is eager to embark on a journey focused on Urban Climate and Sustainability. She firmly believes that this opportunity as a MURCS student will serve as a pivotal moment to integrate her existing knowledge with insights from seasoned academics and practitioners in the field. By aligning her aspirations with this program, Era aims not only to enhance her professional capabilities but also to contribute significantly to her country's development. Her long-term vision includes raising awareness about the benefits of sustainability, ultimately improving the overall quality of life for citizens in the years to come.



Sofia Kotikova, a graduate of a prestigious institution in Saint Petersburg, Russia, has dedicated her career to the revitalization of urban spaces while emphasizing the preservation of architectural heritage. Throughout her academic journey and professional endeavors, she has championed the principles of environmental sustainability, recognizing its pivotal role in shaping our cities for the future.

Driven by a passion to address complex urban challenges, Sofia identified a need for a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability and its integration into every aspect of urban planning and management. This realization propelled her towards seeking novel approaches and methodologies to incorporate green technologies and sustainable practices into her work.

Despite achieving commendable results in her projects, Sofia acknowledges the gaps in her knowledge and practice. Her eagerness to bridge this gap led her to pursue further education in MURCS program, viewing it as a springboard to gain comprehensive insights into solving environmental issues and implementing sustainable urban solutions.

Sofia's ambition extends beyond personal growth; she envisions leveraging her expertise to make meaningful contributions to her country and the global community. Recognizing the nascent stage of sustainability initiatives in Russia, she aims to become a trailblazer in the field, catalyzing positive change through her projects and influencing others to follow suit.

Her international exposure, coupled with a multidisciplinary background in architecture and urban studies, equips her with a unique perspective to tackle complex urban challenges. Sofia's commitment to environmental sustainability and equity underscores her determination to create a more sustainable and equitable urban landscape for future generations.