

Co-producing urban sustainability transformations: Wits-TUB Urban Lab – PhD Programme

Call for Scholarship Applications

Six fully-funded PhD scholarships will be awarded on a competitive basis to South African and other sub-Saharan African candidates for study at University of the Witwatersrand starting July 2017, in collaboration with Technical University Berlin.

The DAAD/BMZ funded Wits-TUB Urban Lab offers a PhD programme based on six prestigious PhD scholarships, three for South African and three for students from other sub-Saharan African countries. The programme invites PhD research contributions, which question whether co-production can serve as a new paradigm to achieve transformation to sustainability in urban areas. How would existing conflictual co-production partnerships need to evolve and what new state-civil society-private sector interfaces might be needed? And what are the roles of urban professionals and researchers in this context?

The submission deadline for scholarship applications is **12 February 2017**. Skype-interviews with shortlisted candidates will take place immediately afterwards and decisions communicated by 20 February. The scholarships are subject to admission into Wits

University's (School of Architecture and Planning) PhD programme being granted to the selected candidates. For candidates with degrees from outside of South Africa, admission depends on a favourable assessment of the candidate's qualifications by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). As SAQA assessment can take up to two months, international candidates are encouraged to submit their qualifications for assessment to SAQA at the same time as submitting their application for the scholarship. The scholarships are effective from **1 July 2017**. Scholarship holders must enrol as full time students in the School of Architecture and Planning at the University of Witwatersrand and complete their research within 3.5 years (**July 2017 – December 2020**).

Application
Deadline:
**12 February
2017**

*supported by the DAAD with funds from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)



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Timeline leading to start of the PhD programme:

- Selection process: **13-20 February 2017**
- Notification of award of scholarship: **20 February 2017**
- Successful candidates apply for Admission to the PhD programme in the School of Architecture and Planning by **28 February 2017**.
- Candidates with degrees from outside of South Africa must have submitted their qualifications for assessment by SAQA **before this date** (see <http://www.saqa.org.za/>), services, evaluation of foreign applications). As soon as their SAQA evaluation is issued, they upload this onto the Wits University system to be added to their application for admission.
- Receive admission letter from Wits University: **end April 2017**, once the SAQA process is concluded for international candidates.
- International candidates apply for study visas as soon as admission letter is received from the University (visa applications can take up to 2 months).
- Register for the PhD degree: **1 July 2017**.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a frameworks for urban sustainability for Africa?

Sustainability challenges such as poverty and socio-economic polarisation, climate change and the lack of appropriate institutional responses are shared across many cities in the world. However, many of these challenges are exacerbated in cities in sub-Saharan Africa. They already have the highest rates of informal settlements with 71.9% of the urban population living in slums (Croese et. al., 2016) and a combination of economic processes and urbanisation might exacerbate inequalities even further. Africa's urban population is expected to triple between 2011 and 2050 (from 471 million to 1.34 billion) and more than half the continent's inhabitants will reside in cities by 2035 (UN-Habitat, 2014).

The recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offers an integrated sustainability framework that acknowledges the multitude, complexity and interdependence of sustainability challenges. It also acknowledges the key role of cities and local urban stakeholders without which sustainability cannot be achieved. The SDGs not only include a specific urban-oriented Goal 11 (Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and





sustainable) but indeed, most the SDG's 169 targets cannot be achieved without significant involvement of local urban stakeholders which safeguard global common goods, such as climate, economic prosperity, social integration, democratization and political stability. This role is also reinforced by the New Urban Agenda (NUA), adopted in Quito in October 2016, which aims to guide SDG implementation in urban areas. It recognises that tomorrow's cities should be socially and spatially just, providing access to affordable housing, basic services, environmental protection, education and employment opportunities for all (New Urban Agenda, 2016) and calls for integrated policy responses. Both the SDGs and the NUA place a particular emphasis on inclusion and equity, with much of the pro-poor and rights-oriented language adopted from the agendas of urban social movements and civil society activists of recent years.

Although all African states are signatories to both the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda, the disjuncture between global agenda rhetoric and local practice could not be greater. Urban development policies – if available – are mostly undertaken in a sectoral manner, without cross-departmental coordination, and without involving local stakeholders ignorant of the fact that planning “is profoundly political and no longer under the sole control of the professional planner” (Odendaal, 2012). Beyond institutional capacity building, many local governments lack skilled and experienced urban planners to meet the complex

challenges arising from rapid urbanization. Urban planning curricula of Africa's educational institutions remain often as out-dated as the planning legislation and young graduates do not have the skill sets needed to reform planning administrations and practice or to enable integrated and participatory urban management (ibid.). Can the conceptual framework offered by the SDGs and the NUA be operationalized to improve human, institutional, legal and technical capacities within African cities?

Aims and objectives of the PhD programme:
“Co-producing urban sustainability transformations”

1. to critically interrogate the concept of **co-production** which has entered academic discourse on urbanisation and sustainability-oriented solutions. Co-production has been used to acknowledge that cities and urban areas are shaped by the rationalities and actions by a multitude of actors. Cities do not act as a coherent entity or speak with one coherent voice. It is precisely the quality of diversity and difference, the complex negotiated relations between a multitude of urban actors that represents its fullest potential and underlines its difference to other political regimes at a regional, national or global level.

Co-production as an approach to and means of implementation is a reality particularly in contexts of sub-Saharan cities. Here, co-production has become an urban reality: To address affordable housing gaps and dysfunctional urban services conventional



urban governance systems clearly do not cope and by default rely on the urban poor to do what they themselves are unable or unwilling to do. Between self-provisioning of the urban poor and state institutions – a new space of interaction opens up in which new kinds of co-production partnerships emerge. Co-production here is a conflictual terrain, often only the result of pressures from civil society and grass root movements and co-production partnerships are characterized by antagonism and conflict. The PhD programme therefore seeks to support research proposals that help to produce a broader and deeper understanding of the “sticky”, ubiquitous and “ordinary” conditions, processes, outcomes and impacts of urban co-production as a means to achieve transformative change to sustainability.

2. to develop innovative methodological approaches to urban-oriented research that apply **co-production as a research and knowledge building strategy**. The PhD program recognizes that technical expert knowledge alone will not suffice to understand urban complexities. Instead, new transdisciplinary understandings

of urban knowledge are required in which different approaches, languages, and concepts can come together and add value to each other. Here, the knowledge and expertise of residents, local initiatives, civil society as a whole, but also administrators and of course technicians, academics etc. can be given the appropriate value. To achieve truly “integrated solutions” as demanded by the New Urban Agenda we need to transcend traditional hierarchisations and sectoralisation of knowledge and recognize that knowledge is always power and value permeated. The PhD program seeks to question the implications of co-production to rethink methodological approaches and the self-understanding of urban researchers. The programme therefore encourages PhD research projects, which seek to test methodological innovations and to explore the role of science between advocacy and theory building. Approaches could take the form of embedded research, empirically and locally grounded research, in which PhD students place themselves within ongoing transformation processes.



3. to **integrate a diversity of research perspectives on multiple sustainability challenges and their interlinkages**. The PhD programme hopes to attract applications from urban researchers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Research proposals should address at least one of the following sustainability challenges where co-production as a means to achieve transformation to sustainability is relevant:

- alternative housing delivery
- climate change adaptation
- access to land for shelter
- urban economies and services
- migration and refugees
- health and safety in urban areas

The PhD programme is part of the bilateral **Wits-TUB Urban Lab (2016-2020)**, supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which seeks to improve graduate education in urban fields across sub-Saharan Africa. The lead partners, the Habitat Unit at the School of Architecture of the Technische Universität Berlin, and the School of Architecture and Planning at University of the Witwatersrand aim to enhance their offering of urban-oriented graduate and postgraduate training and capacity building programmes to effectively address the challenges and needs outlined above. The overall objective of the programme is to contribute to the implementation of urban-relevant SDGs and the New Urban Agenda in sub-Saharan Africa through the development of a sustainable, bilateral academic programme at the University of Witwatersrand

(Wits) and TU Berlin (TUB) that will deliver increased capacities at institutional and individual levels in academia, civil society, private and public sectors. The Wits-TUB Urban Lab closely cooperates with the African Association of Planning Schools AAPS, which was founded in 1999 in recognition that planning education reform could be a key contribution towards sustainable and more equitable urban development in sub-Saharan Africa (see also: www.africanplanningschools.org.za). In addition, Wits-TUB Urban Lab is networked within the African Urban Research Initiative AURI and its scientific community. Its network will extend to key international organisations such as the UCLG and Cities Alliance, and important South African stakeholders such as the South African Cities Network and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). The programme is also linked into a network of key African and European scholars who will comment or input at various stages of the research process.

Activities of the PhD programme:

The graduate programme entails joint annual conferences, workshops, and other forms of academic exchanges between academics and PhD candidates from South Africa and other sub-Saharan Africa and Germany and other European countries. In addition, each PhD candidate has the opportunity to spend a few months at Technical University Berlin and at their fieldwork site, linked to one of our partner universities. The purposes of these exchanges is also for the PhD candidates to get acquainted with other academic systems and thereby to enhance their ability to

play a key role in academic training in their future careers on this continent.

Eligibility requirements:

The programme is interdisciplinary, but we place a special emphasis on a portfolio that is inter- and transdisciplinary, cutting across the fields of development planning, housing, sustainable urban development, urban management, and urban design. Candidates in architecture and urban planning as well as in the humanities, cultural studies, urban geography, or social sciences with a focus on urban studies and planning as well as candidates in related fields such as landscape architecture are also welcome to apply. PhD candidates must hold a master's degree that is equivalent to a masters degree (NQF level 8) in the South African Qualification System (SAQA). The programme language is English. Applicants must also be proficient in any other languages necessary for their proposed geographic location of their fieldwork.

References:

- Croese, N. et. al. (2016) Towards Habitat III: Confronting the disjuncture between global policy and local practice on Africa's 'challenge of slums'. Habitat International. 53, 237-242.
- New Urban Agenda (2016) <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda>
- Odendaal, N. (2012) Reality check: Planning education in the African urban century. Cities, 29 (3), 174-182.

-UN-Habitat (2014) The state of African Cities: re-imagining sustainable urban transitions. Nairobi, Kenya.

Application must include

- Cover letter
- Completed [Wits-TU Berlin Bursary Application Form](#) (click to download the form online)
- All degree certificates
- All academic transcripts (showing all marks obtained, with official translation if not in English, and official explanation of the marking system if not in %)
- CV, with details of previous academic research and publications, as well as work experiences (academic and non-academic)
- Up to three reference letters (at least one reference letter from an academic)

Please send you application including all the required material to taki.sithagu@wits.ac.za by 12 February 2017.

For further information visit:

<http://www.wits.ac.za/archplan/academic-degrees/research-degrees/>
<http://www.habitat-unit.de>

or contact the project coordinator Ms Taki Sithagu, taki.sithagu@wits.ac.za

Principal Investigators of the programme:

- Prof. Fana Sihlongonyane (Wits)
- Prof. Marie Huchzermeyer (Wits)
- Prof. Philipp Misselwitz (TUB)

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