



# URBAN LAB WITS TUB UNILAG

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## WITS-TUB-UNILAG URBAN LAB INTERDISCIPLINARY TRILATERAL POSTGRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAMME CALL FOR PHD SCHOLARSHIPS [APPLY BY 31 AUG. 2021; PRE-SCREENING BY 31 MAY 2021]

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### Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement have highlighted the fundamental roles played by cities and local urban stakeholders in achieving sustainable development. The Habitat III process and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) provided an important enabling framework for these stakeholders to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDG). Yet, at the beginning of the current decade progress regarding their implementation is lagging behind, and thus requires a serious intensification of action to achieve the goals by 2030. Also, the COVID-19 crisis drastically exposes vulnerabilities and inequalities in urban areas, and it reveals the failures and the unjust outcomes of urban governance systems as well as obstacles to urban development. Under these circumstances, there is a pressing need for urban management to address the resilience of households, of societies, of economies and of systems of governance as well as to explore responses that enable truly transformative actions.

The Wits-TUB-UNILAG Urban Lab programme supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) seeks to improve graduate education in urban fields across sub-Saharan Africa. The lead partners, the Habitat Unit at Technische Universität Berlin and the School of Architecture and Planning at Wits University in Johannesburg and the University of Lagos, collaborate in the offering of an urban-oriented graduate training and capacity building programme at Wits University that seeks to effectively address the challenges and needs outlined above.

### Aims and objectives of the PhD programme

This project seeks to contribute to capacity building and empowerment, which it considers key in enabling policy change and action across three areas. It summarizes these as (1) a critically reflected understanding of urban resilience, (2) engagement with inequality and informality in ways that facilitate greater justice in access to housing and urban infrastructure and (3) building on decolonial understanding in line with local realities, and thereby advancing a critical edge towards normative ways to engaging cities.

One of the fundamentals that underpins this programme is the importance of integrating the efforts of policy makers, local urban stakeholders and researchers when aiming at fostering modes of development that are just and adapted to context.

The urban lab has three main areas for research exploration that will inform postgraduate teaching content over the five years from 2021 to 2025

- Resilience: there is a clear need to critically reflect, improve, but also rethink resilience, not only of technical urban systems of risk containment but also in terms of rights frameworks, governance, cultural and religious systems, and societies as a whole. This presents an opportunity to explore different notions of resilience under varied geographies of urban citizenship.
- Urban justice: The SDG commitment to leave no one behind has placed the spotlight on the scale of urban inequality and informality, raising renewed questions about humanity's response to this global condition. This opens the space to examine the relationship between forms of human co-existence and the right to the city, with different forms of socio-spatial segmentation. It also allows us to interrogate urban and peri-urban spaces and how various scales of urbanisation enable and/or impedes access to urban goods.
- Solidarity: There have been renewed calls for fairer global rules governing trade as well as development assistance. This includes recognizing and valuing plural forms of knowledge production and knowledge systems, promoted through decolonial initiatives as well as through initiatives advancing transformative, transdisciplinary and co-productive approaches. It is crucial that the development of a context specific understanding of urban inequalities, power structures and urban planning responses is enabled.

The School of Architecture and Planning at Wits University has a structured PhD offering. This will include regular support and networking activities for enrolled PhD students across the school.



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The PhD students selected through this call will be in digital as well as face-to-face interaction (as and when possible) with the PhD cohort within the project at TU Berlin and University of Lagos. They will take part in a workshop in Lagos in 2022, and in 2024 they will have the opportunity to present their work at the project conference at Wits. In 2023, a PhD workshop will take place in Berlin where the students will present and discuss their work. Students will be encouraged to develop further activities for digital networking and dissemination (e.g. a blog, podcasts etc.). In the context of the abovementioned activities, they will be encouraged to contribute to/work on publications during their PhD studies.

## 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.
- Only South African citizens and citizens of other African countries can apply.
- Applicants must hold a master's degree that is equivalent to a master's degree (NQF level 9) in the South African Qualification System (SAQA).
- They must also meet the PhD admission requirements of the School, which include proven ability of excellent academic writing in English, and an academic transcript at masters level with marks averaging at least at 70%.
- The programme language is English. Proficiency in any other language necessary for their proposed geographic location of their fieldwork is recommended.
- There is no age limit applying to the scholarships for study purposes. However, at the time of the application, no more than 6 years should have passed since an applicant graduated from his/ her previous master studies.

## How to apply for the scholarship programme?

This is a separate application in addition to the application for admission into the PhD degree programme. Once the selection for the bursary is concluded, we will brief the successful candidates on how to apply for admission into the PhD degree programme in the School of Architecture and Planning at Wits University. The bursary application form is either attached or can be downloaded from [www.wits.ac.za/archplan/bursariesand-awards/](http://www.wits.ac.za/archplan/bursariesand-awards/). Applications not using this form, or not adhering to its instructions will not be considered.

Applicants whose masters degree was obtained at a university outside South Africa must have their qualifications evaluated by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Unless such an applicant is already in possession of a SAQA evaluation, he/she is required to submit a full application for this bursary by 31 March for a pre-screening, which will ascertain whether the applicant should proceed with an application to SAQA.

In such cases, submission of a proof of application for SAQA certificate must be submitted to Ms Taki Sithagu ([taki.sithagu@wits.ac.za](mailto:taki.sithagu@wits.ac.za)) within two weeks of having received notice from Ms Sithagu that the applicant was successful in the pre-screening. The procedure for degree evaluation by SAQA is set out at [www.saq.org.za](http://www.saq.org.za). All applicants must submit their SAQA certificates to Ms Sithagu by 31 August 2021, after which final selection for the scholarship award takes place.

Note that there is an application fee that an applicant must pay for SAQA to evaluate a qualification. This fee will not be refunded by the scholarship regardless of the evaluation outcome.

In order for the scholarship application to be complete, it must include the following documents:

- The Wits-TUB-Unilag Scholarship Application Form
- A cover letter explaining why you qualify for the scholarship. Additionally, this letter should speak to the qualification criteria, and should also provide a connection between the project themes and your envisaged topic.
- A 4-page research proposal indicating the intended area of research and topic, research question and methods. The main supervisors are [Prof Mfaniseni Sihlongonyane](#) and [Prof Marie Huchzermeyer](#) (see also [here](#)). Applicants' research proposals should engage with at least one of the project's research areas set out above (resilience, urban justice, solidarity) in the context of urban development on the African continent (the proposal needs to state the geographical area of the research), while also aligning to one of the main areas of expertise of either of the two main supervisors.
- A CV
- A copy of all degree certificates and official academic transcripts indicating marks for all degrees.
- An electronic copy of any previous research undertaken (if available).
- Letters of recommendations from two referees. At least one referee must be an academic under whom the applicant has studied.
- For masters degree obtained outside of South Africa, a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) certificate ranking the applicant's masters degree at NQF level 9.

**DAAD**

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All the listed documents must be submitted by e-mail to Ms Taki Sithagu, [taki.sithagu@wits.ac.za](mailto:taki.sithagu@wits.ac.za) by 31 August 2021. As stated above, those without a SAQA certificate must submit items 1-7 to Ms Taki Sithagu for pre-screening by 31 May 2021. These applicants may refine or update the written part of their proposals subsequently and will submit their final full application including item 8 (SAQA certificate) by 31 August 2021.

Timeline leading to start of the PhD programme  
 Scholarship selection process – September 2021  
 Selected candidates to apply to University of the Witwatersrand for admission into the PhD programme – October 2021  
 Visa applications for non-South African candidates – as soon as the admission letter is issued (October/November 2021)  
 Registration for PhD at Wits – February 2022

### Contacts

If more information is needed, please contact: Ms. Taki Sithagu [taki.sithagu@wits.ac.za](mailto:taki.sithagu@wits.ac.za)

However, before making an enquiry, please exhaust the information available at:

[www.wits.ac.za/archplan/bursaries-and-awards/](http://www.wits.ac.za/archplan/bursaries-and-awards/)

[www.wits.ac.za/wits-tub-urbanlab/](http://www.wits.ac.za/wits-tub-urbanlab/)

<https://www.wits.ac.za/archplan/>

[www.habitat-unit.de](http://www.habitat-unit.de)

<http://chsunilag.com/>

Principal Investigators of the programme:

Prof. Fana Sihlongonyane (Wits)

Prof. Marie Huchzermeyer (Wits)

Prof. Philipp Misselwitz (TUB)

Prof. Taibat Lawanson (UNILAG)

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