

PUG INSIGHTS

Welcome to the Political and Urban Governance Research Group's (PUG) latest newsletter. In this edition, we bring you updates on our recent projects, upcoming events, and latest publications. We also share PUG's Annual Report for the year 2024!



PUG Research Programmes

PUG's research is grouped into three broad research programmes with various projects under these programmes. Below is a list of these programmes and the current projects that fall under each.



HUMAN RIGHTS

- [Regional Hub for Relocation of Students at Risk](#)
- [Universities as Sites of Protection](#)



URBAN GOVERNANCE

- [Caring for the other half](#)
- [Crisis in the City](#)
- [Governing the Just Urban Transition](#)
- [Off-grid Cities](#)
- [Sanitation in informal settlements](#)



DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP

- [Participation in the City \(PAR-CITY\)](#)
- [Participedia](#)

Snapshot



PUG Visiting Scholar, Albert Nyiti

Albert Nyiti (PhD candidate, Humboldt University of Berlin & assistant research fellow, Ardhi University, Tanzania) joined PUG as a visiting scholar from April-June 2025. Learn about Albert's research on the [Africa Hub's Podcast](#), as he explores "just city" challenges and pathways through access to adequate and affordable housing in Tanzania and cities like Dar es Salaam.

Research Highlights

New funding grant & call for applications: Participatory Action Research methods workshop

PUG, in partnership with Prof. Charlotte Lemanski, has received funding from the Mastercard Foundation and the University of Cambridge Climate Resilience and Sustainability Research Fund to host a Participatory Research Methods Workshop for early-career African researchers in early 2026. The hands-on workshop will include training in innovative qualitative methods and mentorship to support participants in applying these approaches to their own research. The call for applications is open until 29 August 2025. [Find out more here]. [Find out more here.](#)

GoJUT Research Training Workshop

In April 2025, the GoJUT team met at UWC for a workshop to share research, receive feedback, and engage in training on fieldwork, data analysis, and writing. The team also visited Khayelitsha to explore issues around basic service access, helping situate individual projects within the broader research agenda. Find out more on the [project page](#).

Workshop participants (L to R): Rogini Naidoo, Asemahle Mahlunwana, Sbahle Cele, Samkelisiwe Khanyile, James Clacherty, Mamokete Modiba, Motshwaedi Sepeng, Charlotte Lemanski, Christina Culwick Fatti, Fiona Anciano, Boitumelo Papane.



Just Urban Transition in African Cities: British Academy-Funded Writing Workshop

We are pleased to announce that applicants have been shortlisted for the Writing and Publishing Workshop on Just Urban Transitions, with the first pre-workshop meeting set for September 2025. This workshop is funded by the British Academy and hosted by PUG in partnership with Cardiff University and the African Studies journal. The workshop will support emerging African scholars to publish their research and share their work globally.



PAR-City Project - London

In June 2025, Fiona Anciano joined the PAR-City workshop at Queen Mary University to collaborate on urban participatory innovations and strengthen global ties for advancing urban democracy. Visit the [project page](#) to find out more.

Latest Publications

Journal Articles

Anciano, F., Lemanski, C., Culwick Fatti, C., Rubin, M., 2025. Substituting for the State: The Sovereignty Impacts of Diverse Citizens’ Off-grid Infrastructure Strategies in South Africa. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.70001>

McPhearson, et al., 2025. Global synthesis and regional insights for mainstreaming urban nature-based solutions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, e2315910121. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2315910121>

Blogs Posts

Lombard, M., Anciano, F., Lemanski, C. and Tobar Tovar, C. (2025) Urban crisis in South African and Colombian cities: Understanding experiences, improving responses. [LINK](#)

Dube, M. (2025) Living the legacy of June 16 - UWC as a space of sanctuary for young African human rights defenders. [LINK](#)

Lemanski, C., Culwick Fatt, C. & Anciano, F. (2025) Climate apartheid? How South Africa’s booming private solar investments reflect and reproduce structural injustices. [LINK](#)

Moses, M., Fumba, N. and Bidla, B. (2025) Can technology tackle democracy’s shortcomings? The promises of ParliMeter - a new digital tool to strengthen parliamentary accountability. [LINK](#)



PUG 2024 Annual Report

Read [PUG’s 2024 annual report](#) to see what we achieved and how we have grown our team, projects and initiatives, laying foundations for long-term research success.

Read our 2024 annual report on our website:

CLICK HERE 



Africa Hub Podcast

The Africa Hub podcast serves as a platform for human rights defenders to share ideas and reflect on their work. Check out the newest episodes [here](#):

1. The Right to Adequate and Affordable Housing Challenges & Pathways to Just City with Albert Nyiti (7 July 2025)
2. The disproportionate impacts of climate change with Mussa Kamanula (23 June 2025)
3. Understanding Freedom as a concept with Dr Lindokuhle Mandyoli (16 May 2025)

New Video - 'Stories of Urban Crisis in SA and Colombia'

In June 2025, the Crisis project team gathered in Cape Town to produce a short film featuring powerful stories created by residents from low-income communities in South Africa and Colombia. The film explores how people experience crisis in their cities—touching on state violence, family struggles, and youth perspectives.

[CLICK](#) to watch the film and learn more.



Conference Attendance

PUG hosts special session on Just Urban transitions at ECAS in Prague, June 2025

At the 10th European Conference on African Studies in June 2025, the GoJUT project hosted a double session titled Just Urban Transitions: Governance and Citizenship in African Cities, facilitated by Fiona Anciano. The session critically examined who drives just transitions, for whom, and at what cost, with papers presented on private solar investments and informal representation in South African cities. Fiona Anciano and SJ Cooper-Knock also presented in a separate session on Decolonisation in South Africa. Find out more [here](#).

PUG Media Appearances

Mmeli Dube appeared on Cape Talk's Heritage Half Hour, reflecting on UWC's legacy and its role in supporting young African human rights defenders through the #AfricaHub. [Listen on YouTube](#) / Apple Podcasts

Fiona Anciano joined The Mobilize Podcast to discuss the hidden cost of spatial apartheid and its links to climate vulnerability in South Africa. [Watch the episode](#)

Upcoming Events 2025

GoJUT Photovoice Workshop

Date: 4th August 2025

Location: Isivivana Centre, Khayelitsha.

Urban Matters: Cities and their Citizens | Seminar

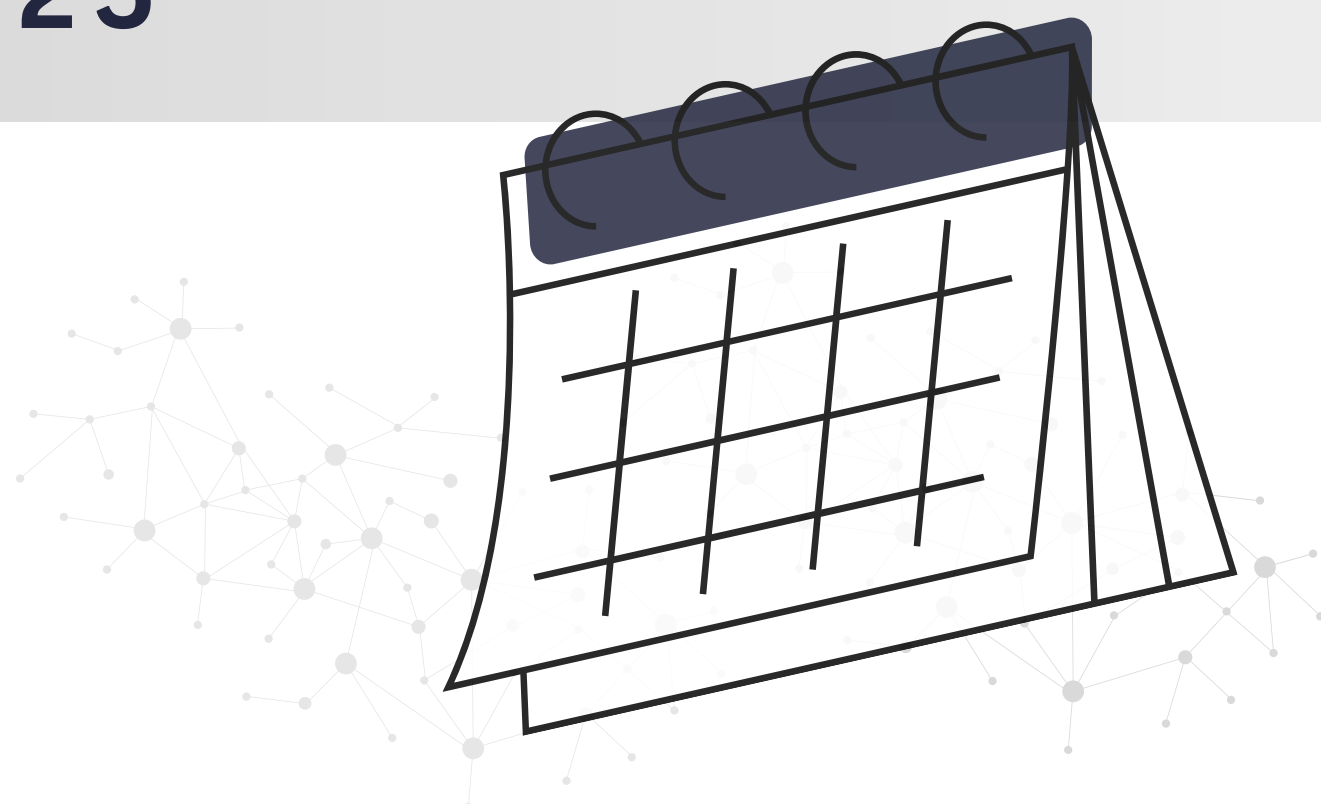
Date: 7th August 2025

Location: Seminar Room, Geography Department, UWC

Africa Hub Summer School

Date: 29th September - 3rd October 2025

Location: University of the Western Cape



Recent PUG Events

Service Delivery Workshop with Mayor, Khayelitsha

In May 2025, PUG co-hosted a workshop with the City of Cape Town and BM Section residents in Khayelitsha to address challenges in sanitation service delivery, particularly around container-based toilets. The session enabled direct dialogue between residents and city officials, leading to co-created solutions for improving fault reporting and service responsiveness. Find out more [here](#).



2025 South Africa BA Crisis Project Workshop

In June 2025, the Crisis Representation Project team gathered at UWC's Iyatsiba Lab for a collaborative workshop with NGO partners, focusing on storytelling themes from 2024 fieldwork in South Africa and Colombia. The team conducted site visits, analysed narratives, and co-developed outputs—including a short film featuring resident-created stories on state absence, violence, and youth experiences in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Cali, and Buenaventura. Find out more [here](#)



Image L to R: Natalie Mc Askill, Melanie Lombard, Charlotte Lemanski, Carlos Andres Tobar Tovar, Vanessa Concha Valderrama, Makanatsa Ziyambi, Adriel Galvan & Babongile Bilda.

GoJUT PhotoVoice Workshop in Alexandra

On 22 July 2025, the GoJUT team hosted a PhotoVoice workshop with small business owners in Setswetla, Alexandra. Participants were introduced to the PhotoVoice method and trained in basic photography as part of a participatory process to document and share their stories. This marks the beginning of an ongoing collaboration with participants, which will culminate in a public exhibition later in the year. Find out more [here](#)

Stay updated on PUG's projects, outputs, events and opportunities via our website, mailing list (QR code), or social media

