



UNITAFRICA

*Empowering the Academic Cooperation between Italy and Africa for
fostering the quality and effectiveness of the higher education
systems in a mutual learning environment*

TNE23-00050 - CUP D81I24000280007

Course	Metropolitan Systems, the Urban–Rural Nexus and Water Diplomacy: Governing New Cities, Sponge City Strategies, Infrastructure and Energy Transitions in Rapidly Urbanising Regions.
Organizing Institutions	Leading university: Politecnico di Milano Co-organizing Universities: - Kenyatta University Others organising institutions not partner of UNITAFRICA - UN-Habitat - Ouagadougou Metropolitan City - Heritage Department Swahilipot Hub Foundation - University of L'Arbi Ben M'Hidi of Oum El Bouaghi -Algeria
Target participants	Professors, Advance Skills Participants, Policies Makers, NGO, Civil Servants
Objectives of the course	The main objective of the course is to promote mutual learning and co-design di science based-policy, knowledge exchange among participants and identify key themes for future collaborative research and capacity-building initiatives aimed at strengthening metropolitan governance in rapidly urbanising regions. The mutual learning will be deepen for the following aspects: • Examine metropolitan territories as integrated systems, where housing, infrastructure networks, energy, water resources, and economic activities are interdependent, and assess the role of metropolitan governance in coordinating these systems for sustainable territorial development. • Analyse urban–rural linkages in rapidly urbanising regions, drawing on the experiences of the Nairobi Metropolitan Region, Burkina Faso, and Algeria, to understand interactions between urban growth, agricultural systems, labour mobility, and infrastructure networks.



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	• Discuss planning approaches beyond municipal boundaries, highlighting the need for territorial planning frameworks capable of addressing metropolitan-scale dynamics. • Provide a critical perspective on the development of new cities within contemporary urbanisation processes. • Explore the role of New Urban Policies (NUPs) as tools for evaluating the sustainability of proposed urban developments. • Investigate innovative water management approaches, including sponge city strategies and water diplomacy, to strengthen territorial resilience. • Reflect on the concept of metropolitan identity and its potential influence on long-term resilience and governance..
Strategic thematic area (select below*)	6. Social Sciences and Humanities 3.Sustainable Energy, Environment and Natural Resource Management
Abstract (max 300 words)	Across Africa and the Mediterranean, rapid urbanisation is reshaping territorial systems through spatial dynamics that increasingly blur the traditional boundaries between urban and rural areas. Metropolitan regions are expanding through infrastructure corridors, peri-urban development, informal settlements, and the construction of planned new cities. While these processes align with global frameworks such as the New Urban Agenda and emerging New Urban Policies (NUPs), they also raise important challenges related to governance, infrastructure sustainability, and territorial cohesion. This Advanced Skill course will be organised as a side event during the Africa Urban Forum in order to explores how metropolitan governance can address these challenges by focusing on the interactions between urban–rural linkages and key territorial systems, including infrastructure networks, housing development, energy distribution, water management, and food systems. In many rapidly urbanising contexts, new cities are promoted as strategic responses to demographic growth and housing shortages. However, a central planning question emerges: should essential territorial systems—such as energy grids, water supply networks, mobility



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	infrastructures, and agricultural systems—be organised primarily at the metropolitan scale, or can they be effectively managed within the planning frameworks of individual new city developments? This question will lead the mutual learning experience: since the different presentations will examine this issue through comparative perspectives from the Nairobi Metropolitan Region (Kenya), Burkina Faso, and Algeria. These cases highlight how metropolitan expansion interacts with infrastructure capacity, governance arrangements, and environmental vulnerabilities, while also emphasising the importance of maintaining strong urban–rural linkages that support regional food systems and labour mobility. Particular attention will be given to water governance and climate adaptation strategies, including approaches such as sponge city concepts and water diplomacy, which can contribute to flood risk management, water security, and more balanced relationships between cities, ecosystems, and agricultural territories. The session aims to foster dialogue and mutual learning on how metropolitan governance can guide urban transformation toward more integrated and resilient territorial development.
Period	From 08/04/2026– to 10/04/2026
Place	Nairobi (Kenya)
Teaching delivery mode	In person and online
Language	English
Final test	No formal individual assessment of learning is foreseen, the Session aims to provide a list of shared recommendations (must have or must avoid) that are the results of the process of dialogue and represents a “group assessment”. The evidence-based recommendations will be disseminated as a open-knowledge tool and delivered to UN-HABITAT .
How to apply	Participation in the event is open to the public upon prior registration through the official African Urban Forum website.
Contacts	antonella.contin@polimi.it



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Extended programme	<u>Facilitators of the mutual learning and co-design workshop</u> Antonella Contin – MetroHUB Centre Politecnico di Milano Jackson Kago – Kenyatta University <u>Lecturers</u> Claudio Del Pero – Politecnico di Milano claudio.delpero@polimi.it Title: <i>Energy Systems and Infrastructure Challenges in Rapidly Urbanising Metropolitan Areas</i> Georgios Yioryos Chatziefthymiou – Politecnico di Milano Title: <i>Beyond the Tabula Rasa: Integrating Africa's New Cities into National Urban Policies toward the "Africa We Want" (Agenda 2063)</i> Bayiri Valentin – Ouagadougou Metropolitan City Title: <i>Metropolitan Planning Strategies and Urban Expansion in Ouagadougou</i> Hamza Benacer – University of Oum El Bouaghi, Algeria Title: <i>Revitalising Historic Urban Centres in MENA Cities: Digital Tools and Space Syntax Approaches for Urban Integration</i> Abdulrahman Ndegwa – Heritage Department, Swahilipot Hub Foundation Title: <i>Metropolitan Identity as a Living Process: Innovation Ecosystems and Civic Initiatives in African Cities</i> Fiona Mc Cluney - Policy and Legislation Global Solutions Division UN-Habitat Title: <i>The New Strategic Plan of UN-Habitat: Perspectives for Sustainable Urban Development in Africa</i> Jackson Kago – Kenyatta University Title: <i>Urban–Rural Linkages and Territorial Development in the Nairobi Metropolitan Region</i> Final Discussion to prepare the Recommendations Moderated by Antonella Contin Topic: <i>Towards Integrated Metropolitan Governance: Infrastructure, Identity, and Sustainable Urban Futures</i>
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* STRATEGIC THEMATIC AREAS

1. Rural development, land management, agrifood and food supply chains;



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2. Health, water and hygiene, One Health;
3. Sustainable Energy, environment and natural resource management;
4. Entrepreneurial and industrial development for local prosperity;
5. Cultural heritage and sustainable tourism;
6. Social Sciences and humanities.
7. Ecological transition and digitalization