

WORLD CITIES DAY 2025

THEME

**BUILDING RESILIENT FUTURES:
PEOPLE-CENTRED SMART CITIES IN THE AGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**



FRIDAY,
31 OCTOBER 2025



11H00
(RSA TIME)



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To mark World Cities Day 2025, the SARCHI Chair for Inclusive Cities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa, will be leading a discussion through a webinar on building a resilient future in the face of climate change and adopting people-centred smart cities.

OVERVIEW:

This webinar is part of the School of Science summer seminar series and serves as a follow-up to the recently concluded *Inclusive Cities Conference 2025*, themed *Resilient Cities and Communities: Adapting to Climate Change and Beyond*. The conference highlighted the global importance of urban resilience, noting that infrastructure challenges in South Africa mirror those in Europe. It emphasized systems that transcend individual leadership and advocate for sustainable governance, while showcasing the role of urban innovation in responding to African urbanism and local realities promoting adaptable, co-produced knowledge and participatory governance.

Aligned with this year's World Cities Day, which focuses on people-centered smart cities, the webinar will explore how data-driven decision-making, technology, and AI can enhance urban life and aid recovery from shocks and crises. The emphasis remains on promoting smart city initiatives that are centered on people's needs.

The SARCHI Chair for Inclusive Cities as a global research group at the University of KwaZulu-Natal underscores that people-centered smart cities must prioritize climate change responses and resilient urban development to meet sustainability goals for 21st-century communities. With a focus on equity, sustainability, and participatory governance, particularly within African urban climate contexts, the webinar is titled "Building Resilient Futures: People-Centred Smart Cities in the Age of Climate Change."

The central aim is to reinforce the importance of prioritizing marginalized communities, fostering context-sensitive planning, and promoting co-production of knowledge among stakeholders through bottom-up governance and community-led data collection. While UN-Habitat advances the global dialogue on people-centered smart cities, the SARCHI Chair's focus is on building resilient futures through the adoption of such cities amid climate challenges.

This event features a panel of five experts with nearly four decades of combined experience in local projects and successful case studies across Europe, Africa, Australia, and America. The discussion will contribute to shaping strategies for creating resilient, inclusive, and climate-responsive urban futures.

SPEAKERS:



Associate Professor Patrick Cobbinah is a leading academic commentator on urban planning in Africa. His research focuses on urban planning and climate change in Africa and the outcomes of inappropriate planning practices and theories on African cities. Patrick is the Africa editor of Journal of Urban Affairs and the editor of three flagship books. He serves on the editorial boards of Habitat International, Urban Studies, and Tourism Planning and Development. He is a lead member of the OECD's Working Group on 'Accelerating Africa's built environment towards a sustainable and resilient future'.



Professor Lovemore Chipungu is an academic in the Discipline of Town and Regional Planning, University of KwaZulu-Natal. He is an active member of the Zimbabwe Institute of Regional and Urban Planners as well as a Corporate Member of the South African Planning Institute. He has published widely in peer-reviewed journals and books; and his areas of interest are housing policy, land-use planning and urban design. He is currently a co-co-principal investigator on a project on inclusive cities in Southern Africa.



Professor Mike Hardman is Chair in Urban Sustainability and Director of the Environmental Research & Innovation Centre (ERIC) at the University of Salford. He is an interdisciplinary researcher interested primarily in cities and has published widely on topics from guerrilla gardening to urban agriculture and green infrastructure. Mike is a Trustee of Social Farms & Gardens and Chair of the Academic Working Group, a national charity for gardening, growing and farming.



Associate Professor Claudia Loggia teaches in the discipline of Housing at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban. She has extensive experience in trans-disciplinary research projects and consultancy work in the areas of: energy efficient building design and retrofit, green infrastructure, sustainable urban regeneration, informal settlements upgrading. She is a Green Star South Africa Accredited Professional with the Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) and a National Research Foundation (NRF) C-rated researcher.



Professor Hangwelani Hope Magidimisha-Chipungu expertise in the intersection of climate change and the built environment is truly remarkable. She is the SARCHI Chair for Inclusive Cities and has served on various boards both locally and internationally, including the National Planning Commission, SACPLAN, and ISOCARP, among others. Her current work focuses on the intersection between climate change and the built environment, emphasizing sustainable and resilient urban development.

ENQUIRIES

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