

2026 Small Private Online Course (SPOC)

A Critical Engagement with Advancing the Development Goals

- Goal:** Assess processes required to achieve the UN & AU development goals
- Objective:** To develop critical, transdisciplinary and innovative approaches to sustainable development initiatives



About this Course

Period	Wednesday 18 November – Friday 18 December 2026
Commitment	4½ weeks 8-10 hours/week
Institutions	Leiden Delft Erasmus Alliance (LDE)/ African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL)/ University of Nairobi (UoN)
Level	300 (Upper intermediate)
Language	English
Participants	LDE students who have completed African Dynamics Minor Block A Selected senior students from African based Higher Institutions
Certification	LDE students: 10 ECTS towards African Dynamics Minor Block B Guest students: LDE endorsed Certificate of Participation or Completion
Activities	Asynchronous knowledge acquisition Synchronous discussions Online peer collaboration Group and individual knowledge application Weekly Reflective Learning Journal Adaptive Management Plan ¹

¹ Voluntary option for guest students who aspire to achieve a Certificate of Completion.

Course Framework

The SPOC is offered annually towards the end of the year and runs for nearly five weeks. Framed within the goals of the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063, the course provides a dynamic online learning environment in which participants engage with interactive learning materials, multimedia content and collaborative activities. These learning experiences encourage participants to connect theoretical knowledge with practical applications and to explore development challenges from multiple perspectives.

The online classroom provides a space for knowledge exchange across socio-cultural, economic, disciplinary and geographical boundaries. Participants from African countries and LDE universities work together to explore four key development-planning approaches for addressing complex sustainable development challenges, considering perspectives ranging from the global to the local. Weekly online discussions are complemented by a network webinar every Wednesday, featuring practitioners working in fields related to the week's theme. These webinars provide opportunities to connect academic perspectives with professional experience and practice.

African-based students are encouraged to participate actively in all course activities, including the Weekly Reflective Learning Journal (WRLJ). Students who participate in at least 70% of the course activities will receive an LDE-endorsed Certificate of Participation.

Following the SPOC, participants also have the opportunity to apply their learning by developing an Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) based on a case study of their choice. For African-based students, the AMP is a voluntary extension of the SPOC. They are encouraged to undertake the assignment collaboratively with an LDE student, creating an opportunity to further develop cross-contextual learning and exchange.

African-based students who successfully complete the AMP assignment will receive an LDE-endorsed Certificate of Completion.

SPOC Weekly Schedule:

- Structured readings and videos as well as facilitated activities and discussions.
- Synchronous introductions Mondays 12.30 – 14.00 UTC².
- Building Network Webinars Wednesdays 12.30 – 14.00 UTC (Optional for African-based participants).
- Synchronous theme wrap-ups Fridays 12.30 – 14.00 UTC.

The online course is hosted on the Leiden Centre for Innovation Brightspace and synchronous session on Zoom: <https://universiteitleiden.zoom.us/j/67860853408?pwd=jxIBUPqNPQjkOiFAZruypBVExdOW2z.1>

Meeting ID: 678 6085 3408/ Passcode: y8PiT2a#

Course Syllabus

Theme: Orientation: Structure, logistics and personal introductions

Successful completion of this course depends on participants' ability to balance the interplay between self-directed and collaborative learning - two powerful educational approaches that empower learners to take charge of their own education and foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This orientation week sets the stage.

Presented by: Drs. Madi Ditmars African Studies Centre, Leiden University & Dr. Anne Wairimu Kamau Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi

Week 47: 18 -20 November 2026

² Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) is the global time standard used to set clocks and organize time zones in the world. Look up how late this is in your time zone.

Outcome & Targets: Become familiar with the environment and requirements of the course

1. Enrol and login on the learning management system
2. Plan own programme based on the course structure
3. Build personal profile and get to know peers

Theme 1: Systems Thinking

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) demands a systemic approach to address the multiple challenges facing humanity. Ensuring social well-being, economic prosperity, and environmental protection requires an understanding of the interdependence and an integration of complex dynamic systems and sub-systems.

Presented by: Drs. Madi Ditmars African Studies Centre, Leiden University

Week 48: 23 -27 November 2026

Outcome & Targets: Evaluate the significance of a systemic approach in sustainable interventions

1. Outline systems covering; social inclusion, economic development, environmental sustainability, and good governance
2. Examine the linkages and interconnectivity between elements of the whole of the system, and identify synergies and trade-offs within systems
3. Include the systems approach in a strategy for an integrated capacity building project

Theme 2: Partnerships

AU Agenda 2063 Aspiration 7 “Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner” acknowledges that the attainment of development goals requires active and effective partnerships with other regions and continents, as well as public and private partnership arrangements.

Presented by: Dr. Taslim Alade Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Week 49: 30 November -4 December 2026

Outcome & Targets: Assess the possibilities that partnerships offer in sustainable project initiatives

1. Become familiar with the terminology and ways of addressing complex partnering processes
2. Explain the impacts of cross-sector partnerships and the value of public and private partnerships in the context of development objectives
3. Identify principles for effective global, regional and local partnerships on issues related to sustainable development

Theme 3: Participation

Par 117 in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda reaffirms that “...indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.” Community participation ensures that interventions are based on actual needs, grounded in the local realities and determined by those who will be impacted.

Presented by: Dr. Anne Wairimu Kamau Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi

Week 50: 7 -11 December 2026

Outcome & Targets: Analyse the complexities of stakeholder participation in sustainable development

1. Appreciate the value and advantages of participatory planning
2. Develop skills to encourage beneficiaries to become driver of their own development processes (The participation ladder)
3. Evaluate project effectiveness through the Participatory Assessment of Development (PADev) approach

Theme 4: Adaptation

The direct link between climate change and sustainable development, informs and shapes the global development agenda. Paragraph 14 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, identifies climate change as “one of the greatest challenges of our time” and is concerned that “its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development”.

Adaptation pathways is a planning approach to deal with climate change, mitigation and societal transformation. These strategies consider the dynamics of climate change and its linkage with socioeconomic and environmental processes.

Presented by: Dr. Rachel Lee & Drs. Mia Barnard History of Architecture and Urban Planning (HAUP), Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment (A+BE) TU Delft

Week 51: 14 -18 December 2026

Outcome & Targets: Clarify how adaptation planning can be incorporated in planning sustainable projects.

1. Examine Africa’s vulnerability and exposure to climate change and its impacts across all sectors
2. Integrate adaptation pathways in project planning to mitigate and manage climate change risks
3. Incorporate local and traditional knowledge and encourage communities to change behaviours



Interested student from students from African based Higher Institutions are invited to apply via [A Critical Engagement with Advancing the Development Agendas](#)

Apply Timeously! There is a limited number of places, and participants will be accommodated on a first-come-first-serve basis.