

# SOUTHERN AFRICAN CITY STUDIES CONFERENCE: 17-19 MARCH 2016

## Call for contributions

The Southern African City Studies Conference will be held in Durban in March 2016. City studies require multifaceted and collaborative approaches to address the dynamic variety of urban experiences. The conference brings together scholars who wish to expose their work to positive critical discussion and engage with ideas of those working in disciplines other than their own. This call for contributions seeks participation from scholars in all disciplines based in Southern Africa or committed to positive collaboration with Southern African scholars, doing original and creative research on one or across any of the thematic areas below. We are also open to other themes which a group of contributors might wish to propose:

**Alternate Experiments and Visions in Urban Planning and Design:** With increasing urbanization (and decline in some urban areas) and levels of poverty and disparity within urban spaces there is no better time than the present to ask how we can better our urban planning? What is it about the disciplinary practices and philosophies of town planning, architecture and urban design more broadly that limit the transformative capacity of cities as equitable and inclusive spaces? We are interested in papers that directly tackle the epistemological core of architecture, planning and urban and landscape design in search of different modes of theorisation and practice that move us towards creative, pragmatic solutions to current practices that all too often perpetuate disparities.

**Through the lens of the Everyday:** If we are to understand cities and the people in them it is best some would argue, after Lefebvre and others, to start from the lens of the everyday. Research that focuses on everyday practices, atmospheres and experiences can uncover unexpected hope and pragmatism in creative livelihood strategies of urban residents as they adapt to their city surroundings. It can also be a reminder of the treacherous possibilities for exploitation that exist in the gross inequalities of Southern African cities. Here we are interested in research that uses the lens of the everyday as a mechanism through which to reflect critically, review and possibly resolve broader urban issues.

**Responses to Urban Insecurity:** Cities are places in flux. They are places in which there is a flow of people, resources, communication, technology and infrastructure. City spaces are often viewed as insecure or unsafe, particularly in less developed and transitional societies. However, even in highly developed cities such as London, New York and Paris, moments of insecurity exist at the individual and collective level. There are numerous responses to this insecurity, whether it is real or perceived. These include – among others – gang formations, housing fortification, substance abuse, crackdown through policing, creative public space utilisation and communalism. This panel provides the space to share the very wide responses to real and imagined urban insecurity.



**The Challenge of working across disciplines:** Understanding urban/city spaces is best done when a range of disciplines meet up to share perspectives, theories, skills and critical insights. In addition, for changes to be experimented with and implemented in the urban arena, academics need to work closely with relevant practitioners which include government and civil society actors who bring to the table sets of knowledge, resources and skills. However, this is far easier said than done. Working across disciplines is as problematic and difficult as it is rewarding. The co-production of knowledge and developmental urban programmes is far from simple. This panel provides the space to engage about the challenges, dilemmas and possible solutions to 'doing' multi, inter and trans-disciplinary work in the urban context.

**The Significance of Infrastructure:**

Fast unplanned urban growth raises complex challenges for infrastructure delivery and maintenance: safe drinking water, sewage, roads and communication infrastructure are amongst the most urgent. Given the vast number of people living in urban settings today how we tackle infrastructure challenges impacts directly on issues of social justice and human dignity. Formal and informal solutions to retrofitting African cities require more than a simple technical approach. This panel encourages papers that deal with diverse infrastructural challenges and solutions, which address a mix of the technical and the social.

**Other themes, other forms:** We invite scholars working in groups to propose sessions, events, roundtables, exhibitions and performances which go beyond the suggested themes above and which will expand the interest and enjoyment of the conference experience.

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**WORKSHOP LOGISTICS**

Contributions will predominantly take the form of papers submitted in advance and then presented and discussed at the conference, and may also take other forms. Proposals will be reviewed and selected by a joint panel of scholars from across DUT, WITS, UP and UCT.

**Abstracts of no more than 250 words must be submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015.** Please upload abstracts online at <http://www.dut.ac.za/sacsc>.

Successful candidates will be notified by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 and ***papers are due by 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016.*** For queries and correspondence regarding the conference please email [sacsc2016@dut.ac.za](mailto:sacsc2016@dut.ac.za).

