

MEDIA RELEASE

City Desired

An exhibition on cities through the lens of Cape Town

CAPE TOWN, 1 October 2014 — The African Centre for Cities (ACC), a research unit of the University of Cape Town (UCT), is mounting a wide-ranging exhibition investigating the challenges and possibilities facing Cape Town. Entitled *City Desired*, the exhibition opens at 6pm on 30 October in the iconic City Hall. It will run until 10 December 2014.

City Desired emerges against the backdrop of the World Design Capital (WDC) programme, with its focus on “Live Design, Transform Life”. The increased interest in Cape Town’s future, sparked in part by its WDC status, provides an ideal moment to offer a resource for the city to think more deeply and honestly about our collective role in determining the future. How can we overcome the many social and environmental challenges facing Cape Town, a city that shares conditions and predicaments common to cities across South Africa and the continent?

An exhibition about ten everyday people

Based on in-depth journalistic research, *City Desired* uses a range of media platforms, including photography, film and interactive tools, to profile ten Capetonians whose life experiences offer powerful insights into the fabric of the city. Drawing on the biographies of a domestic worker and unionist, taxi boss, psychiatrist, urban farmer, environmental officer, spaza shop owner, violence counsellor, architect, school principal, and twin brothers who collaborate as artists, *City Desired* maps the fine grain of a city awkwardly negotiating change.

While strongly focused on biography, the exhibition nonetheless offers the public a full-spectrum view of Cape Town’s many and complex challenges. Drawing on extensive

research undertaken by ACC's Citylab research programme, as well as research from within UCT and other institutions, *City Desired* is structured around ten key themes, each of which affects the city's present and future livelihood. These core themes are Well-Being, Education, Mobility, Shelter, Work, The Food System, Land, Diversity, Vulnerability and Climate Change.

City Desired features an extensive public programme. Aromar Revi, director of the Indian Institute of Human Settlements in Bangalore, India, will deliver a Kapuscinski Development Lecture, the first time this lecture series will be hosted in Africa since its establishment in 2009. Other notable activities include the Grootboom Series, which will be presented in conjunction with Social Justice Coalition; a round-table discussion with noted urbanists AbdouMalik Simone, Teresa Caldeira, Ash Amin and Filip de Boeck; and a special edition of the public discussion forum Talking Heads focusing on the ten themes explored in the exhibition.

City Desired is curated by Tau Tavengwa and Edgar Pieterse, with Caroline Sohie

“*City Desired* intends to unlock a different public discourse about the current state and futures of the city,” says Professor Edgar Pieterse, director of the ACC. “In an atmosphere where most public debate gets ensnared in fixed oppositions and polemic, *City Desired* endeavours to open up fresh and interesting engagements with the city and its endless potential and inspire an exploration of the key challenges and opportunities facing the city across race, economic status, and geography to inspire meaningful action.”

“The exhibition clarifies the interconnected nature of all Capetonians whose fates are linked,” says Tau Tavengwa, chief designer and curator of *City Desired*.

An exhibition built out of partnerships

City Desired is a project of the ACC and was made possible by various partner organizations: City of Cape Town, Max Planck Institute, Pro Helvetia, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Goethe Institute, Ove Arup Foundation, the National Research Foundation, Mistra Urban Futures, and the Africa Centre. Additional support has been provided by the Council for Higher Education Consortium, the Dutch Consulate, Cape Town Partnership, International New Town Institute, Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading, Western Cape Government and the University of Cape Town. The Children's Radio Foundation is a core partner bringing young voices into the conversation.

For more details: www.citydesired.com

For further information: Edgar.Pieterse@uct.ac.za or UCT Media Office