



Capital Cities Project

Faculty of Humanities

University of Pretoria
Institutional Research Theme
Capital Cities: Space, Justice and Belonging

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Capital Cities: Space, Justice and Belonging

Executive Summary

For the first time in human history, the majority of the world's population now lives in cities. This dynamic, coupled with the resurgence of the importance of capital cities in the wake of the global economic crisis, makes the city in which this University is located an important site for understanding and intervention. This moment and dynamic present the University of Pretoria with an opportunity to contribute to finding solutions to challenges that face our city, our society and our world.

The Capital Cities Project is an exciting and new cross-faculty research project initiated by the Faculty of Humanities, but involving several other faculties within the University of Pretoria community. Researchers and postgraduate students from the Humanities, Law, Engineering, Theology, Built Environment, Information Technology, and Natural and Agricultural Sciences will collaborate by asking new questions about the city of Pretoria/Tshwane as a city, and as a capital city. The uniqueness of capital cities in general and our capital city in particular, will be investigated from the viewpoint of a variety of disciplines including arts and language, architecture, urban planning, law, history, social work, psychology, gender studies, political science and economics.

Four sub-themes have been identified:

1. Cities Represented;
2. Cities Lived;
3. Cities Remapped; and
4. Cities Re-visioned

Questions pertaining to space, justice and belonging will animate all the themes, while the following questions have been raised: What are the distinctive characteristics of government capitals? How are sovereignty, the state, governance, justice and nationhood represented in capital cities? How are state projects imagined, built and transformed in government capitals? How is space translated into place in cities? How do people live, work and play in capital cities? How are diplomatic communities formed and reproduced, within our own capital city and across capital cities? How are capital cities represented in arts and popular culture? What are the implicit moral visions of society and selves implied in various practices within the city as social laboratory? Which metaphors do planners, academics, activists and civil workers deploy in their discourse about their city? How is the city envisioned by city planners? How does the vision of such planners coexist with those who live in the city? What does a comparison between the visions of city planners across continents and countries tell us about the capital city of Pretoria/ Tshwane? What is the relationship between social power complexes and political power complexes? How have geographies of power, of inclusion and exclusion, shaped the city? How can an understanding of the spatial economies of our city contribute to democratic forms of planning and governance?

The overall aim of the project is to create a platform for coherent research on and intervention in the city. This common meeting ground will facilitate and coordinate interaction among role-players that engage the City of Tshwane by their research and practice. The project will form a node around which postgraduate training and postdoctoral support can be organised, and from which the leveraging of funding will be facilitated. Collaboration with other universities, local and international communities and governmental departments and municipalities is envisaged.

The Capital Cities Project will seek to achieve these aims through a number of research and public engagement activities, which will include:

- A research conference launching the project
- A series of 'State of the City' seminars
- A series of roundtable discussions with the City of Tshwane Metro Municipality
- Launching a Capital Cities book series
- Developing a Capital Cities research portal and archive
- A number of Capital Cities conversations
- Introducing Research Walks in the City
- Training young researchers in innovative and multi-disciplinary technologies and methodologies
- Supporting civil society events and discussion on social justice in the city
- Providing a platform for representing the city in art and by creative performances

The Capital Cities Project represents an invitation by the University of Pretoria to the residents of the city, civil society and public authorities on all levels, as well as international communities, to engage one another in theory and practice about the capital cities in which we live, and the capital cities in which we want to live.