

PLENARY SESSION: Caring Cities

Session organized by South African Cities Network



Date: 16 July 2013
Time: 09:00 – 13:15
Venue: Sandton Hilton Hotel, Conference Room 1 &2

PROGRAM

09:00 – 09:30: **Opening and Presentations:**

- **Facilitator:** Nellie Lester, General Manager, Housing Development Agency
- **Opening Remarks:** - Mally Mokoena, Mayoral Committee, City of Johannesburg
- **Presentation:** Report and multimedia presentation

09:30 – 10:45: **Keynote Presentations, reflections on caring cities from policy and practice:**

- Kgosientso Ramokgopa, Mayor of Tshwane
- Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA)
- Tracey Webster, CEO: Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship
- Sello Hatang, CEO: Nelson Mandela Foundation
- Yunus Carrim, Deputy Minister: Cooperative Governance & Traditional Affairs

Summary of key issues by facilitator

10:45 – 11:15: **Tea/Coffee Break**

11:15 – 13:00: **Strategic conversations with Mayors**

- Panel discussion and Questions from audience: Panelists
- Social Media Feedback and interaction

13:00 – 13:15: **Concluding Remarks**

- The Facilitator will conclude and discuss way forward in terms of a continuing discussion among cities in South Africa and the social media

13:15 – 14:00: **Lunch**

SUMMARY OF SESSION

The Metropolis 2013 theme is "Caring Cities", this will be the basis for the conference engagements. The South African Cities Network (SACN) will be coordinating inputs from its nine member cities (for note) to introduce this theme at the opening plenary session on the 16th of July 2013. The event will provide a platform for networking and exchanging of ideas. It will also bring together city managers, city officials, experts, international NGOs, academics and other stakeholders who are focused on the built environment in many cities around the world.

The notion of "the Caring City" relates to the African concept of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is an age-old African term for humaneness - for caring, sharing and being in harmony with all of creation. As an ideal, it promotes co-operation between individuals, cultures and nations. This term can be widely interpreted in cities. What is imperative in Metropolis 2013 is to focus cities on the global and local problems that most pressingly challenge urban governance. This focus is set also against the opportunities that abound in the current global conditions.

The global context in which this conference is inserted is characterized by deepening debt crises; increased levels of local and international migration and urbanisation of disenfranchised communities and individuals; high levels of poverty and inequality; and growing dangers posed by climate change.

It is also a globalized world where resource flows; communication, trade and migration are possible at unprecedented scales and depths. And it is a world in which cities benefit from advanced connectivity, scientific progress and sophisticated developmental approaches to sustainability. Enormous benefits of cultural exchange, interpersonal connectivity and mutual learning are visible and possible through increases in migration across the globe.

Within this context cities need to deepen their responsiveness to people and places most affected by the grave urban challenges. Urban governance has to address ways to ensure that cities offer opportunities for all residents and users, that the concerns of communities are at the heart of decision making on development, and that risk and vulnerability is effectively addressed, particularly for the urban poor. A proactive focus on addressing the needs of the urban poor stands out as the key focus for caring cities.

Caring cities in the notion of Ubuntu focus therefore on people and place. They are cities that strive to offer a high quality of life, showing a sense of humanity and exchange, providing comfort and dignity for all and deliver solutions that meet the needs of their residents, and particularly the most vulnerable inhabitants. They are also cities that protect and sustain the quality of environment, natural resources and the allocation of resources to ensure the health and wellbeing of inhabitants

Caring cities make conscious choices and take conscious actions to be inclusive, hospitable and supportive. They are cities that are focused on caring holistically for the needs of residents and on ensuring sustainable development. The session aims to investigate the notion of Ubuntu from different stakeholders and hence a caring city needs to be interpreted beyond policy and legislation or city facts and figures. It is instead a spirit, an inherent sense of caring for citizenry that needs to be expressed and interpreted by cities and administrations. There is thus a need to ensure that participation inputs are not only about reeling out facts, figures and policies on delivery. Instead, there is a need for participants to genuinely reflect their ability to "care" for the residents of their cities. There is also a need to extract from all participants, from whatever background they come from, how they interpret the concept of Ubuntu in their local contexts. From here, they can elaborate on how it is expressed and underlies their actions towards their citizens.

"A caring city sustains the city and all who live in it, particularly the poor and vulnerable".

Guiding questions for the session:

- How does your organisation interpret and understand Ubuntu in the city context?
- How are notions of “caring” ,”justice”, “dignity”, ”harmony”, “fairness”, “humanity” built into your organisation?
- Who are the people in your society that you have identified as most in need in the light of Ubuntu?
- What do you do to ensure that the attitude of Ubuntu frames your action towards these, the most vulnerable in your society?
- What planning strategies are in place to ensure that the city is more inclusive and integrated in creating a caring city?