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3 April 2025

UCT to host conversation tackling practical imperatives of sustainable urbanisation for Africa

Tuesday, 8 April 2025 | 18:00-19:00 SAST | New Lecture Theatre 2, University Avenue South, Upper Campus | [RSVP](#)

Amidst global geopolitical shifts and South Africa's assumption to the Presidency of the G20, the University of Cape Town (UCT) will host an event that will explore critical issues of African urbanisation to forge a path that can advance the African Union's Agenda 2063 and integrate crucial UCT research into South Africa's priorities for the G20.

UCT will launch its Collective Conversations: On Science for Society series on Tuesday, 8 April 2025. Featuring Professor [Edgar Pieterse](#), the founding director of the [African Centre for Cities](#) at UCT, the first conversation in the series will tackle why African urbanisation is an "unstoppable force", and discuss its significance in addressing global development priorities. Professor Pieterse's research centres on city-level innovation ecosystems that can support the mainstreaming of sustainable urbanism in Africa.

He asserts: "Africa's urbanisation trajectory presents a unique opportunity to address critical global challenges such as climate-compatible development and sustainable infrastructure, paving the way for more innovative and just cities."

Associate Professor [Geci Karuri-Sebina](#) from the University of the Witwatersrand's [School of Governance](#) has been invited to respond and offer a counterpoint. Her research explores the intersection between people, place, time and technological change. She intends to focus on the perspectives of ordinary Africans who are innovating at grassroots level but often face hindrances from government policies and systemic barriers.

She emphasised that, "It is vital to move beyond dominant narratives and recognise the ingenuity of everyday Africans who are actively shaping their urban futures, often in spite of, rather than because of, formal policies."

The evening will open with a welcome from Professor Mosa Mashabela, UCT Vice-Chancellor, who will connect the series to the university's vision. The event will conclude

with a 30-minute interactive Q&A session with the audience, followed by networking opportunities.

This series is an initiative of the Executive Director of Research at UCT, Dr Linda Mtwisha. "UCT has history of contributing to advancing cutting-edge scientific research that addresses some of the most pressing societal challenges," she said. "To this end, the series aims to bring together experts from across disciplines to lead engagements on some real-world challenges, particularly those most pertinent to the African context.

"Furthermore, South Africa faces significant challenges in meeting many of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Despite progress, the country continues to grapple with systemic issues such as inequality, poverty, unemployment, climate change and health disparities. As such there is an urgent need for multi-sectoral, evidence-based solutions that can be scaled for greater social impact. This is where this series comes in."

The aim is to foster robust dialogue between the academic community, policymakers, industry, civil society and the public on how scientific advancements can contribute to solving unique challenges within the Western Cape, South Africa and the rest of Africa.

Anticipated outcomes:

- Strengthened cross-sectoral partnerships and collaborations in a way that ensures accelerated development of solutions to the grand challenges facing society (Africa's Agenda 2063)
- Increased public awareness, appreciation and engagement with science
- Expanded STEM participation among underrepresented groups
- Increased interest in STEM fields and research careers

This Collective Conversation series aims to bridge the gap between academic research and societal impact, fostering cross-sectoral partnerships to drive innovation, ensure knowledge exchange and promote actionable solutions to global challenges.

This initiative is a key component of UCT's Vision 2030, which aims to strengthen the university's role as a globally recognised institution committed to advancing knowledge that meaningfully contributes to society, with a particular focus on local and regional African contexts.

- [See the event programme](#), [venue map](#) and [speaker bios](#).

Members of the media wishing to attend the event are requested to [RSVP](#).

Ends

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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