

Cape Argus

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Bridging our divides

THE SUCCESS of every major initiative in Cape Town is bound to be judged by its impact on the inequities that define the divisions in our urban landscape.

The World Design Capital 2014 award is no exception, quite properly so.

The sincerity of such sentiments depends on their being placed well beyond the limits of charity. Charity is commendable, and essential if we are to maintain our sense of humanity.

But from an economic and developmental point of view, charity is not enough when the opportunities to make Cape Town a fairer, more inclusive city are so much greater in major initiatives, and greater to the extent that the whole city can benefit.

The idea of a metropole which functions as a whole is central to such thinking, a recognition that a thriving central city or Atlantic seaboard cannot be separated from the blight and social risk of the Cape Flats, or that a sense of belonging can never take root in poorer communities if sought simply at the expense of safer, flourishing precincts.

In this context, it is encouraging that the city is deliberately focusing attention on what mayoral committee member Brett Herron has defined as World Design Projects that can “transform the lives of marginalised people”.

“We have to ask,” he said, “how each bridge, public transport system and community hall will work for people and how it will enhance its surroundings.”

Making public space hospitable to healthy, productive lives is a vital element of this, as UCT’s Professor Edgar Pieterse argued on our opinion page yesterday.

It is worth noting that Cape Town’s ambitions will depend to a considerable degree on communities and individuals acting on them, too.