



Global COE Program “In Search of Sustainable Humanosphere in Asia and Africa”

## Initiative 1 Seminar

# Urban Space, Collective Memory and Identities in Post-apartheid South Africa: Reflections from Cape Town

### < Date and Time >

27 September 2010, 17:00-19:00

### < Venue >

Room 332, Inamori Foundation Memorial Building, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

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### < Speaker >

Dr. Scarlett Cornelissen (Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Stellenbosch)

### < Abstract >

Cities have historically played a distinctive role in South Africa's modern political economy. They constituted central collection points for capital amassed predominantly through mining in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; were instrumental in providing the means to coordinate the rationalist planning and industrialisation characteristic of the apartheid era; and were fundamentally shaped by the policies of racial division of that era. The governing of cities in apartheid South Africa was designed to service the infrastructural, but particularly ideological and spatial requirements of the apartheid state. Urban authority reflected the

spatio-administrative ordering of apartheid, consisting of local councils governing each of the four statutorily defined racial groups (i.e. White, Coloured, Indian and black African). Finally, since a key rationale of apartheid planning was the control of the flow of black Africans into cities – the intention of apartheid policy being to contain African settlement in designated rural ‘homelands’ or bantustans – urban policy centred on managing and monitoring Africans’ (and other populations’) movements.

In the post-apartheid era urban areas continue to play an important role, although their primary function in the political economy has shifted. In a spatial sense, too, cities are now considered important geographical and economic sites for the enactment of transformation and integration. But the post-apartheid city has been subject to many other, unintended changes, which range from gentrification, informalisation, deindustrialisation in some instances, the rise of private securitised spaces, and pronounced class polarities. Urban identities have concomitantly also changed. In this presentation I reflect on changes in the spatial, social and economic geography of the city of Cape Town and their effects on urban identities in the city. The focus is on the broad way emerging (and older) identities interrelate with constructions of place in post-apartheid South Africa.

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\*“Initiative 1” studies the impact of the technology and institutions which human society had applied and imposed on the environment in Asia and Africa in historical perspective. It also seeks to determine the directions of technological and institutional changes in the future.

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