

The struggle to belong
Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.
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‘The Softer Side of Policing’: Social Development in the revanchist Cape Town

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Abstract:

Over the past few years, the repressive tendencies of the neoliberal city have been analysed by geographers. Here, the state and its public police that apply zero tolerance approaches against groups and individuals that have been identified as undesirable and counter-productive to the growth orientated city have been in the critiques. Furthermore, a focus has been on the various new governance actors and their private securities, using paradigms such as the ‘broken windows syndrome’ to exclude these ‘undesirables’ from their sphere of control. Agreeing with this critique, this paper takes the argument a step further, arguing that in recent years it is not only the police and other policing agents that have been used to establish and maintain this urban order, but social development actors as well. Acknowledging the limits of actual policing measures, urban partnerships have invested and participated in social development to approach the issue of ‘undesirables’ more holistically. Being placed in an environment where the private interests of the funding communities and their territorialized short-term ideas of space and security prevail, social development turned into what will be called the ‘softer side of policing’.