

Cape Town named World Design Capital 2014: what it means

 By [Fred Roed](#)

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On Wednesday morning, 26 October 2011, at around 6:20am South African time, the announcement came from Taipei that Cape Town has been awarded the crown of World Design Capital 2014. Since the announcement, it seems that half the people on the SA social media circuit are jumping up and down celebrating, and the other half are scratching their heads, asking "World Design Whadda?"



In the spirit of illumination, I'll attempt to clarify (quickly, 'cos I got important creative work to do at my *real* job) what this all means.

First of all, for those who don't know, the [World Design Capital](#) is an award created around eight years ago by prominent international design forum [ICSID](#). Previous winners have been Torino, Seoul and Helsinki. My own company, web marketing agency World Wide

Creative, has been working with our client [Cape Town Partnership](#) on the digital side of the bid.



In short, it's a big deal, especially considering the stiff competition, having been shortlisted against Bilbao and Dublin. In terms of outcomes, there are five major things we can expect:

- **Outcome #1: boost to Cape Town's economy**

This comes in two forms. First, from the commitment by local government to invest in better architecture, smarter infrastructure and contemporary solutions such as green areas in the city bowl, cycle tracks, walking paths, safe areas and culture hubs. Secondly, the expected increase in tourism, despite the global downturn. According to the IDSID, previous award winner Torino, Italy, reported higher visitor numbers in its title year - which coincided with the previous global economic downturn - than in 2006, when it hosted the Winter Olympics.



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- **Outcome #2: attention from the global creative community on Cape Town**

Don't snort at this. Think movies, music, advertising, conferences. When considering where to host anything, the badge next to Cape Town's name is going to play a big part in swaying big decisions.

- **Outcome #3: free marketing of Cape Town**

Expect to see Cape Town appearing with increasing frequency in the global media. Magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The Economist*; newspapers on all continents and especially in travel bibles such as *Conde Naste* and online tourism forums and travel blogs.

The award gives the media something other than wine, weather and a mountain to write about.

- **Outcome #4: increased focus on creative solutions**

I'm excited about this idea. Consider that, in South Africa's past, design was used to keep us apart. We had separate



Credit: Andre Vorster,
www.ontopoftheworld.co

benches in public areas, signs on beaches telling us where to go, designated toilets, buses, and coaches on trains. We were divided into allocated areas, suburbs and parks. Our cities were designed to divide us.

Now, design will be proactively used to bring us together. This award brings an increased awareness of the power of creativity to solve problems - from traffic, to overcrowded townships, to informal trading areas, and to the environment. Thinking creatively brings about positive change, and ultimately profit to society and to business (ask Steve Jobs about that last point).

• Outcome #5: Capetonians will become even more irritating

Yeeup. We can't help ourselves. We're now officially cooler than anyone else in the country. And we have a big yellow badge to prove it.

One last note: I attended the pre-announcement party last night, Tuesday 25 October, at The Assembly nightclub in Cape Town, and it was mentioned that 2014 is exactly 20 years after the dawn of South Africa's new democracy.

We've been through a bumpy ride since then, with societal and economic challenges of the highest order. It's significant to note that a marked sign of any developed nation is its sustained commitment to arts and culture. With more pressing issues to tackle, the creative side of our society has (understandably) been sidelined. What better way to get us on track than to win this award?

Here's to the future of Cape Town and South Africa!

For more:

- Bizcommunity Search: [World Design Capital](#)
- Official website: www.capetown2014.co.za
- Media resource: www.capetown2014.co.za/media (this will be updated in due course with more collateral from the campaign)
- Google News Search: [World Design Capital 2014](#)
- Twitter Search: [#WDC2014](#)
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/CT4WDC
- Twitter: [@CapeTown2014](#)

ABOUT FRED ROED

Fred Roed, CEO of digital marketing agency World Wide Creative (www.worldwidecreative.co.za) and co-founder of the Heavy Chef initiative (www.heavychef.com), has unhealthy obsessions with online branding, The Simpsons, Hawaiian shirts and old Christopher Walken movies. He blogs at Ideate (www.ideate.co.za) a blog about South African entrepreneurs, and personally at www.fredroed.com. Contact Fred on tel +27 (0)21 423 3519, email fred@worldwidecreative.co.za and follow [@Fred_Roed](#) on Twitter.

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