

NEWS

THE PATTIS
FAMILY FOUNDATION
GLOBAL CITIES
BOOK AWARD

Hosted by

metropolis ●



Jan Erasmus

Director of Strategy and
International Relations at the City
of Johannesburg.

“

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Jan Erasmus: On Narrative Power, Global South Leadership, and Reimagining Urban Futures

Friday 13/06/2025

We invited Jan Erasmus, Director of Strategy and International Relations for the City of Johannesburg, to talk about his experience on the Judging Committee, the value of books in shaping urban thinking, and how cities in the Global South can help lead conversations around urban futures. These are his thoughts:

BOOKS REMAIN ESSENTIAL FOR NAVIGATION URBAN COMPLEXITY

*"Books hold a unique and enduring power to deepen our understanding of global issues, especially those **issues focused on cities and their evolving roles in a rapidly changing world**. Unlike short-form digital content, books provide the space for in-depth research, thoughtful analysis, and nuanced storytelling. Books also allow authors **to connect historical context with present-day challenges and future possibilities** - something that is essential when discussing urbanization, sustainability, inequality, migration, and governance.*

*In a time dominated by rapid information exchange, books offer a slower, more reflective form of engagement. They invite readers not just to consume facts, but to think critically, challenge assumptions, and imagine alternative futures. **Cities are at the frontlines of global change**, and through books, authors can explore their complexity in ways that **spark meaningful dialogue and inspire action**."*

AMPLIFYING URBAN NARRATIVES THAT SHAPE OPINIONS AND EXPERIENCES

*"I was motivated to take part in the Pattis Family Foundation Global Cities Book Award because I believe strongly in the power of narrative and scholarship to influence both policy and public perception. This award not only honours the work of authors who are committed to urban issues, but also helps **elevate these important conversations to a wider, global audience**. My hope is that participating in this award will amplify the themes of the books, connect with readers across disciplines and borders, and contribute to a broader understanding of **how cities can be catalysts for solutions** in the face of global challenges."*

CENTRING GLOBAL SOUTH PERSPECTIVES IN URBAN FUTURES DISCOURSE

*"Johannesburg, with its rich yet complex history, has long been a beacon for urban resilience, innovation, and international cooperation. As one of Africa's most dynamic metropolitan hubs, the city understands both **the challenges and the potential of urban transformation**—especially in the context of the Global South, where cities are rapidly growing and evolving under the weight of historical inequities, economic constraints, and environmental pressures.*

*Initiatives like the Pattis Family Foundation Global Cities Book Award play a vital role in advancing global conversations about urban futures by **amplifying diverse voices and perspectives**—particularly those from the Global South, which are too often underrepresented in global discourse. By recognizing and supporting scholarly and narrative work that reflects the lived experiences and innovations emerging from cities like Johannesburg, these initiatives help balance the global narrative, **shifting it from one of deficit to one of contribution**.*

*Such platforms can foster deeper understanding, build solidarity between cities facing similar challenges, and encourage the exchange of grounded, locally informed solutions. They also provide an opportunity to **reimagine urban futures that are inclusive, just, and sustainable**—not only for the Global South, but for the global community."*

* With a Master's in Urban and Regional Planning, Jan Erasmus leads strategic policy development and manages Johannesburg's global partnerships to advance urban sustainability and inclusive growth.