

Gauteng



building a globally competitive city region



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Photo: Gauteng Provincial Government

Gauteng is claimed to be a 'global city region'. What does this mean? The 'city region' refers to an area comprised of more than one city or urban node – a metropolitan region. The term 'global' refers to a city region which is connected in a series of networks with the global economy. As a global economic hub, a city region competes with other global economic hubs for capital and resources. The question is then: how can the region compete more effectively with other global city regions?

The province of Gauteng is the largest economic centre in Africa. While it is geographically the smallest province, Gauteng's population of 9,5 million people (20% of the nation) produces 40% of the national GDP. Its population increases by 20% every five years. The challenge for the Gauteng Government is how to increase its global competitiveness as a region. The Province aims to have an 8% annual economic growth rate and to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014. How can it maximise efficiency and productivity to grow its economy within a global economy? This question must necessarily be answered in the context of South Africa's system of multi-level government.

For the provincial and local governments in Gauteng, the challenge is to achieve a common perspective that would guide the development of the region as a global city region. How can consensus be achieved between local and

provincial government on the vision for the region? More than that, how can this perspective be shared by all stakeholders in the province, informing long-term thinking on social and economic development?

International experience

Metropolitan regions are found the world over – large conurbations in excess of millions of people that are socially and economically integrated although not consisting of a single political entity. With large concentrations of people, skills and resources, these regions are seen as their countries' economic dynamos. At the same time they are also the site of pervasive social problems and environmental pollution. In developing countries, large urban sprawls are increasing at a rapid rate – for example, in India, Nigeria, Brazil and Mexico.

With the massive concentration of people, governance issues become critical. How is coordination and planning effected for the entire area in an effort to provide cost-effective services to millions of people? How can resources be equitably distributed between rich and poor areas? The aim of governance is not only the provision of services, but also the fostering of economic development. In the case of decentralised systems of government, both provincial or state governments and local governments must collectively confront these challenges.

International conference

To learn from international experience on global city regions, an international conference was held in April in Johannesburg, organised by the Office of the Premier and the Department of Provincial and Local Government of the Province of Gauteng in cooperation with the Community Law Centre and the Forum of Federations. Attending were members of the provincial executive, the executive mayors of Johannesburg and Tshwane metropolitan municipalities, mayors and councillors of other councils in Gauteng, representatives of national departments, members of the diplomatic corps and business community, and academics.

Presentations were made on the following city regions:

- Chicago (USA)
- Toronto (Canada)
- Sydney (Australia)
- Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

key points

- There is no one solution to the challenges of global city regions, and around the world creative solutions is found for country-specific challenges.
- The first step for Gauteng may be the reconfiguration of local government into only metropolitan municipalities.
- The integration of metropolitan regions should be a long-term goal and not be driven by short-term events.
- Key to a globally competitive city-region is good cooperation between provincial and local government.
- The GCR initiative cannot be confined to provincial and local governments. There should be a marriage of economic leadership in pursuit of common goals of economic growth.

- Mexico City (Mexico)
- Mumbai (India)
- Lagos (Nigeria)
- Vienna (Austria)
- Zurich (Switzerland)
- Madrid (Spain)
- Ruhr area (Germany)



Photo: Gauteng Provincial Government

International delegates that addressed the Gauteng City-region Conference

International perspectives

Given the diverse experience across the world with global city regions, the following were key insights participants at the conference identified as important for Gauteng:

- Comparisons with different countries and regions showed a great similarity between their practices and challenges and those of Gauteng. While there are some commonalities there are also structural differences. There is no one solution to the challenges of global city regions, and around the world creative solutions are found for country-specific challenges.
- The integration of metropolitan regions should be a long-term goal and not driven by short-term events. Mexico City hosted both the Olympics and the Soccer World Cup, but these events did not have a lasting legacy on the effective functioning of that metropolitan area, which has in excess of 15 million people.
- Metropolitan government is not static but is a flexible and an innovative form of government. However, there is a need for legitimacy and public buy-in for the idea of metropolitan governance. It is important to ensure that the Global City Region (GCR) initiative in Gauteng takes the citizens along.
- Key to a globally competitive city region is good cooperation between provincial and local government. Cooperation is important in the areas of urban planning, the environment, transport and strategic services. Furthermore, the possibilities of shared services among metropolitan and local governments can add much to the attractiveness of a city region as an investment location, apart from being very useful to citizens.

It is vital for Gauteng to take its residents along with it in its quest to make the province a more prosperous and equitable hub of economic activity in South Africa and Africa.

- The GCR initiative cannot be confined to provincial and local governments. There is a need to involve social partners and civil society in a social dialogue. There is a need for collective forums, especially between governments and the private sector. In all instances there should be a marriage of economic leadership with political leadership in pursuit of common goals of economic growth.

Comment

In comparison to other city regions in the world, the governments in Gauteng are making a conscious effort to promote the concept of a global city region for Gauteng in all sectors. The first concrete steps may be the reconfiguration of local government in Gauteng, seeing metropolitan municipalities as the only form of local government. As was highlighted by the international experts, it would be vital for Gauteng to take its residents along with it in its quest to make Gauteng as a whole a more prosperous and equitable hub of economic activity in South Africa and Africa.

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