

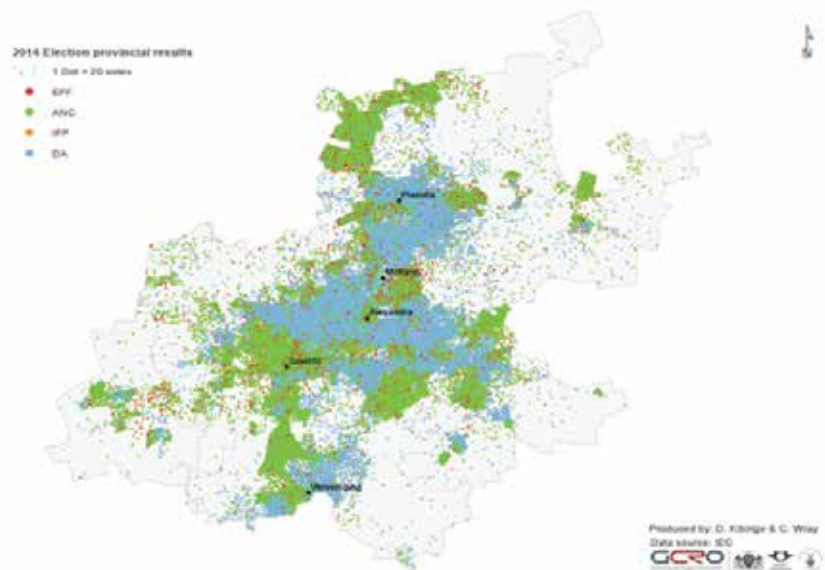
Gauteng and the arrival of uncertainty



DAVID EVERATT is the Executive Director of the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO), has over 17 years of experience in applied socio-economic and development research, designing and implementing monitoring systems, and programme evaluation. He was responsible for path-breaking research into youth marginalisation and out-of-school youth in South Africa in the early 1990s; his research into political violence was quoted by Nelson Mandela at the UN; he was the chief evaluator of the South African Constitutional Assembly between 1995 and 1997; and has served on successive ANC election polling teams since 1994 until the present.

Introduction

2014 saw the most contested election in Gauteng’s history. The ruling African National Congress (ANC) saw its support drop to 54%, down 10% on the previous election. The Democratic Alliance (DA), the national and provincial opposition, increased its vote share to 31%, while the Economic Freedom Fighters outstripped all previous new parties by garnering 10% of the vote despite being in existence for only a few months (the Congress of the People (COPE) had managed 8% in the previous provincial poll, and the Independent Democrats 2% five years prior to that, both after only a few months of formal existence)¹. “Substantive uncertainty” – called for, many years back, by Adam Habib² – appeared to have arrived in Gauteng, with a bang, in electoral terms at least. The past sea of green (ANC) votes was suddenly awash with blue and red.



(Election 2014: Gauteng. Votes for 3 main parties: Data source: IEC, Map Source: GCRO)

‘It’s more complicated than that...’

This brief article is not solely about the politics of the election, and the questions it raises, fascinating though those are. How did the DA virtually double its vote

share while being viciously attacked by its own supporters and former staffers on a near-daily basis, accused of lack of principle, lack of strategy, lack of vision and lack of liberalism.²³ How did the EFF gain and the ANC lose so many votes when both were led by men who had in common a history of allegations of corruption and a familiarity with court-rooms, albeit one of whom could bring a crowd to life in seconds, a skill the other notably lacked? How did COPE manage to lose virtually its entire voter base, not winning 1% of the ballot (with the big-hearted ‘Terror’ Lekota having the decency to actually eat his hat in public, as he threatened to do if this voter catastrophe occurred)? How did the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) continue its slow decline that seemed to march in step with the age of its leader – but head-off the electoral grim reaper and retain almost a per cent of the Gauteng vote? By the same token, how did the Freedom Front Plus, once thought extinct, out-perform the IFP?

Was this election the death-knell of smaller parties retaining any significance whatsoever – or will future elections be so close that coalitions give these tiny parties enormous influence? These – and in particular the political and governance implications of the last point – all deserve far more rigorous analysis, which hopefully will appear in time.

During elections, most commentators understandably focus on rallies and marches, statements, bloopers, rumours, scandals, and the trading of insults (and/or blows), they follow party leaders and focus almost entirely on the electoral process itself. Many lack accurate polling data, and so resort to whatever is ‘newsworthy’ that day, regardless of its real or long-term significance. And, of course, pollsters – who make sure they keep their data locked up – know that Robert Orben was entirely rhetorical when he asked: ‘Do you ever get the feeling that the only reason we have elections is to find out if the polls were right?’

“Do you ever get the feeling that the only reason we have elections is to find out if the polls were right?”

By commingling foci on socio-economic and attitudinal issues within the province and the election results, we suggest some of the answers to the questions posed above are beyond party politics. Looking at the just-released ‘Quality of Life’ survey conducted by the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO), and accounting (albeit briefly) for social change and class formation as well as attitudinal shifts over time, we find a more complex story. The survey, with a sample of some 27 000 respondents, is a measurably accurate barometer of public sentiments. The story it tells is one of:

- growing *satisfaction* with service delivery (measured against a basket of 14 services);
- contrasted with growing *dissatisfaction* with all three spheres of government;
- compounded by a pervasive belief held by 90% of respondents in our just-released ‘Quality of Life’ survey that ‘corruption is the biggest threat facing our democracy’;
- coupled with growing unhappiness at rough treatment at the hands of public officials, of whom 79% of respondents said they failed to live up to Batho Pele (people first) principles; and
- hardening racial attitudes, reflecting the fact that
- 20 years of democracy has delivered little to a great many black people locked into spatially and racially demarcated areas created for them under apartheid but which have survived long after its formal demise.

In sum, the majority of Gauteng residents are positive about service delivery, but deeply dissatisfied with both government itself, and the corruption and disregard they see operating within it. People don't merely want an efficient government, they want one they can trust.

Old research tropes such as the racial census as punted for years by R W Johnson and Lawrence Schlemmer, Tom Lodge, Bob Mattes and many others, are withering on the bough, and new analytic lenses are needed.⁴ With votes splitting many ways – and the ANC in particular losing votes on both flanks, to the DA and EFF, and black voters (the essence of the 'race' in 'racial census') having left the ANC for COPE staying away from the ANC and preferring other parties – clearly something more is happening than 'the sins of incumbency' and voter fatigue with a long-dominant ANC. Black voters didn't refuse to vote, if they had lost confidence in the ANC – they voted for other parties, to its left and right. According to the IEC, 4 382 163 valid votes were cast in Gauteng, with just 42 261 spoilt votes despite a campaign that called for ballots to be spoiled or cast for small parties, led by former ANC luminaries (though voter turnout in the province was 72.97%, down from 75.6% in 2009).

Change – the core message of the ANC's 1994 campaign – was in the air during election 2014, and on the ground; nonetheless, the Gauteng election results were received with some surprise.

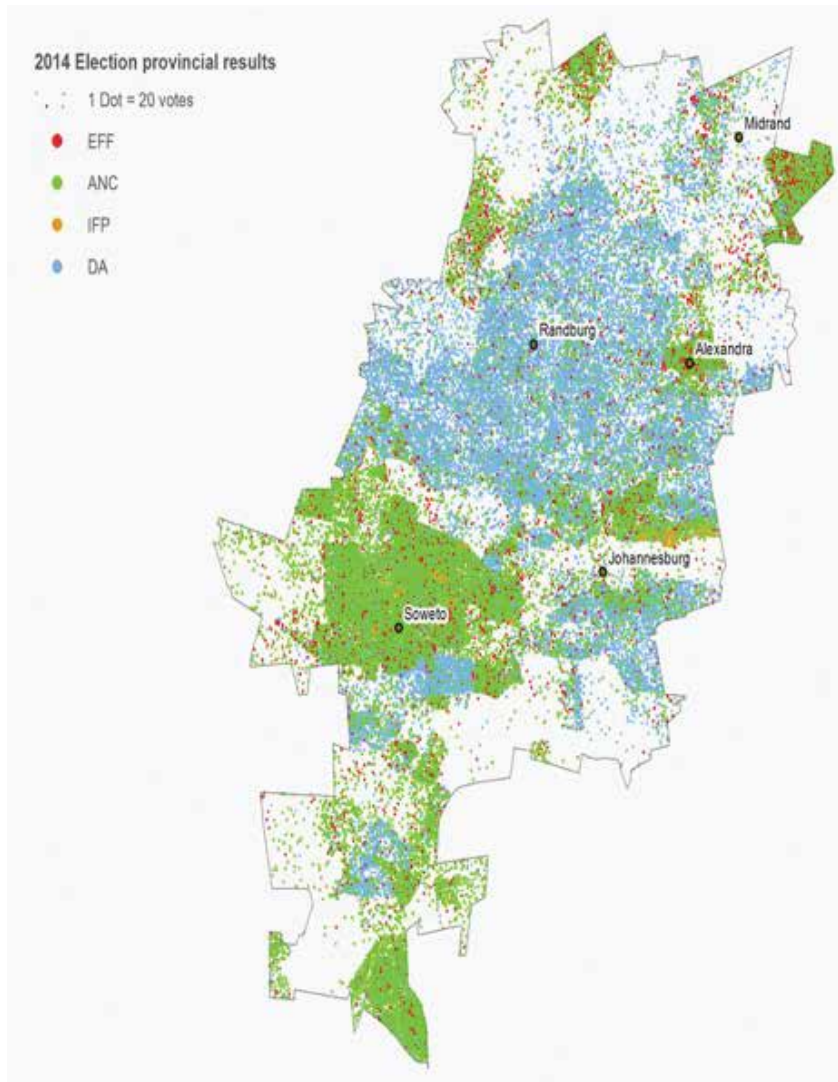
The irony of this election was that it can be argued the 'racial census' thesis proved to be a redundant analytic tool – for African voters (if it had ever been a useful tool). Africans voted the ANC back into power, certainly; but large numbers also voted DA, and large numbers voted EFF. Africans do not blindly vote ANC because they are African or because the ANC is the ANC. But the racial census beautifully captures how whites, coloureds and Indian voters flocked to the DA in massive numbers.

If anyone voted because of their race, it was the so-called 'minorities'.

Change – the core message of the ANC's 1994 campaign – was in the air during election 2014, and on the ground; nonetheless, the Gauteng election results were received with some surprise. Particularly noteworthy was the fact that more Gautengers cast their national than their provincial ballot for the ANC, suggesting they were more comfortable with Zuma's scandal-ridden ANC than the Gauteng ANC, which has long prided itself on being both modern and progressive. If the election were about national corruption scandals around Nkandla or the person of the President – which was the core message in the DA campaign – these seemed to matter less to Gauteng voters than their local circumstances which, ironically, were better than almost anyone else's in the country in terms of the delivery of services, availability of employment, and so on. This, in itself, seemed counter-intuitive. Could it be that people were torn between old political loyalties and new class interests?

After all, "Election 2014 will be won in Gauteng", a Gauteng ANC pamphlet had asserted; and the Gauteng ANC had a reasonable expectation that it would stand somewhat above the mud being slung at the ANC's national leadership, given that the Gauteng ANC had consistently maintained both an independent and progressive stance. Gauteng was one of only a couple of provincial party structures that did not support Zuma's re-election at Mangaung, preferring then Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe; had previously bucked the trend under Mbeki and initiated a mass anti-retroviral roll-out programme while the then President,

backed by other ANC structures, was still trying to prove that a syndrome could not be caused by a virus; had publicly named and removed corrupt members; and generally may have felt that if a dividend for remaining principled was available, the Gauteng ANC should be the beneficiary.



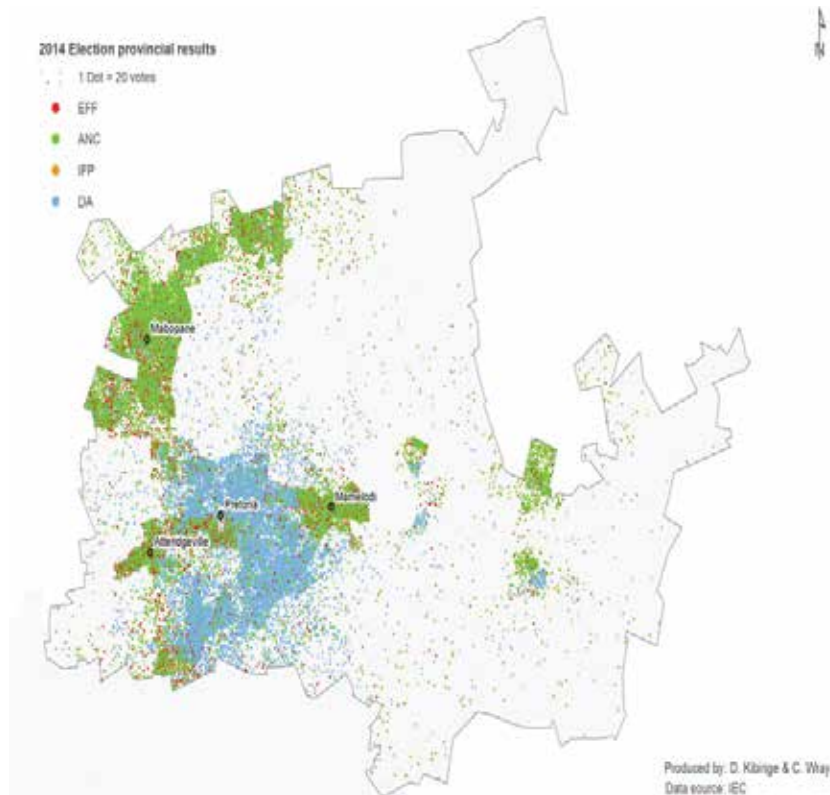
(Election 2014: Johannesburg. Votes for 3 main parties: Data source: IEC, Map Source: GCRO)

But it was not: quite the opposite, as the map of votes for the three main parties in the three metropolitan centres (above and below) suggest.

Gauteng: driving change, losing (ANC) votes...

Perhaps an error the ANC in Gauteng made was to misunderstand the impact, depth and spread of change in the province, and the broader city-region in which the province is located; and, in particular, the policy choices this requires of the ruling party. This tiny space, occupying 1,4% of the national land mass, holds the largest population share in the country (a fifth of South Africans live in Gauteng), and the population grows at 2,6% per annum⁵ while helping generate 36% of national Gross Domestic Product.⁶ Tellingly, Gauteng has no rural areas worth

speaking of, though it sees the tail end of former homelands at the northern borders of Tshwane.



(Election 2014: Tshwane. Votes for 3 main parties: Data source: IEC, Map Source: GCRO)

The ANC now has a large suburban constituency – not just domestic workers and gardeners, but black middle class residents – but has struggled to find ways to reach them in face-to-face campaigning, the most effective ANC tool.

Nonetheless, it has performed well in delivering basic needs.⁷ Gauteng also has a distinctive demographic profile: Africans make up three-quarters of the population (in a majority of provinces, this figure exceeds 90%), meaning that so-called ‘minorities’ (coloureds, Indians and whites) are significant and in many wards, are in fact majorities. While poverty has kept many Africans locked in the townships racially demarcated for them by apartheid, many more have moved into (old and new) suburban areas, and into

professional occupations. In brief, Gauteng is complex, modern, heavily urbanised, and highly contested.

If old research tropes no longer work, in Gauteng, neither do old campaign strategies and messages; or, at least, their traction is slipping. The ANC now has a large suburban constituency – not just domestic workers and gardeners, but black middle class residents – but has struggled to find ways to reach them in face-to-face campaigning, the most effective ANC tool. The DA trotted out its repeated corruption accusations, but talk of ‘taking Gauteng’ rapidly dwindled as the party struggled to mobilise in the townships and informal settlements, having botched its position on redress and diversity. Both parties faced the same problem, in reverse: the DA didn’t seem to know how to campaign in townships and informal

areas, while the ANC didn't seem to know what to do in suburbs.

The EFF, the surprise package of the election, picked up (overwhelmingly African) votes across the board – its message may have been ostensibly pro-poor, but it was also anti-white, with a fuzzy mix of nationalisation and immediate redistribution, riffing on Marx, Fanon and a whole gamut of liberation icons. It also played a brilliant media game, refusing to be cowed by other parties while leader Julius Malema titillated all with his insider stories about 'how we did it in the ANC', compounding common assumptions about cronyism and heavy-handed tactics (for example, requiring stories to get top billing on SABC news). As such, the EFF could appeal as much to the black middle class as to the black poor, equally sick (though from different perspectives) of white racism and economic domination, and similarly wanting a more responsive ruling party that was seen to be fair and not favour only its supporters. It is worth noting that the English word 'nepotism' became part of (non-English) focus group patter as early as 2011, as black middle class participants turned on the party that had allowed their class to emerge but then refused to allow them to thrive.

In those focus groups, run among participants drawn from the black middle class (defined by occupation) to talk about the meaning of being middle class, politics was more than evident. The ANC, the party of liberation, was accused of 'nepotism', used by focus group participants to describe their failure to win government tenders and thus to occupy a middle class position with the confidence that it is a secure, long-term move and not a fragile, easily reversed one, while those close to ANC leaders (local or national) were able to secure such resources and their new class position. The global financial crisis had of course heightened this sense of economic insecurity, making Barbara Ehrenreich's famous 'fear of falling' very real. Many black middle class participants complained that despite (in their view) being professionally and racially qualified to win government tenders, in particular, or benefit from affirmative procurement in general, they were outside the charmed circle of ANC insiders in their locale, and thus shut out of access to government resources – obviously a critical revenue stream for the emergent black middle class. As one young woman (an IT specialist) from KwaZulu-Natal said: "I wish my dad was in exile", because she would now be in the charmed circle and able to win tenders. The sacrifice, pain and suffering of exile have been reduced, among many former ANC voters, to a meal-ticket they lack.

Many black middle class participants complained that despite (in their view) being professionally and racially qualified to win government tenders, in particular, or benefit from affirmative procurement in general, they were outside the charmed circle of ANC insiders in their locale, and thus shut out of access to government resources – obviously a critical revenue stream for the emergent black middle class.

As a result, a middle class 'alliance' was slowly emerging as the new millennium began, picking up speed as its first decade ended. This was not a conscious alliance, and not a comfortable one either, but one driven together by a set of shared grievances, at the heart of which is the way the ANC is seen variously as corrupt, nepotistic, incompetent, and so on – common to middle class voters across the board, regardless of race. That 'alliance' is about class interests – but it remains deeply rent by race-based suspicions (hence the discomfort). The uniting factor is the ANC: in each instance, those who feel themselves to be

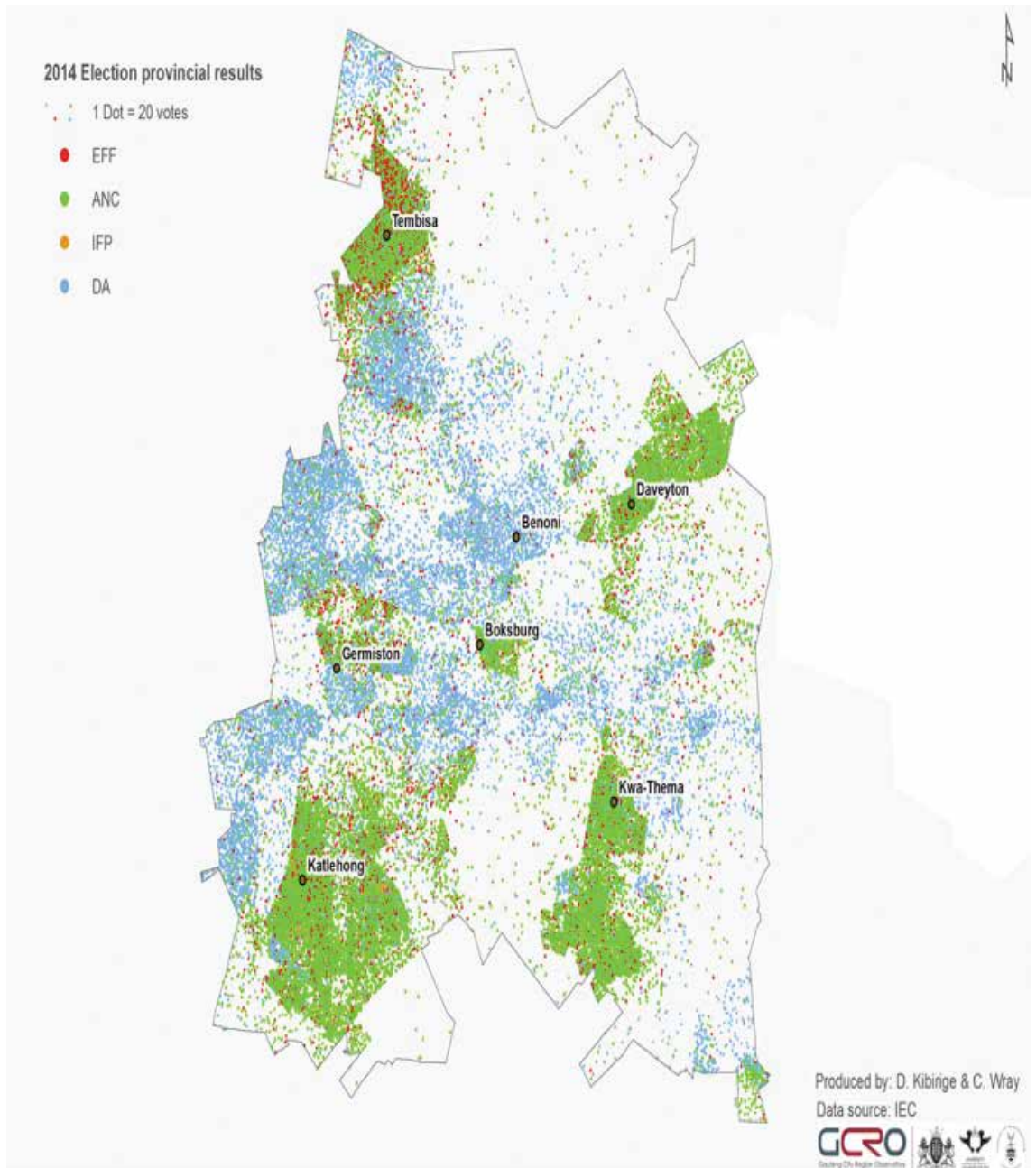
‘victims’ (whether complaining of ‘reverse racism’ or ‘nepotism’ and so on) hold the ANC responsible. A non-racial middle class anti-ANC alliance – an alliance of complainants or whingers, if you like – was steadily emerging, bound together by a common class position and a shared sense of grievance of being cut out of economic advancement by ANC nepotism, but divided by race and the unhealed wounds of a violent, racialised past. In 2012 it could still be argued that: “It is not yet an electoral threat to the ANC; and it lacks the internal coherence or stability that permit easy organisation or mobilisation behind common objectives. That day, however, is not far off.”

Election 2014 was in fact won for the ANC in the less-developed, more rural provinces, most with former homelands and massive ‘pockets’ of poverty, which continue to serve up large – but shrinking – majorities for the ANC. Which merely reinforces the point that the ANC cannot forever remain a broad church, playing on legacy and history, but will have to make policy choices that will cost it a portion of its historical voter base.

Indeed it was not far off at all. But the simple narrative – where the DA, as a party of the free market with at that point some kind of attachment to affirmative action and/or redress – would provide the natural home for disaffected black middle class voters, was speared by the EFF. The media face of the EFF, as the home of the angry (anti-white, anti-establishment, etc.) lumpen-proletariat, is not necessarily borne out by the data. It is worth noting that the last IPSOS poll conducted before election 2014 – which had the EFF slightly below the 10% of the vote it eventually garnered – did not find a single EFF voter who had an education level below incomplete secondary education. Those with no education at all (4% of Gauteng’s population), or with primary only, were still voting ANC. The disaffected middle class certainly moved to the DA in numbers – but many moved across to the EFF who were busy belittling both ‘butternut head’ (Zuma) and ‘the madam’

(Zille). Race and class continue to bedevil South Africa, and throw up interesting if not confounding outcomes.

Race and class played out differently in different provinces, many containing large rural areas, or large coloured and/or white populations alongside Africans; but in none were the stakes (or vote share) as high, nor the economics and demographics as challenging, as in Gauteng. In sum, Gauteng does not look like much of South Africa; and, worryingly for the ANC, if the rest of South Africa develops at anything approaching the rate of socio-economic change and development in Gauteng, old certainties will be gone. Election 2014 was in fact won for the ANC in the less-developed, more rural provinces, most with former homelands and massive ‘pockets’ of poverty, which continue to serve up large – but shrinking – majorities for the ANC. Which merely reinforces the point that the ANC cannot forever remain a broad church, playing on legacy and history, but will have to make policy choices that will cost it a portion of its historical voter base. This is a tough position to occupy – losing voters is an inevitable outcome, whatever the ANC decides – but the ANC can either proactively make those choices itself and stomach the electoral results, or (as in 2014) it can allow other parties to make those choices for it, and see sections of its voters hive off for what seem to be more amenable pastures to the left or the right.



(Election 2014: Ekurhuleni. Votes for 3 main parties: Data source: IEC, Map Source: GCRO)

Finally, the development and size of the black middle class – and their attitudes towards the ANC – are one among many signals that ‘substantive uncertainty’ has arrived (and had arrived, years before the election). Using a clumsy reductionist approach that looks merely at average household income, it is clear that Gauteng has a large black middle and wealthy class, using average household incomes (from Census 2011). The data suggest that if we posit middle class incomes between R9600 and R38 400 a month, this accounts for some 615 000 African households; with another 58 000 earning far more. This is certainly a small-ish portion of the African population – some 22% - but that is an awful lot of votes to lose...

Conclusion

The Gauteng electoral battle showing how future elections will be fought and won or lost, as the processes of urbanisation and social change impact on other parts of the country, and deepen their impact in Gauteng. And we should be clear: 2016 is almost upon us, and when votes are analysed at municipal level, using provincial ballots, it is notable that the ANC got 49,5% of the Tshwane vote, 52% in Johannesburg, and 55% in Ekurhuleni. No-one knows how the EFF will perform at local level; and traditionally, this is where the DA has performed best (and the ANC worst). The Gauteng ANC leadership has to contemplate the possibility of governing Gauteng, but not ruling one or more of the three major Metropolitan Municipalities that form its core. If that were to happen, and there seems no reason why it should not, then governance will take centre stage, and the notion of 'autonomous but inter-dependent' spheres of government, will become a key object of focus for all.

NOTES

- 1 Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) Territorial review of the Gauteng City-Region (OECD, Paris, 2011)
- 2 Gauteng City-Region (2014) State of Gauteng City-Region review 2013 accessed at <http://www.gcro.ac.za/stateofgcr> on 13/03/2014.
- 3 Statistics South Africa Census 2011: Gauteng results (Pretoria, StatsSA).
- 4 Executive Director, Gauteng City-Region Observatory, a partnership between the University of Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Gauteng Provincial Government and SA Local Government Association
- 5 All voting results are rounded off.
- 6 Habib, Adam (2004) 'The politics of economic policy-making: substantive uncertainty, political leverage, and human development' in *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 56, 2004 pp. 90-103.
- 7 See for example Everatt D. (2014) 'Politics, polling and social change in South Africa: The fight for Gauteng in Election 2014', paper presented to '20 Years of Democracy in South Africa' conference at St Antony's College, Oxford, April 2014; but for a far more enjoyable tour, visit www.politicsweb.co.za and read the savagery of liberal in-fighting (previously an assumed tautology) as the election approached.
- 8 See for example Johnson, R.W., and Schlemmer, L. eds. 1996. *Launching Democracy in South Africa: The First Open Election, April 1994.* (New Haven: Yale University Press.); Lodge, T. 1999. *Consolidating Democracy: South Africa's Second Popular Election.* Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University
- 9 Press; Mattes, R. 1995. *The Election Book: Judgement and Choice in South Africa's 1994 Election.* Cape Town: Idasa; Mattes, R. 2005. "Voter Information, Government Evaluations and Party Images in the First Democratic Decade" in *Electoral Politics in South Africa*, eds. Piombo, J and Nijzink L. New York: Palgrave, pp. 3–22; Mattes, R. and Piombo, J. 2001. "Opposition Parties and the Voters in South Africa's General Election of 1999" in *Democratization* 8: 101–28; Mattes, R., Taylor, H. and Africa, C. 1999. "Public Opinion & Voter Preferences: 1994–1999." In *Election '99 South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki*, ed. Reynolds, A. New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 37–63.
- 10 Everatt, D. (2012) 'The black middle class and the future of politics in South Africa', paper presented to a conference on 'the new middle classes in South Africa, Indian and Brazil' in Sao Paolo, September 2012, commissioned by the Centre for Development and Enterprise.