The GCRO’s Quality of Life survey: an overview

International Seminar: *Metropolitan policies and indicators of social cohesion*

*CIDOB, Barcelona, 27 June 2019*

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Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO)
The Gauteng City-Region (GCR)

Context

- A actually existing urban reality, with dynamics (spatial, economic, social, environmental, etc. that need to be understood)

- A ‘political project’ to govern the GCR better through improved intergovernmental co-ordination

- How do we generate reliable insight into the city-region’s conditions, to inform public sector decision-making?
The Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO)

Context

The GCRO is an effort to generate scholarly work to inform public sector decision-making and policy.

- GCRO is a partnership between:
  - University of Johannesburg (UJ),
  - University of the Witwatersrand (Wits),
  - Gauteng Provincial Government, and
  - Organised local government in Gauteng

A purpose-designed vehicle for policy-oriented research.

GCRO helps to build the knowledge base that government, business, labour, civil society and residents all need to shape appropriate strategies that will advance a competitive, integrated, sustainable and inclusive Gauteng City-Region.
Constituting a ‘boundary organisation’:  
A form of ‘embedded autonomy’

- Core funding from provincial government
- In-kind support from the universities
- Located on university campus
- Guaranteed academic freedom
- Primary client is provincial government (but increasingly the metros too)
- Most outputs to be fully publicly available
**GCRO as a research partnership**

Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO)

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**Specific roles:**

- Medium to longer-term applied research (on request or self-initiated)
- On-request policy support work
- Government – academia portal
- Academic publication
- Policy-relevant outputs
- Partnership and network building
The reach of GCRO research

Global website visits
“If universities are at the heart of knowledge economy, and the knowledge economy is urban, then urban researchers must pay heed to how they are increasingly implicated as political actors in, rather than purely critics of, territorial projects.”

(Perry, 2011)
Bridging the divide:

• How do we address intensely political issues without becoming positioned (and sunk) politically?

• How do we inform debates and draw (evidenced) conclusions without being seen to be “playing politics”?

• How do we play to both authorities – the scholarly and the governmental?
The quandry
Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO)

Bridging the divide:

• How do we address intensely political issues without becoming positioned (and sunk) politically?

• How do we inform debates and draw (evidenced) conclusions without being seen to be “playing politics”?

• How do we play to both authorities – the scholarly and the governmental?

How it has transpired

• Government research needs emergent and changing;

• GCRO has strong interpretive discretion;

• Strong political maturity in maintaining autonomy of the GCRO;

• Intuitive normative alignment between key GPG staff and GCRO;

• Negotiating trust and good faith at personal levels;

• Most outputs to be fully publicly available.
Impact: Do we influence government?
Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO)

• Many direct contributions to government frameworks;
• Influencing high-level positions on key issues;
• ‘Data-lab’ workshops with officials;
• Increasing appetite for GCRO work
• Working with government at all three tiers (local, provincial and national)
Impact: Do we influence government?
Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO)

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• Increasing appetite for GCRO work;
• Working with government at all three tiers (local provincial and national).

However:
• Uneven absorptive capacities across and within departments;
• Do we reach street-level bureaucrats?
• No linear, cause-and-effect relationship between research and policy or decision-making;
• Multiple intervening variables – endogenous and exogenous factors;
• Relatively weak institutional arrangements in government for using science advice;
• GCRO aims to ‘saturate’ the public sphere: a ‘knowledge ecology’.
Overview of the Quality of Life Survey
GCRO’s Quality of Life survey (QoL) started in 2009, and runs every two years.

Measures the wellbeing of Gauteng’s residents, taking a broad approach:
- Objective measures, such as socio-economic circumstances and access to services; and
- Subjective measures, such as psycho-social attitudes, value base, and perceptions of government and services.

QoL has developed into one of the largest social surveys in South Africa.

Provides spatially fine-grained insights into the lives of residents of the GCR:
- Data can be analysed at the provincial, municipal and ward levels.
- Particularly valuable in a context of extremely high levels of inequality, and a diverse population.
Overview of the Quality of Life Survey

Why is it valued?

Gauteng Premier David Makhura, at the QoL V launch (November 13, 2019)

“The Survey has become one of the most comprehensive and reliable instruments to measure citizens’ satisfaction and perceptions on governance, service delivery, socio-economic development and the quality of life among the people of Gauteng.

This Survey has established itself as an important barometer to measure the pulse of the citizens and their social attitudes on all issues. Accordingly, the Gauteng City Region Observatory’s Quality of Life Survey has earned pride of place as an indispensable tool for evidence-based governance and decision-making.”
Overview of the Quality of Life Survey

Geographical scope of the survey
QoL V 2017/18 questionnaire

Category: Community Services
Question: How satisfied are you with government’s initiatives to grow the economy and create jobs?
Index question: None
No. of surveys: 1 (in addition to depicted)

Category
- Community
- Community Services
- Demographics/household
- Education
- Employment and business
- Finances and household resources
- Headspace, well being and quality of life
- Health
- Household services and needs

No. of surveys (in addition to depicted)
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Index question
- None
- Both indices
- Marginalisation index
- QoL index
Overview of the Quality of Life Survey
The QoL index – 58 variables

1. Global Life Satisfaction
2. Family
3. Community
4. Health
5. Dwelling
6. Infrastructure
7. Connectivity
8. Work
9. Security
10. Socio-Political
Overview of the Quality of Life Survey
The evolution of the survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Local elections</td>
<td>31 Aug '09</td>
<td>8 Oct '09</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Nat. / Prov. elections</td>
<td>15 Aug '11</td>
<td>15 Dec '11</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Local elections</td>
<td>9 Sep '13</td>
<td>17 Mar '14</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Nat. / Prov. elections</td>
<td>10 May '14</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Local elections</td>
<td>15 Jul '15</td>
<td>15 May '16</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
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The evolution of the survey is shown graphically with data points indicating the number of responses and the start and end dates for each survey period.
More about QoL V (2017/18)
More about QoL V (2017/18)

Methodology

- Surveys conducted on tablets, with GPS functionality
- Sample points (fixed number per ward) randomly selected from residential buildings in GeoTerraImage’s 2017 Building Based Land Use (BBLU) dataset
- Fieldworkers navigated to these ‘target’ sample points
- All dwellings at the site listed, and one randomly sampled
- All adults in the dwelling listed, and one randomly sampled
More about QoL V (2017/18)

Quality control

01 In-field supervisors - checks progress and quality of surveys by fieldworkers

02 Quality control office - manually checks each survey for quality, and conducts telephonic verification of selected surveys

03 Research manager - reviews work of quality control office, checks selected individual surveys for quality, and explores potentially concerning patterns in surveys aggregated overall, and at the data collector level

04 GCRO - research staff review selected surveys, and patterns across incoming data before providing the final approval

FIELDWORKERS UPLOAD COMPLETED SURVEYS TO A CENTRAL SERVER ON A DAILY BASIS

Completed surveys are then downloaded and used for constant, ‘live’ quality control
QoL V (2017/18): Headline results
Overall quality of life is gradually increasing over time

QoL V (2017/18): Headline results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Weighted Dimension</th>
<th>Weighted Indicator</th>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>6.23</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>2013/14</td>
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<td>6.01</td>
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<td>2015/16</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>6.13</td>
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<td>2017/18</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>6.20</td>
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</table>
QoL V (2017/18): Headline results

However, inequality by race remains a serious problem
QoL V (2017/18): Headline results
Dimensions of well-being vary differently by gender

Quality of Life index dimensions by sex

global
family
community
health
dwelling
infrastructure
connectivity
work
security
sociopol
QoL V (2017/18): Headline results
Material well-being varies substantially by income group

- Difficult to save money
- No medical insurance
- Adult skipped a meal
- Tertiary qualification
- Car in good working order
- Have debt
- Own dwelling

Income Groups:
- R0 - R1 600
- R1 601 - R6 400
- R6 401 - R19 200
- R19 201 - R51 200
- More than R51 201
QoL V (2017/18): Headline results
Hunger is increasing in poorer households

Proportion of households where an adult skipped a meal in the last year

- **R0 - R3 200**
- **R3 201 - R12 800**
- **R12 801 - R25 600**
- **R25 601 - R51 200**
- **More than R51 201**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>R0 - R3 200</td>
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<tr>
<td>R3 201 - R12 800</td>
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<tr>
<td>R12 801 - R25 600</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>R25 601 - R51 200</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than R51 201</td>
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</table>
QoL V (2017/18): Headline results
Service delivery largely holding steady, despite population increases

Gauteng's access to basic services over time

- Adequate sanitation
- Water
- Electricity for lighting
- Refuse
Satisfaction with government has increased

QoL V (2017/18): Headline results

- **National government**
  - 2011: 39
  - 2013/14: 39
  - 2015/16: 40
  - 2017/18: 44

- **Provincial government**
  - 2011: 33
  - 2013/14: 39
  - 2015/16: 40
  - 2017/18: 44

- **Local government**
  - 2011: 33
  - 2013/14: 35
  - 2015/16: 37
  - 2017/18: 37
Economic growth and crime remain serious problems.

**QoL V (2017/18): Headline results**

Satisfied with government initiatives to grow the economy & create jobs:
- 2015/16: 22%
- 2017/18: 19%

Dissatisfied with government initiatives to grow the economy & create jobs:
- 2015/16: 18%
- 2017/18: 15%

Neutral:
- 2015/16: 60%
- 2017/18: 66%

**Biggest community problem (%)**

- Crime: 32%
- Unemployment: 18%
- Alcohol and drug abuse: 16%
- Lack of basic services: 10%
- No problem: 7%
- High cost of living: 4%
- Other: 4%
- Corruption: 2%
- Gangs: 1%
- No problem: 1%
- Violence against women/children: 0.5%
- Disease: 0.3%
- Drought, flood, disaster: 0.2%
- Protest, unrest and strikes: 0.1%

**Other biggest issues:**
- Violence against women/children
- Disease
- Drought, flood, disaster
- Protests, unrest and strikes
- High cost of living
- Lack of maintenance
- Corruption
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Gangs
- Poverty
- Pollution
- Other
QoL V (2017/18): Headline results

Family structures are deeply fragmented

Respondents with child dependants living elsewhere

Number of child dependants living elsewhere

Male
- 0: 40%
- 1: 18%
- 2: 11%
- 3+: 11%

Female
- 0: 66%
- 1: 14%
- 2: 11%
- 3: 5%
- 4+: 4%

Total
- 0: 54%
- 1: 17%
- 2: 14%
- 3: 8%
- 4+: 7%
QoL V (2017/18): Headline results

Some discouraging trends in social attitudes

Blacks and whites will never really trust each other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2015/16</th>
<th>2017/18</th>
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Participated in a protest in the past year

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<td>96</td>
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</table>

Blacks and whites will trust each other

Neutral

Did not participate in a protest in the past year

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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QoL V (2017/18): Headline results
But also some positive trends in social attitudes

2013/14
- 35% All foreigners should leave
- 45% Legal foreigners can stay
- 19% Neutral
- 19% All foreigners should stay

2015/16
- 23% All foreigners should leave
- 58% Legal foreigners can stay
- 19% Neutral
- 14% All foreigners should stay

2017/18
- 17% All foreigners should leave
- 67% Legal foreigners can stay
- 16% Neutral
- 6% All foreigners should stay

2013/14
- 13% Violence to gays and lesbians is acceptable
- 7% Neutral
- 81% Violence to gays and lesbians is not acceptable

2015/16
- 14% Violence to gays and lesbians is acceptable
- 14% Neutral
- 72% Violence to gays and lesbians is not acceptable

2017/18
- 6% Violence to gays and lesbians is acceptable
- 5% Neutral
- 89% Violence to gays and lesbians is not acceptable
Data use and dissemination
Data use and dissemination

Who uses our data and results?

- **Government:**
  - Local, provincial and national government draw on our data
  - Used to identify policy priorities and assess performance

- **Academia:**
  - Researchers from around the world use our data for papers
  - Increasing use for teaching purposes in a wide range of fields
  - Extensive student use of data for research projects, theses and dissertations

- **Civil society:**
  - NGOs draw on data to understand particular issues or to explore key concerns in particular areas
  - Media draws on our data for articles and interviews on issues of public interest
  - Residents of the GCR can use survey results to better understand the area they live in

- Our data is made freely available, for any non-commercial use
Data use and dissemination
How do we share survey results?

- Presentations
  - Various levels of government, student lectures, and academic and policy seminars and conferences
- Direct support to government, media and other interested parties
  - Recent examples include providing background data for a metropolitan project, data and analysis for a 5-year provincial government review, and assisting media with analysis and interviews
- Interactive viewers and visualisations
  - Both survey methodology and results
- Maintain an extensive mailing list (over 6000), social media presence, and media engagement
  - All outputs are shared through the mailing list and the website
- Key GCRO outputs include:
  - Maps of the month
  - Data briefs
  - Occasional papers & research reports
- Internal capacity is a constraint
What next?
Planning for the next ten years of QoL

- Currently completing a ten-year review process for the survey
  - Conducted a series of technical workshops with top South African experts in survey work
  - A range of stakeholder and service provider interviews
- Planning for a research report to document the history and contributions of the survey
- Preparations for QoL VI (2020) underway
Thank You