

# Urban tourism, aerotropolis and local economic development planning: Ekurhuleni and O.R. Tambo International Airport, South Africa

## Abstract

One vibrant topic within the emerging scholarship around geographies of tourism development and planning concerns that of tourism and local economic development planning. Across many countries tourism is a core base for planning of place-based local economic development programmes. In post-apartheid South Africa the country's leading cities have promoted tourism as part of economic development programming. This article examines planning for South Africa's aerotropolis around the O.R. Tambo International Airport in Ekurhuleni, which is adjacent to Johannesburg. Under circumstances of economic distress and the need for new sources of local job creation Ekurhuleni is undertaking planning for tourism development through leveraging and alignment to aerotropolis planning. The nexus of aerotropolis and urban tourism planning is analysed. Arguably, the strengthening of tourism in Ekurhuleni offers the potential for contributing towards inclusive development goals.

## Keywords

aerotropolis • urban tourism planning • local economic development • Ekurhuleni • South Africa

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## Introduction

As pointed out by Saarinen et al. (2017), a critical theme within the emerging scholarship around the geographies of tourism development and planning is that of tourism and local economic development (LED) planning. Over the past 40 years, as a by-product in part of the advance of globalization, LED planning has expanded in significance on a worldwide basis to become a vital planning approach for local economies (Pike et al. 2016; Rodriguez-Pose & Wilkie 2015). In the developing world, the activity of local economic development constitutes an explicitly social and territorial approach to development which encompasses not only economic aspects but also issues of employment creation and poverty reduction (Rodriguez-Pose & Palavicini-Corona 2013; Rogerson 2015a; Rogerson and Rogerson 2010).

The growth of LED is associated with the global movement institutionally towards the decentralization of powers and responsibilities from national governments to sub-national tiers of government (Pike et al. 2006, 2014; Rodriguez-Pose & Wilkie 2017). Subnational tiers of government have been gaining power and capabilities “to design and implement contextually tailored economic development strategies that reflect local socio-economic and institutional characteristics, conditions and realities” (Rodriguez-Pose & Wilkie 2017, p.151). Furthermore, it is argued that the “new capacity of subnational authorities to devise and implement territorially oriented approaches to development represents an important opportunity for regions and localities to mobilize their full economic potential” (Rodriguez-Pose & Wilkie 2017, p. 153). Planning for LED is grounded on identifying, mobilizing and exploiting local potential, which is contingent upon the economic activities in which localities excel,

their stock of human and physical capital, local resources and the institutional context (Pike et al. 2006; Rogerson 2015a). From a theoretical perspective, Rodriguez-Pose and Wilkie (2015, p. 21) point out that “the most prominent reason for the endorsement of LED strategies specifically in the context of equitable urban growth in developing environments is that they mobilize and capitalize upon local potential”. Essentially, LED strategies are place-based interventions taking due cognizance of several different factors that can influence the potential returns of intervention (Barca et al. 2012; Rodriguez-Pose & Palavicini-Corona 2013). The policies enacted by central or national governments are a critical component of the institutional context for establishing local economic development programmes (Rogerson 2014a). Overall, the objective of place-based strategies for economic development is to leverage and maximize local potential and thereby to foster economic activity that reflects a particular locality's comparative advantage and is impacted by the specific macro-economic environment (Pike et al. 2006).

In many countries tourism is a core vehicle for place-based local economic development programmes. In particular, the tourism sector in Europe constitutes an increasingly popular basis for boosting economic growth, welfare improvements and employment expansion in peripheral regions which are experiencing rural economic restructuring and decline (Brouder 2013; Privitera 2018; Saarinen 2014). With global economic restructuring and de-industrialization, tourism is a critical policy focus for city redevelopment strategies. Law (1992, 1993, 1996) shows the rise of urban tourism in the USA and Europe accompanied severe economic recession and distress which triggered a search by

city policymakers for new activities to reinvent and regenerate ailing urban economies. From historical roots in the USA and Western Europe, the policy promotion of urban tourism spread to Australasia, several parts of Asia, post-Communist Eastern Europe, Latin America and also to sub-Saharan Africa (Dumbrovská & Fialová 2014; Henderson 2014; Li & Bihu 2014; Pasquinelli 2015; Rogerson 2013; Rogerson & Rogerson 2014, 2016, 2017; Rogerson & Visser 2011).

South Africa provides a particularly interesting case for examining issues of urban tourism and LED planning. For much of the existence of South Africa's democracy, LED planning has been undertaken, with varying degrees of commitment, and anchored on the defined principle of 'developmental local government' which was introduced in 1998 (Nel & Rogerson 2005; Rogerson 2010). In terms of the national Constitution, all of South Africa's local authorities are mandated to implement Local Economic Development (LED) strategies which, in most cases, take on a directly pro-poor focus, with the exception of the larger cities where market-based approaches are more evident (Rogerson 2010). Over the past nearly 20 years, with varying measures of success, most South African local governments have attempted to undertake LED with a significant focus on the promotion of tourism (Nel and Rogerson 2016). In particular, tourism promotion has been embraced for enhancing economic development prospects in South African cities and especially in the country's largest metropolitan centres (Rogerson 2013, 2014b; Rogerson & Rogerson 2017). For South African city policy makers, the decision to promote urban tourism is influenced by its labour-absorptive character and its broader impacts for re-imagining and place-making. As Ruhanen (2013) argues is the case in other parts of the world, local governments can be key agents in the development of tourism.

It is against this backdrop that the objective is to investigate one new element in urban tourism and LED planning in South Africa. The analysis in this article focuses on two issues. The first is the concept and planning of an 'aerotropolis' around O.R. Tambo Airport, South Africa's major international gateway, and its embedding as part of LED. The second is the leveraging of the planning around aerotropolis to enhance the prospects of Ekurhuleni for tourism with the aim of diversifying the economic base of Ekurhuleni. Following a brief description of the case study area and research methodology, the discussion turns to explore LED and aerotropolis planning, and the linking of the aerotropolis with local tourism promotion initiatives. The paper concludes with recommendations and by highlighting distinctive aspects of aerotropolis planning in South Africa against the background of the international experience.

### Ekurhuleni and O.R. Tambo Airport

O.R. Tambo is South Africa's leading gateway airport and services the country's major economic heartland, the Gauteng City Region, which centres upon Johannesburg. The actual location of the airport is, however, just outside the boundaries of the metropolitan area of Johannesburg and falls within the adjacent metropolitan municipality of Ekurhuleni (Fig.1), which is South Africa's newest metropolitan authority and the country's most under-researched metropolitan area (Rogerson 2005). According to the most recently available data, Ekurhuleni has a population of 3.8 million of which 600 000 reside in growing informal settlements, while the metropolitan area remains a focus for migrants arriving from poorer (mainly rural) parts of South Africa (Manda 2018).

Ekurhuleni became a unified entity only after South Africa's municipal elections of December 2000 and was formed from amalgamating several long-established towns, namely the six East Rand centres of Alberton, Benoni, Boksburg, Edenvale, Germiston and Kempton Park, which merged with the three Far

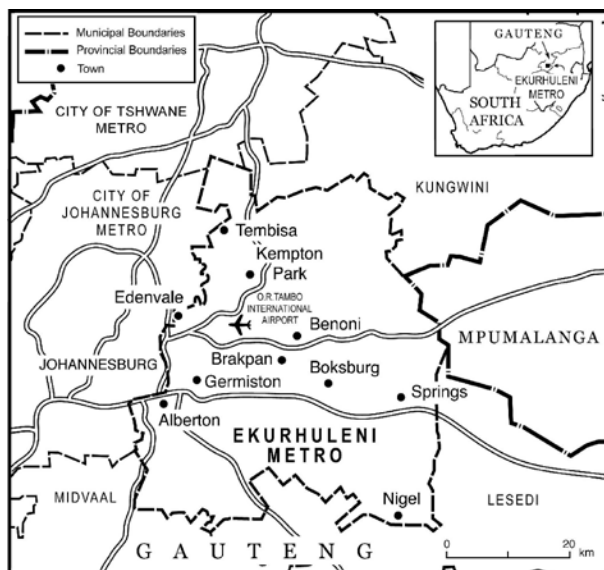


Figure 1. Location of O.R. Tambo International Airport and the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. Note: (1) Metro is an abbreviation for Metropolitan Municipality

Source: Author own elaboration.

East Rand centres of Brakpan, Nigel and Springs (Fig. 1). Gold mining was the historical economic base of the urban settlements of East Rand and Far East Rand (Centre for Development and Enterprise 1997). The decline of gold mining was accompanied, however, by a structural change in the economy and the rapid growth of industrial activities, such that the region became styled as South Africa's industrial workshop (Misago 2016; Rogerson & Rogerson 1997). The city is also the transportation and logistics hub for the region of Southern Africa because of its wide and modern network of roads, rail lines, telecommunications and the national airport. During the 1990s and early 2000s there were further job losses with factory closures and a shakeout of the manufacturing economy occurred (Centre for Development and Enterprise 1997; Rogerson 2005). Although the manufacturing sector remains at the core of Ekurhuleni's economy alongside the sector of finance and business services, with an estimated 30 percent rate of unemployment, there was an urgent need for new sources of economic diversification and job growth through the aerotropolis (Misago 2016). The metropolitan authority is committed to a pro-poor development focus, albeit with strained financial resources (Manda 2018).

### Methodology

In terms of methodology, the analysis draws upon a range of source material including local, regional and national planning documentation, stakeholder interviews, and an investigation of local tourism data. The planning documentation includes the framework documents for the aerotropolis in Ekurhuleni as well as for local tourism development planning. With respect to the interviews, these were undertaken during 2017 with key stakeholders engaged with tourism planning at the Ekurhuleni metropolitan municipality.

The tourism data for Ekurhuleni was extracted from the IHS Global Insight database on tourism, a subset of the IHS Global Insight Regional eXplorer and a consolidated platform of integrated databases which, in the absence of official establishment and enterprise surveys, currently provides the most useful data in South Africa at the sub-national scale, including down to municipal level (IHS Global Insight 2015). The IHS

Global Insight collates data on a regular basis from a wide range of sources (official and non-government) with the primary data reworked to ensure consistency across variables and by applying national and sub-national verification tests in order to ensure that the model is consistent for measuring business activity (IHS Global Insight 2015). For tourism research, the IHS Global Insight database offers details of the tourism performance of all local municipal authorities in the country in respect of, *inter alia*, the number of tourism trips differentiated by primary purpose of trip; bed nights by origin of tourist (domestic or international); calculation of tourism spend; and the contribution of tourism to the local gross domestic product. From this database, information can be extracted for trends and the current status of tourism trips, differentiated for all local, district and metropolitan authorities in the country (Rogerson & Rogerson 2016). Information is available on origin and purpose of trips as well as tourism spend (Rogerson 2014).

### Aerotropolis and South Africa

Aerotropolis is a concept that is generating an expanding multi-disciplinary and international scholarship. In several influential works, Kasarda (2006, 2008, 2013) writes of the birth of a new economic geography with aviation networks and major airports functioning as key drivers for patterns of business location and urban development. That said, Shen and Cao (2016, p. 216) highlight that the aerotropolis phenomenon so far “has not attracted enough interest from urban planners and developers”.

Charles et al. (2007) argue that this century will be dominated by air transport – both the domestic and international carriage of passengers and cargo. Further, they maintain that the airport as a driver of local growth “is expected to become more than merely a regional gateway” and instead will function as a city in itself in terms of residential spaces for workers and their families, manufacturing plants reliant on airborne inputs as well as service industries located proximate to the airport, and with major road and rail infrastructure connected to it (Charles et al. 2007, p. 1009). In several countries, the land around airports is increasingly emerging and planned as a magnet for a range of economic activities that thrive on long-distance connectivity, including time-critical manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, tourism, entertainment and corporate offices (Antipova and Ozdenerol 2013; Appold & Flores-Fillol et al. 2016; Hadinugroho et al. 2017; Kasarda 2013; Yeo et al. 2013; Yun 2015).

For Banai (2017, p. 357) the aerotropolis is nothing less than “the twenty-first century’s new urban development paradigm” at the heart of which is “a metropolitan region with cities that capitalize on proximity to a globally networked economy’s airport”. That said, Appold (2013, p. 3) views the definition of aerotropolis as loose and somewhat vague as it often refers simply to a busy hub airport and at other times to an aviation-intensive global economy. Kasarda (2008, p. 55) – the chief international proponent of the aerotropolis – stresses that such urban forms “are still in their earliest stages of evolution”. The spatial form of the aerotropolis is in certain respects similar to the traditional metropolis, made up of a central city and allied commuter-linked suburbs. The aerotropolis consists of an airport city and an extensive outlying area of corridor developments up to 20 kilometres of aviation-oriented enterprises and associated residential developments (Kasarda 2006). Overall, for Kasarda (2008, 2013) the aerotropolis, as an airport-centric urban economic region, essentially “coalesces” the development processes which are moulding new 21<sup>st</sup> century urban-economic geographical landscapes. Indeed, the aerotropolis is where the ‘global meets the local’ and represents the physical manifestation of globalization made concrete in the form of “aviation-oriented, airport-centric urban development” in which many local businesses are more dependent on distant

suppliers and customers than on those in their own region (Kasarda 2013, p. 55). The core competitiveness of an aerotropolis is anchored upon aviation connectivity and its ability to move people and products rapidly around the world (Appold 2013; Hubbard 2017).

Arguably, the planning, development and management challenges of an aerotropolis require design and implementation “in a manner that brings about the greatest returns to the airport, its users, business and the larger community it serves” (Kasarda 2008, p. 55). Currently, on the international stage it is argued that the aerotropolis concept is emerging as the new model for airport development and management in much of the USA, Europe and East Asia (Appold & Kasarda 2013; Yeo et al. 2013; Yun 2015). Among the leading international examples of aerotropolises which are evolving either by design or spontaneously are those in or surrounding Amsterdam-Schiphol, Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Dubai, Dusseldorf, Hong Kong, Incheon, Memphis, Paris Charles de Gaulle and Washington Dulles airports. In many respects, the international diffusion of the aerotropolis concept and its application for planning airports and urban development can be viewed in terms of what Baptista (2013) calls a ‘travelling’ concept for policy-makers. Given its take-up in other parts of the world it was, perhaps, inevitable therefore that the concept of the aerotropolis would spread to the African continent where it is beginning to exert a growing influence on the planning of airports and proximate urban development.

Within sub-Saharan Africa, it is evident that South Africa is presently the major country with an advanced and dedicated focus for aerotropolis planning and associated development. Although several critically received proposals have been reported for aerotropolis planning at airports both in Cape Town and Durban (Crosby & Maharaj 2015; Desai 2015; Hancock 2011; Mokhele 2016), currently the most advanced planning for an aerotropolis is taking place around South Africa’s major international airport, the O.R. Tambo International Airport.

The initial discussions and project planning around an aerotropolis can be traced back to 2011 when it was announced by the Executive Mayor of Ekurhuleni that a six-month process of strategic planning had been initiated to establish a ‘roadmap’ which would give rise to Africa’s first ‘airport city’ (Hancock 2011). The conceptual planning of the aerotropolis was undertaken by Kasarda and the University of North Carolina Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise. Against the backdrop of a weakened state of the traditional economic base activities of mining and manufacturing, key elements of the initial strategic roadmap were to encourage “industries that produce light-industrial and time-critical products”; in addition, “boosting tourism is also an important component of the strategy” (Hancock 2011, p. 3). It was projected that Ekurhuleni might emerge as “the cultural capital of Gauteng” and, with the establishment of a convention centre, museums and theatres, “Ekurhuleni would become a destination of choice” (Hancock 2011, p. 3).

During 2011, the City of Ekurhuleni embedded the aerotropolis concept in its Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework which established the groundwork to further integrate the concept into municipal strategic planning (Engar 2015). Another important step forward in the planning of the aerotropolis was its endorsement and incorporation within South Africa’s National Infrastructure Plan of 2012 which aimed to transform the national economy, accelerate new employment opportunities and strengthen service delivery. The infrastructure plan functions under the Cabinet through the coordination of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission which identified 18 strategic infrastructure projects (SIP), one of which is a so-called ‘geographic SIP’, the Ekurhuleni aerotropolis (Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission 2012). Engar (2015)



considers that the inclusion of the aerotropolis within the national infrastructure plan accorded substantive national recognition to the aerotropolis. With support at the national level, the formal adoption of a working partnership between the Airports Company of South Africa (with responsibility for airport management) and the City of Ekurhuleni took place in 2013.

The early conceptual thinking behind the Master Plan for the Ekurhuleni metropolis was released in 2013 at the Airport Cities World Conference and Exhibition which was hosted in Ekurhuleni. It was stressed that the aerotropolis aligned with South Africa's National Development Plan for 2030 which included the massive infrastructural projects set forth in the national infrastructure plan (Van der Merwe 2013). Underpinning the framework was the strategic decision taken by the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality "that the Aerotropolis concept be pursued, developed further and implemented to leverage the economic benefits of having the busiest airport on the African continent, the O.R. Tambo International Airport, located within its boundaries" (Van der Merwe 2013, p. 3). Arguably, in terms of LED planning for Ekurhuleni, by 2013 the aerotropolis concept was moving to centre stage. By 2015, the focus was on establishing the details of the 'first five years' implementation plan of what was projected as a 30-year implementation plan (Engar 2015). Essentially, this involved mobilizing the strategic stakeholders and partners across all levels of government as well as the private sector to undertake a series of projects and planning designed "to unlock a new growth path not just for the city, but for the Gauteng City Region" (Engar 2015, p. 3). In November 2015, the details of the approved Master Plan were released at an investor forum at which 21 catalytic projects were put forward for delivery within the next 25 years to drive city and regional economic growth and expansion (Haynes 2015).

The Master plan identified a suite of projects in terms of a set of key economic clusters to be targeted. As stated by Liedtke (2017, p. 2) these included "advanced manufacturing, cargo logistics and e-commerce hubs, retail, aviation, cold storage, training colleges, research and development hubs, information and communication technology, a medical city and tourism". The final approval of the R8.1 billion (January 2018 1US\$ = South African Rand 12.50 approx.) 30-year Master Plan by the City of Ekurhuleni was announced in November 2017. At the launch, the Mayor proclaimed that the aerotropolis would "be a game changing intervention that would facilitate spatial, economic and social transformation, in order to reposition the regional economy as an ideal destination for trade, investment and tourism" (Cox 2017). At the heart of the master plan "is the redesign of the city's layout, infrastructure and economy to be centred on the major airport" (Cox 2017). Importantly, the implementation of aerotropolis planning intends to seek to counter-balance the existing uneven distribution of economic activities between Ekurhuleni's former white commercial and residential areas and the city's disadvantaged black townships. As Misago (2016, p. 14) states, in addressing the legacies of apartheid, planning the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis "is about taking advantage of all the economic opportunities an airport offers and use them for a city-wide equitable socio-economic development through new infrastructure, alternative retail, employment and commercial land use that stretch far beyond the airport precinct".

**Urban tourism in Ekurhuleni**

By the 2010s, when aerotropolis planning was launched, however, the manufacturing economy was again under strain and there was a vital need to diversify the local economy as part of wider local economic development programming in Ekurhuleni. The local economy is unable to absorb the volume of potential work seekers and unemployment in the city which is estimated

Table 1. Ekurhuleni's Tourism Economy 2015: Key Indicators

Indicator	Absolute Value	National Share (percent)	Rank in terms of South African municipalities
Total Trips	1 739 587	4.3	5
Leisure Trips	207 660	2.8	6
Business Trips	221 830	4.8	5
VFR Trips	1 156 229	4.6	4
International Trips	650 129	7.7	3
Domestic Trips	1 089 458	4.9	6
Total Bed Nights	8 381 711	3.1	5
Total Spend (R'000s)	7 848 442	3.3	5

Source: Author from the IHS Global Insight data

(2015) at 28.8 percent (Misago 2016). Maximizing opportunities in the tourism sector was identified as one component of urban economic restructuring for new job creation.

Ekurhuleni is one of South Africa's most significant, if little recognized, tourism destinations (Rogerson 2014). The works by Rogerson and Rogerson (2014, 2017) reveal that Ekurhuleni is a non-traditional tourism destination with important strengths in particular for VFR (visiting friends and relatives) travel and, to a lesser extent, for business tourism. Table 1 shows a set of important indicators of the tourism economy of Ekurhuleni for 2015, which highlights its significance as an urban tourism destination. In terms of absolute numbers of trips and total tourism spend, it is evident that Ekurhuleni is the fifth most important destination in South Africa. Unpacking the absolute trip data by origin, the analysis of the tourism economy reveals that 37 percent of trips are international and the majority – 63 percent – are domestic. Nevertheless, the relative importance of Ekurhuleni in terms of international travel is evidenced by the fact that it is South Africa's third most important focus for international travel. Ekurhuleni emerges most strongly as a destination for international travel in part because of the location of the O.R. Tambo Airport in the metropolitan area. Another explanation for the high presence of international travellers is the popularity of Ekurhuleni as a destination for 'informal sector city tourism' cross-border African shoppers/ traders (Rogerson 2018). Although precise data is unavailable, it is evident from other research that regional African visitors constitute the major component in international travel to Ekurhuleni (Rogerson & Mthombeni 2015). Overall, in relative terms, Ekurhuleni is not a significant destination for domestic tourism in South Africa; the city ranks sixth as a national domestic tourism destination (Rogerson 2015b; Rogerson & Rogerson 2017).

The analysis of trip data by purpose provides further insight into the contemporary nature of Ekurhuleni's tourism economy (Table 1). In respect of purpose of travel, it is apparent that the largest number of trips are for visiting friends and relatives (VFR), which represents more than two-thirds of total trips to Ekurhuleni. Research in the city's predominantly black township areas confirms the overwhelming dominance of VFR travel which is mainly domestic in origin (Rogerson & Mthombeni 2015). In 2015, Ekurhuleni was South Africa's fourth most important destination for VFR travel, a finding which reflects the population size of

the metropolitan area (Rogerson & Rogerson 2017). The data for leisure and business travel disclose that 12.8 percent of visits are for business and 11.9 percent for leisure; in relative terms, Ekurhuleni emerges as a poor performer in terms of leisure travel. For business tourism, Ekurhuleni's performance is boosted both by hosting conferences and events at a number of airport hotels (Rogerson 2014) and the area's importance for informal business travellers who are shoppers/ traders from surrounding countries, in particular Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Rogerson 2018).

It is against this backdrop of the character of the urban tourism economy of Ekurhuleni that the planning interventions around the aerotropolis must be understood. The development and promotion of tourism in Ekurhuleni has been one constant theme in the unfolding planning for the aerotropolis. The imperative for South Africa's tourism industry and planning for tourism development to be aligned with the national infrastructure plan was emphasized by the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission during 2013 (Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission 2013). For Ekurhuleni, the challenge is to maximize the impact of the aerotropolis in terms of the further deepening of the city's tourism economy. Historically, little attention has been paid to tourism promotion with the policy focus in terms of local development squarely upon the city's manufacturing potential (Rogerson 2005). In 2012, however, the municipality issued a Tourism Strategic Framework (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality 2012). The report acknowledged that, whilst some effort had been made to expand initiatives for tourism, these initiatives had been disappointing in impact as they appear to have been "too broad and lacking in integration with national and provincial initiatives" (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality 2012, p. 3). In addition, there was limited partnering of the city with provincial and national tourism development initiatives. Overall, it was concluded that "it is presumptuous to assume that effective and sustainable tourism development will be possible in the short to medium-term" and a recommendation was made that "decision-makers adopt a more practical and focused approach to tourism development" (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality 2012, p. 4).

In 2016, the Ekurhuleni Tourism Strategy (prepared by the city's tourism division) marked the first step taken by the municipality in planning to boost tourism in the city (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality 2016). It was recognized that this strategic document marks a watershed for the city's tourism sector as previously there was no guiding document for the development and marketing of tourism. Prior to drafting the strategy, the municipality engaged in the task of conducting a review process to ensure that the strategy is properly aligned to other national and provincial tourism policy interventions. The overall strategic vision of the strategy is to leverage tourism development linked to aerotropolis planning; indeed, it is stated the strategy seeks to "position the City of Ekurhuleni as a leading Aerotropolis and tourism destination in Africa" (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality 2016, p. 11). A scoping exercise reveals that the city has a number of tourism assets in terms of casino and entertainment facilities, good conference facilities, struggle heritage linkages with Chris Hani and Oliver Tambo, shopping centres that attract cross-border travellers, some archaeological sites and historical buildings, most notably one of the world's largest clusters of Art Deco buildings. The strategy concedes that there are several challenges that need to be dealt with in attaining its vision and maximizing the city's tourism assets. It is recognized variously that, for leisure travellers, Ekurhuleni has "underdeveloped tourism attractions, facilities and infrastructure, most of which are in a dilapidated condition and therefore do not appeal to international and domestic visitors"; in addition, as a destination, Ekurhuleni "is not well known and its residents do not identify

with the city despite its rich liberation heritage, natural resources and being home to the OR Tambo International Airport" (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality 2016, p. 10). Other acknowledged shortcomings are that the city lacks a sense of place, has an absence of greenways, boulevards and night life, and a legacy of industrial pollution, xenophobia and of perceptions of crime.

Overall, for leisure travellers, Ekurhuleni carries a perception of an industrial, tired and dirty city. It needs to transcend perceptions of the minimal leisure tourism base and lack of iconic attractions (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality 2016). In beginning to address these challenges and to maximize the potential opportunities for tourism development in Ekurhuleni, the city has begun a number of interventions which followed the formal approval of a 5-year Ekurhuleni Tourism Strategy (Shologu 2016). Interviews with key stakeholders in the tourism department reveal a wide array of potential interventions under discussion (Mthombeni 2018). Certain ongoing initiatives relate to addressing the dilapidated character of some existing tourist sites. Actual new tourism product development so far has concentrated on the city's potential for township or 'slum tourism', which is a vibrant focus for long haul international tourists to South Africa (Frenzel 2016). Culture and struggle heritage are the particular focus, for example, in the upgrading of Khumalo Street, which might open up tourism entrepreneurship opportunities for local township residents (Shologu 2016). Arguably, the long-term success of these upgrading initiatives in the townships will be critical for attaining the city's aspirations for a more 'inclusive tourism' which spreads the benefits of urban tourism within Ekurhuleni into poorer, disadvantaged communities.

### Conclusion

Tourism can be a critical driver for enhancing the prospects for place-based local economic development, both in peripheral rural areas and in cities. With economic restructuring and the manufacturing decline in many cities in North America and Western Europe, tourism became the anchor for reinventing urban economies as leisure destinations. In South Africa, similar trends have emerged particularly since the democratic change in 1994, which opened up the national economy to competitive global forces as well as expanding the prospects for tourism growth. Currently, urban tourism promotion is a vital constituent of LED strategies in South Africa and especially in the largest cities, which have sought out new sources for job creation in the wake of high levels of unemployment (Rogerson 2013). One aspect of building successful urban tourism destinations is the leveraging of all local potential for competitive tourism. In the case of Ekurhuleni, this has involved strategies and interventions to maximize the potential associated with the planning of the aerotropolis. The aerotropolis has become the core of long-term development planning in Ekurhuleni which confronts major challenges for diversifying the local economy away from the traditional economic base of mining and industry.

One distinguishing feature of aerotropolis planning in South Africa as compared to similar planning in the global North is the significant emphasis accorded to 'inclusive development' and spreading the benefits of aerotropolis-linked economic development. The metropolitan authority of Ekurhuleni is committed to a pro-poor development strategy which will provide benefits to the city's poorer communities. Arguably, the strengthening of tourism in Ekurhuleni is recommended for its potential for contributing towards such inclusive goals. The aerotropolis project offers opportunities for expanding the role of Ekurhuleni as a focus for conference tourism, shopping tourism and slum tourism, which holds the potential for achieving a greater spread of tourism benefits into poorer areas of the city.

Over the next 30 years, the unfolding planning of South Africa's aerotropolis and its implications for tourism development in Ekurhuleni merit close investigation by LED researchers, urban scholars and economic geographers.

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