



## The R30 Route as Potential Development Corridor

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### Introduction

The Provincial Administration of the Free State has instructed the Department of Urban and Regional Planning to conduct a regional study of the Free State Goldfields along the R30 provincial road between Bloemfontein and Welkom.

### Hypothesis

In order to investigate the instruction by the province to conduct a study on a potential development corridor in the area, it was decided to first establish whether such a development is possible. Since 2003 students have been working on this assignment and written numerous theses. The study uses this information, while focusing more on the industrial areas of the region.

The section of the R30 provincial road in the Free State (Figure 1) that links Bloemfontein and Welkom was designated as the area for this study. The study investigates the link between Bloemfontein, the centrally situated provincial capital of the Free State, and Welkom, a mining town situated in the north-western region of the province. The study area extends over approximately 150 km and includes two rural villages Brandfort and Theunissen on this route (Figures 2 and 3). This area is situated in two district municipalities (Lejweleputswa and Motheo), divided into three local authorities, namely Mangaung, Masilonyana and Matjhabeng (Figures 4, 5 and 6).

The following is the hypothesis for this assignment: The R30 area between Bloemfontein and Welkom is a development corridor.



Fig 1 Study area with regard to South Africa



The following scientific question is also investigated: Is there sufficient economic movement of goods and services between Bloemfontein and Welkom on the R30 route for it to be considered a development corridor?

Once this question has been resolved, recommendations will be made to the instance responsible for such development. The implications of the recommendations for the spatial level will also be explained.

### Methodology

The research comprises a literature study that could contribute to



Fig 2 Study Area with regard to the Free State Province.



the development of such corridor and its feasibility. Students conducted fieldwork in the industrial areas of Bloemfontein, Bothshabelo, Brandfort, Theunissen and Welkom. Only those industries that can stimulate export were selected. This was done on the assumption that they could help develop the basic economy of the region, as it precedes an interaction of economies and ultimately leads to economic growth. The chosen businesses were contacted by telephone to complete a questionnaire.

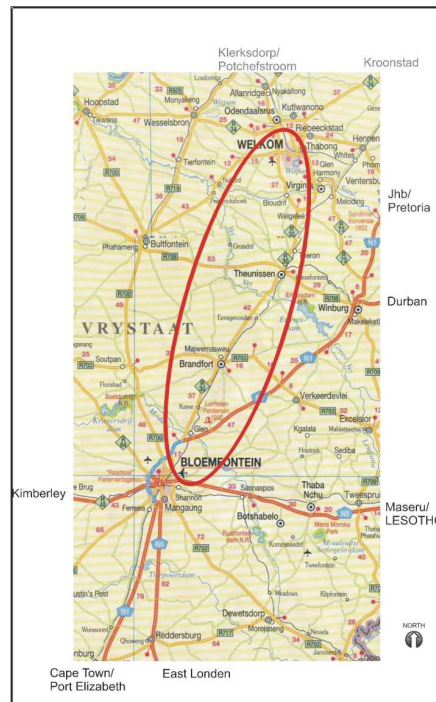


Fig 3 Study area with regard to the rural towns

However, the study had a few limitations: the study area is not a formal area and no data was available for the region as a whole that could be used for the study. The fact that the study region extends over three municipalities within two districts has made the gathering of data difficult

## Terminology

### Development corridor:

A development corridor can be viewed as a concept to bring an area to a certain level of development. The region must have the potential for development with the condition that the entire region must take part in the process (Infrastructure Development Corridor, 2004).

A development corridor implies a specific spatial area. The demarcation of such an area depends on the type of development being planned. Certain conditions must be met. A development corridor is based first on the development of the region from within, followed by contact and further extension with adjoining regions.

A development corridor is thus a multidimensional strategy that strengthens and supports the chosen area's internal networks of development (Infrastructure Development Corridor, 2004, Millenium Link, 2004).

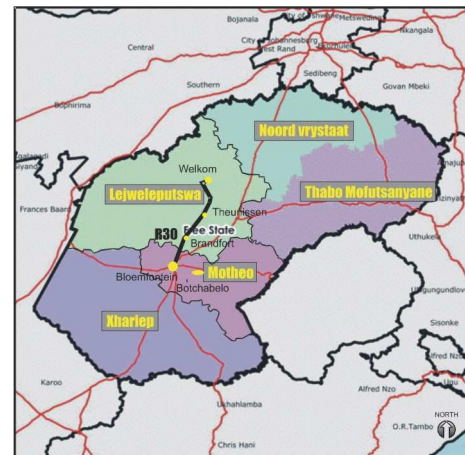


Fig 4 Study area with regard to the District and local municipalities

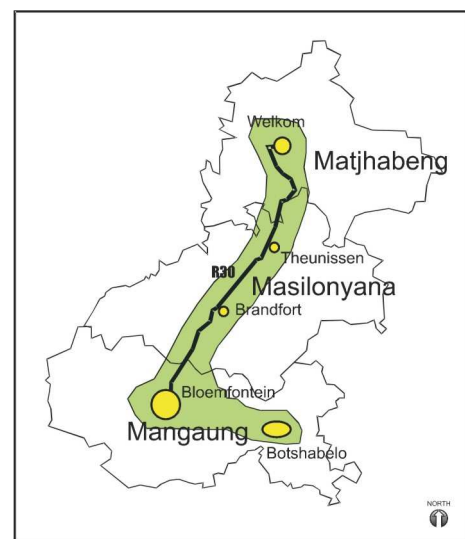


Fig 5 Study area



Fig 6 Study area along the R30 route



According to Friedmann (1966), a development corridor comprises a small zone along important connecting roads between various nodes. Economic activities within such regions are less concentrated, but have the ability to expand. The main nodes of such a corridor must be developed to such an extent that they can stimulate development, but they should not be too distant from each other (Figure 7).

#### Development axis:

According to Geyer (1988, p. 120), there are four prerequisites for a development axis:

- two development centres must be linked by means of a communication axis;
- there must be mutual dependency between the centres;
- the interaction must have the potential for further development, and
- the axis must grow both economically and physically.

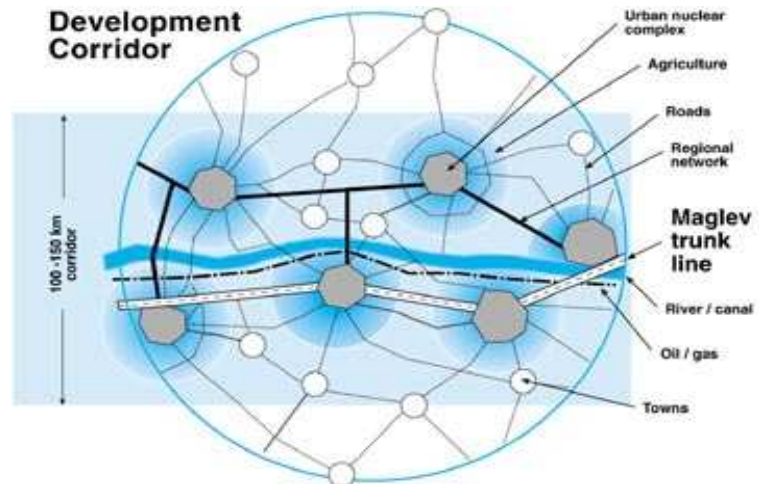


Fig 7 Development Corridor representation

(Source: Infrastructure Development Corridor, 2004)

A development axis thus arises as the interaction between two centres along a communication axis that offers the potential for further economic development.

#### Transport corridor:

According to Smith (Zucula, 2004), a transport corridor is defined as a multinodal corridor that links two points of economic activities. It must be as reliable and as cost-effective as possible.

For the purposes of this study the transport corridor is an area in which the transport of goods is the economic driving force of an area (Steyn & Barnard, 1991, p. 134). This interaction between two points leads to further economic development and growth.

This report comprises three sections: The first section examines the theory and background of the study; the second section gives an analysis of the region, and the last section describes the implications of the study.

#### Theory and background

Planning implies working with the unknown (the future) whose variables cannot be controlled. According to Glasson (1974, p. 19), planning is a way of thinking about problems and solving them for the future. According to Drakakis-Smith (2000, p. 181), planning can be regarded as a political process in which different interests compete for limited resources.

According to Glasson (1974, p. 35), there are two ways in which the region can be distinguished: a subjective approach and an objective approach. The subjective approach regards the region as a means to an end, namely to be able to study the world better. A region is thus “chosen” with specific requirements for a specific aim. These requirements depend on the study, and this is the reason for the “subjectivity” of the region’s demarcation. The objective approach is more analytical in that the requirements (climate, plants, etc.) are “unchangeable”. The first approach is used mostly in regional planning, since planning cannot be restricted to physical features.

Botha (1991, p. 3) describes regional planning as follows: Regional planning in the widest sense of the word is about maximising profit in the development of a region’s resources, along with minimal costs of the increase and promotion of both material and spiritual wellbeing of all the inhabitants of a region”.

According to Glasson (1978, p. 20), regional development is ultimately reducible to the location and activities of the region’s economies. According to him, regional planning “concerns the incidence of economic growth. It is ultimately the result of the location of economic activities in response to differential regional attractions”.

There are various approaches to regional planning:



### **Growth pole theory:**

In order to understand what made this theory popular as an instrument for industrial development and physical planning, it is necessary to understand what is meant with the term growth pole. According to Botha (1991, p. 24), a growth pole is an urban centre of economic activities, which can reach self-sufficient growth up to the point where growth gradually spreads outwards to the less developed regions of the country.

### **Christaller's central place model:**

Walter Christaller's central place model derives from the assumption that a region develops according to specific settlement patterns (Glasson 1978, p. 14). This is the result of man's need to organise his activities within a geographical space. However, this model is based on a few simplified assumptions, namely that there is a homogeneous level of which the quality of agricultural land and natural resources is constantly similar, with a population that is proportionately distributed, and whose consumer preferences of consumer and production techniques for each product are uniform (Botha 1991, p. 28).

### **Weber's minimum cost model:**

Weber's approach basically means that three factors, namely transport costs, labour costs as well as agglomeration or deglomeration forces (the environment's own factors determine distribution) influence the location of industries. According to this approach, the location a businessman chooses for his business depends on the place where the costs are lowest (Glasson 1974, p. 105-106).

### **Friedmann's economic development regions:**

According to Friedmann (1966, p. 21), there are no historical proofs of regional economic balance conditions. For the purposes of research one must start from a state of imbalance. To him, the ultimate aim of regional economic planning lies in the national aims (Steyn & Barnard 1991, p. 319). He attempts to do so by means of the development of a complex system in which regional nodes are linked to each other by means of thoroughly planned spatial organisation. He also considers optimising resources. He thus wants to balance the regions to some extent, which will ultimately lead to national balance in regional planning.

In order to implement development within a region, the choice is between an approach focusing on economic growth and an approach addressing economic growth in consultation with other factors (such as the environment). Friedmann (1966, p. 48) distinguishes between the following regional strategic starting points: 1) growth vs prosperity, 2) unbalanced growth vs balanced growth, and 3) concentration vs distribution.

In the present study growth vs prosperity is important. Botha (1991, p. 9) distinguishes between growth and prosperity as follows: growth assumes a maximum growth rate of the national product, where prosperity advocates the distribution of income in favour of the population of the poorer regions of the country.

The business sector supports the growth approach as it ensures profits, whereas the community at large and not merely individuals benefit from prosperity. However, these two approaches can also be reconciled with each other. This is essential in the present study area as the region needs economic growth while experiencing prosperity on all levels of society.

With reference to the above: 1) the region of this research is a theoretical construct which focuses not so strongly on the functioning of the region, but is rather a means to an end, namely to stimulate development in the region. 2) It is not easy to define development for the region as there are different types of economies within it. 3) The difference in functioning of the various towns and cities in the region and their development requires a multiple theoretical basis, as one approach does not provide an adequate explanation. 4) The fact that the mining region of Welkom distorts most of the approaches to regional planning makes it difficult to find a uniform approach. 5) The various contributions offered by the theoretical models must also be taken into account in the planning. Each region has some of these features to some extent and they can be used. 6) The approach to development in the region should not solely be based on economic growth or prosperity, but a balance between the two must be found.

It is important to realise that the theoretical section of a study is not only a background, but also gives direction to the process of finding solutions and interpreting results.

## **Background of regional planning in south africa**

### **Planning before 1994**



In her study “’n Teoretiese en historiese oorsig van streekbeplanning in Suid-Afrika met riglyne vir ’n toekomstige beleid” Irma Botha (1991) classifies regional planning as follows:

- Up to and including the 1940s: a period of growth with a core development policy where economic growth was the aim.
- 1940 to 1986: there was a tendency to establish a balanced growth strategy by means of a decentralisation policy aimed at obtaining more proportional distribution of economic activities. The focus was determined by the political aim, namely separate development.
- Since 1986: a new policy was sought to change the decentralisation policy from a balanced growth strategy to a distribution strategy. It not only focused on industries, but attention was also paid to socio-economic and ecological problems.

The planning which begun in 1986 was stopped in 1994 with the change of government.

#### **Planning after 1994**

According to Swanepoel (1998, p. 28), since 1994 regional planning changed from a top-down approach to a bottom-up approach. The new constitution has had far-reaching consequences in many fields, in particular in planning where the focus is increasingly on human rights.

Various regional planning initiatives have emerged since 1994.

#### **Reconstruction and Development Programme:**

This programme endeavours to mobilise people into a fair distribution of the country’s resources, thus ensuring a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future (Machogo 2003).

#### **Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR):**

This strategy emphasises an export-orientated economy that will enhance international accessibility and competition. Municipalities must administer the consequences of globalisation, such as restructuring and the resettlement of industries. The implications for planning are as follows (Machogo 2003): improving the private sector’s involvement in development by means of investments; effecting broader investments in infrastructure; obtaining more effective local expenditure and reprioritisation of funds, and lastly nationalising local government as person.

#### **Integrated Development Planning (IDP):**

This planning process proposed in terms of the Development Facilitation Act comprises, according to Orton (1999, p. 110), the following activities: a broad review of the present state of affairs, a vision, setting goals, a situation analysis, an integrated development framework, land development aims, development strategies, an action plan and budget, the monitoring and reviewing of the procedure, and the provincial approval of the land development aims component of the IDP.

The planning and administration of development must thus combine and integrate all aspects of development (social, economy, environment, ethics, infrastructure and space) in the short, medium and long terms. Integration requires holistic thought. Issues and sectors must be viewed in relation to each other in order to ensure the best use of resources and to achieve the development aims.

It is obvious from the above that the government’s disposition has changed considerably over the past 20 years. The focus has shifted from a purely economic approach to a more comprehensive planning to man and his problems. This change must also be addressed in this study. Although the economy still has a big role to play, other social and ecological issues are also important. The present research must provide a whole picture of the region on all levels as prescribed by the planning approaches.

#### **Historical background of the region**

The Orange Free State came into being on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1856 following the Bloemfontein Convention concluded between Sir George Clerk, British representative, and representatives of the white population living between the Vaal and Orange rivers. Although an important section of the population had requested independence from Britain for a decade, the circumstances elicited a feeling of uncertainty. The new state was not prepared for independence. Without funds, military forces or an established legal system, distributed over a large region and surrounded by restless Griqua, Korana, Baralong and Basotho tribes, divided into two groups (the republicans and the pro-British Boers), the Free Staters had to maintain order and create a state from nothing. A constitution based on the 1848 French constitution was drawn up with a few changes based on the



American constitution. Legislative power was vested in a chosen house of assembly. The State President had executive power. Various wars were waged with the Basotho tribe between 1854 and 1867. In 1902 after the Anglo-Boer War the Orange Free State lost its independence and became known as the Orange River Colony from 1902 to 1910. In 1910 with the proclamation of the Union it became the Orange Free State Province. In 1961, when South Africa became a republic, the Orange Free State maintained its provincial status (Potgieter 1973, p. 351-353).

### **Bloemfontein**

In 1846 Major Henry Warden founded the 'Bloem Fontein' military base close to the said fountain (Schoeman 1980, p. 3). The town developed fast as it was the capital of the then 'Republic of the Orange Free State', and in 1883 the first residential area, West End, was developed (Roodt 1994, p. 80). According to Roodt, Bloemfontein was still 'turned inwards' and development took place around the centre of Bloemfontein.

The town grew drastically between 1902 and 1910. As early as 1907 Bloemfontein had modern sanitation, electric lights and telephone lines (Schoeman 1980, p. 189). Until 1950 development was very slow, although in 1945 Bloemfontein was awarded city status (Schoeman 1980, p. 304). Between 1960 and 1970 the biggest growth in residential areas took place in Bloemfontein (Roodt 1994, p. 87). As early as the 1970s the centre of Bloemfontein started expanding to other areas, mostly because of insufficient parking or because of high rents (Roodt 1994, p. 88). Decentralisation and the tendency to erect suburban shopping centres changed the town considerably between 1980 and 2000 (Mangaung Local Municipality 2003, p. 7).

Two important industrial areas also arose on two sides of the urban area. One industrial area to the south of the earlier white residential areas served as a buffer zone between the eastern, previously black town. The other large industrial area lies to the west of Bloemfontein. Service provision and administration are the primary economic activities in Bloemfontein.

### **Brandfort**

Brandfort's origin and development are closely related to the development of the railway line in the early twentieth century, in particular the Johannesburg-Cape Town line (Van Gend 1983, p. 22).

Brandfort was founded in 1866 on the farm Keerom on the Keeromspruit in the Bloemfontein district. Earlier the owner of the farm, Jacobus van Zyl, had divided the farm into plots, and on 30 October 1866 the first 47 plots were sold. In 1874 Brandfort was declared an urban area, and in 1884 a municipal area. The town is named after both President Brand, who visited the town shortly after it was founded, and the burnt-out fort on the hill in the urban area. During the Second Anglo-Boer War, the front line of Lord Roberts's force was stopped here on 25 March 1900, but fell into British hands on 3 May 1900. A concentration camp was erected just outside the town and named Dwyersdorp after Captain Dwyer, an Irishman who was sympathetic towards the women in the camp. In the camp cemetery 1550 women and children are buried. There is also a Voortrekker cemetery of 50 tombs. Both cemeteries were declared monuments by the War Graves Council (Potgieter 1970, p. 489-490).

The industrial area is situated on the outskirts of the town on the road to Winburg. This area's development is closely linked to the foundation of Brandfort with the development along the Johannesburg-Cape Town railway line (Masilonyana IDP review 2004/2005, p. 13).

### **Theunissen**

The foundation and history of Theunissen are closely linked to the origin and development of the railways and the Free State (Henning 1982, p. 9). On account of the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand the construction of a railway line to this region was essential. A station was constructed due west of Winburg and named Smaldeel. At that time this station was the only direct link with the main line between Bloemfontein and Johannesburg for Eastern Free State towns. It is easy to realise why this area showed such a strong vital force. The inhabitants of the station Smaldeel and the farmers in the area felt that it was time to request that a town be founded.

In 1906 those living in the vicinity of the Smaldeel railway station applied, under the guidance of Commander Helgardt Theunissen, to the Legislative Council of the Orange River Colony for consent to found a town near Smaldeel. The request was approved and the farms Smaldeel, Statie and 34 hectares of the farm Poortjie were purchased for this reason. The town was founded in September 1907 and named after Commander Theunissen. It was first administered by a town management council, and then by a municipality in 1912 (Potgieter 1974, p. 48).



Since 1911 Theunissen experienced a fast growth as the result of the establishment of the agriculture sector and the later development of the gold mines. Masilo also suffered from the fast growth. Theunissen's industrial area is situated along the central main entrance route on the western side of the town (Masilonyana IDP Review 2004/2005, p. 8-9).

### Welkom

After the discovery of gold in the maize lands of the Orange Free State was made public on 16 April 1946, mining activities begun the next year, and towns had to be laid out. In contrast to the mining camps on the Witwatersrand, no mining camps consisting of disorderly tents, small hamlets and huts were allowed (Potgieter 1975, p. 390).

Orderly model towns were laid out. Situated in the heart of the Free State Goldfields and named after the farm on which it was developed, Welkom was designed by William O'Blackhouse, urban and regional planning consultant for Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa. Welkom was proclaimed a town on 23 June 1948 and acquired full municipal status on 5 January 1961 (Potgieter 1975, p. 390).

Mining is the primary economic activity of Welkom which has a well-established business and industrial area situated due west along the railway line. Welkom is the largest centre in Matjhabeng (Matjhabeng IDP 2002).

The historical overview of the above towns and villages is crucial for the purpose of this study. Without adequate knowledge of the past, it is impossible to make projections for the future.

### Regional analysis: status quo

Demography, infrastructure, economy, as well as industries and transport links will now be discussed under separate headings.

### Demography

Considering the nine provinces of South Africa, the Free State province has the second smallest population, with 2 782 470 million inhabitants, representing 6.7% of the total population of South Africa (StatsSa 2004). The greater region's functions are based in the greater Bloemfontein: local government and administration, tertiary training, judicial centre, agricultural community and services. As far as the study area is concerned, the demography of Mangaung, Masilonyana and Matjhabeng is schematically illustrated in Figure 8.

The Mangaung Local Municipality has the biggest concentration of people in comparison with Matjhabeng and Masiloyana. In Matjhabeng the white, black and coloured population has decreased over the past 5 years, mainly due to fewer work opportunities on the mines. The population growth has an impact on economic

development and although the region shows better growth, the ratio between economic and population growth is too small to increase the standards of living (Popenoe & Boulton 1998: 407).

The unemployment figure in the Free State is 24.4%, of which 16.7% of economically active males are unemployed against 33.8% unemployed females (StatsSa 2004). Since 1999 the unemployment figure rose by 9% as the result of the closure of the mines. The literacy percentage is 85.2% which is the third highest in the country, but the size of schools is smaller than in the other provinces (Masiloyana IDP 2002, p. 25). In Matjhabeng the employed represent 70.7% of the population whereas 23% of the population is unemployed and must be supported by the economically active population.

The largest section of the population can earn an income, but there is still a great need for training that will ensure work opportunities. In most regions mines are the main employers, and the reduction in mining activities can exert great pressure on the local economy. Training in health issues should also be considered since HIV targets the largest section of the population and affects trained employees. Local municipalities should stimulate the provision of housing by the government.

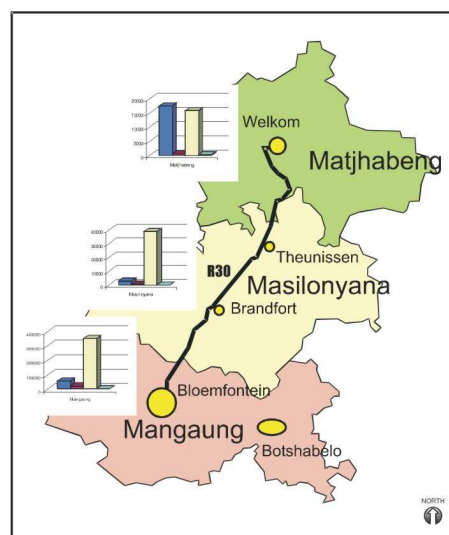


Fig 8 Demographic

White  
Coloured  
Black  
Asian



## **Infrastructure**

### **Road transport**

The R30 is a secondary road and given the fact that the study area extends over 3 regions, each of the regions is discussed separately. Secondary roads are not designed to carry heavy traffic, and it is thus essential to upgrade the R30 for the survival of the local community, health and training services.

The secondary roads in the Matjhabeng region are in bad state of repair and require upgrading urgently. The problem is exacerbated by the vastness of the region and the enormous costs involved in upgrading the roads network (Matjhabeng Traffic Project 2003).

In the Masiyoyana region, the roads are still acceptable, but a budget is required for urgent maintenance, as this must be done more regularly than is presently the case.

Mangaung's roads are in general the best. They are well maintained in urban areas, but drainage canals are essential in rural areas. In Mangaung public transport is supervised by the metropolitan section, which also plans to improve the public transport system, as the present means of transport are predominantly private taxis.

Considering the study area on a larger scale, the tollgates affect road transport. The tollgate erected in 2003 at Verkeerdevlei has already had an impact as much traffic follows an alternative route to avoid the tollgate. At this stage this favours Brandfort, as the alternative R30 route passes through the town and on to Winburg to join the N1 later. The proposed tollgate on the R30 (beyond Brandfort) will put a spoke in this route, and motorists will have to follow alternative routes. The impact study on this tollgate has been approved and it will probably be built next year (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2004, s.p.).

### **Railway transport**

Although the railways does not play the same role it did 30 years ago, it is still an important part of the infrastructure. The main Gauteng/Bloemfontein/Port Elizabeth/East London routes through the region play an important role in the distribution of agricultural products – in particular the numerous silos along the railway line (Masiyoyana IDP 2003: 23). There is a need to maintain the railway and to expand it for passenger use.

### **Air transport**

Airports play an important function in the development of a corridor by means of their link with international industries. Bloemfontein's airport is one of six internal airports owned by ACSA (Airport Company South Africa). Welkom also has an airport, but not on the same scale as that of Bloemfontein. The proposed construction of a cargo airport can shift the accumulation of industries along the main roads in the Witwatersrand to the R30 route. According to the Matjhabeng Municipality (2004), the proposed cargo airport in Welkom will benefit the business sector not only of Welkom, but also of the study area, the Free State and the rest of South Africa.

### **Physical services infrastructure**

In the Masiyoyana region, mining is the biggest consumer of water which forms an essential part of the industry. Before considering any urban expansion, the water supply must be addressed (Masiyoyana IDP 2003, p. 34). The water supply for the Matjhabeng region must also earnestly be addressed, as only 25% of the plots that have water do not meet the IDP standards. This critical situation holds in the traditional black areas, in particular, as the infrastructure of the traditional white areas and industrial areas is well developed. A similar situation is found in the Mangaung region, where this imbalance is being addressed. The focus is, in particular, to provide stand-pipes for informal settlements and water meters for formal plots.

The Mangaung municipality's provision of water to all formal plots is well developed, with its infrastructure complying with the NEAC (National Environmental Awareness Campaign) standards. In Masiyoyana the network must be urgently upgraded. No funds are available for this at present, and the rural areas suffer as a consequence. Electricity is readily available in the town itself, and for the industries. The industrial areas in Bloemfontein are fully provided with water and the area has the capacity to expand even further. Matjhabeng's provision of electricity to the mines and to the urban areas is well developed. There is adequate infrastructure for expansion of industries. Services to the rural areas must still be improved (Mangaung IDP 2003; Matjhabeng IDP 2003, Masiyoyana IDP 2003).



There is an imbalance between the various developing areas (usually also the traditional white areas) and the underdeveloped areas (the previously traditional black areas) in the region. The development and upgrading of sanitation is a high priority in all the municipalities. Fixed refuse removal must also be upgraded in these regions.

Bloemfontein and Welkom have a housing problem, since there are more employment opportunities than in other towns in the study area. The need for housing, however, does not have a negative impact on the industries, as it is in fact a case of too many workers available (Matjhabeng IDP 2001, p. 15). Shanty towns settle near mining areas with the hope of finding employment and exert pressure on the environment and infrastructure. This type of housing must urgently be upgraded and formalised.

Cellular communication plays a big role in communication nowadays, although land lines are the main means of communication. Land lines have decreased since 1996 mainly due to an increase in the use of cellular telephones. The entire region is well provided with telephone lines (by Telkom) with automatic exchanges. Cellular telephone towers have also been erected in this region (Demarcation Board of south Africa 2004).

### **Social services infrastructure**

The study area's literacy figure is not very high. A vast section of the region's population is unemployed or economically inactive. The level of training is low with mining as main employer. The majority of the population received training at school level, but little tertiary training.

As far as training possibilities are concerned, the study area boasts one university (University of the Free State), one university of technology (the Central University of Technology), and numerous technical colleges and satellite campuses.

The difference in the function of the various towns is obvious in the infrastructure of the study area. The infrastructure of Bloemfontein, with its urban character and administrative functions, is far better developed than for instance Theunissen or Brandfort. By contrast, the mining activities of Welkom are responsible for the better development of the services required there. It is essential to upgrade the R30 for the development of the region, but the vastness of the region increases the maintenance costs. The proposed R30 toll road can reduce traffic and have a negative impact on the region's economy. The physical infrastructure is well developed in the urban areas and can even cope with development in the region, but it is poorly developed and maintained in the rural areas. The issue of training in the region is poor as the result of the low level of skills. The reduction in employment opportunities has caused a drop in the figures. Although the physical infrastructure of this study area is reasonably well developed, it is not sufficiently so to talk of a development corridor: the region is too divided as far as the functioning of the regions is concerned to form a unit of development.

### **Economy**

One of the South African government's key economic strategies is the so-called Spatial Development Initiatives (announced in 1995). The aim is short-term and directed attempts to stimulate growth by creating global, competing spatial entities by means of new investments, infrastructure development and employment (Taylor 2003, p. 3). The South African government sees the necessity to work in partnership with private capital to operate such initiatives as its primary task. In the South African context, the Maputo Development Corridor is regarded as the flagship of this strategy.

The Free State economy is dominated by government services (15% of gross geographic product); mining (14%); community, social and other services (17%); manufacture (11%), and financial services (11%). Agriculture has contributed only 9% to the gross geographic product of the Free State. The contributions by tourism are increasing, but it is covered by a variety of economic sectors and is thus not indicated separately in the statistics (Free State Provincial Government 2004).



**Table 1. Contributions by various economic sectors in the study region**

	Free State Province	Bloemfontein (Mangaung)	Welkom (Matjhabeng)	Brandfort/Theunissen (Masilonyana)
Mining	14%	4%	54%	10%
Trade	8%	15.1%	14%	20%
Construction	2%	2.9%	4%	28%
Transport/Communication	7%	13.2%	3%	10.1%
Agriculture	9%	3%	1%	11.2%
Government	15%	37.4%	7%	10.2%
Services	17%	2.9%	2%	1.5%
Manufacture	11%	8%	7%	5.2%
Financial services	11%	17.1%	8%	3.8%

(Source: Mangaung IDP 2003; Matjhabeng IDP 2003; Masilonyana IDP 2003; Free State Provincial Government 2004)

Table 1 clearly indicates that the economies of Mangaung (Bloemfontein, Thaba 'Nchu and Botchabelo) and Matjhabeng (Welkom) have little in common. The mining sector dominates the economy of the Welkom region with a direct contribution of 54% to the economy, and the economic contribution is not sufficiently diverse (StatsSA 2004). In a survey conducted by the study group in the third quarter of 2004, it was found that 50% of the respondents in other sectors focus their marketing activities mainly on mining.

Considering the economic development strategies of Welkom and Bloemfontein, there are few proofs of any synergism between these two towns. Bloemfontein is focused on the N8 route to Thaba 'Nchu. There is little of concrete interest. With the increasing pressure on the mining sector, it would appear that the municipality of Matjhabeng (which includes Welkom) is keen to establish economic alternatives to the gold mining industry.

Against this background, the Matjhbeng municipality has decided to follow a five-sector strategy to diversify its economy:

- The development of the Matjhabeng region into a distribution centre for South Africa, consisting of the link of airfreight, road and railway transport. In this initiative, upgrading the R30 to a national road and erecting an international cargo airport are crucial.
- The establishment and development of an intensive, alternative agriculture industry with the focus on export products such as paprika, herbs, spices, etc.
- The development of a training and skills support centre, with the focus on the gap between school and formal tertiary education.
- The development of a jewel manufacturing centre and the promotion of small-scale mining activities.
- The development of tourism unique to this region, among others underground mine visits and museums, an expanded zoo, steam train rides, waterfront developments, and the activities associated with the Phakisa racecourse (Matjhabeng Municipality 2004).

According to a Matjhabeng council member Montsioa (2004), it is believed that the implementation of this strategy can create between 40 000 and 45 000 employment opportunities over the next 10 years.

### Research into industries

Research has revealed that there is no distribution of goods between Bloemfontein and Welkom. The majority of businesses only serve the markets in their immediate environment, and it would appear that the towns look to other large cities for distribution (Figure 9).

Bloemfontein's central position can be considered the most important reason for settlement, while Welkom's businesses are driven by mining and historical events.

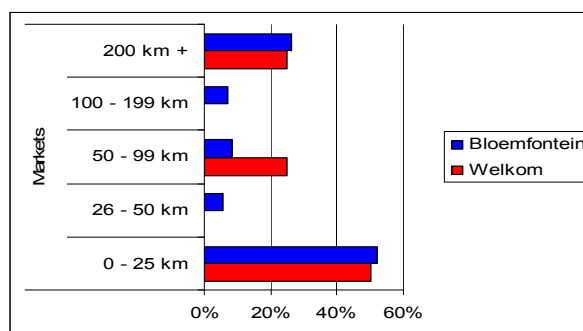


Fig 9 Distribution distance of goods to markets

The most important advantages for Bloemfontein's businesses are its central position whereas Welkom's businesses have not shown any competition or stable work force. Most businesses in Bloemfontein indicated that they do not experience any disadvantages, whereas Welkom's businesses considered the drop in the markets as



the most important disadvantage. Bloemfontein's industries extend over the spectrum, with most of them falling in the 10 to 14 years and in the over 20 years categories. The majority of Welkom's businesses fall within the 20 years and over category.

### **Investigating transport links**

Surveys (Matjhabeng Municipality 2003) indicate that there is considerable traffic between Bloemfontein and Brandfort and between Welkom and Theunissen. The traffic between Brandfort and Theunissen is less by half. This implies that at this distance there is a cut-off point for the destination of the traffic: those who are closer to Welkom go to Welkom and those who are closer to Bloemfontein use Bloemfontein.

As an alternative route for the busy N1, the R30 is extremely suitable. The surveys indicated the R30 is already used to some extent, but the ideal would be that the entire route, and not merely sections thereof, is used. This would benefit the region as a whole.

### **AIM**

#### **Results of the study**

The results of the study reveal that the economic link between Bloemfontein and Welkom is not sufficiently developed to function as a development corridor. The hypothesis of the study was thus rejected. The region functions better as a transport corridor, with Bloemfontein and Welkom as the main nodes. The position of Brandfort and Theunissen on the transport axis also offers potential for development.

Unfortunately, the state of the region is not ideal, and the drop in the mining industry causes a fast decline in the region. Employment opportunities are increasingly scarce, but the population growth does not decrease. The region's infrastructure is good, but the status quo should not be allowed to drop. Economic growth is negative especially in Welkom, whereas Theunissen experienced a relative growth rate as it is the main town in Masilonyana.

As far as the industrial aspect is concerned, there is practically no exchange of goods or products between Welkom and Bloemfontein. This can be attributed to the difference in their basic economies. Bloemfontein as the provincial capital still has links with Welkom and must fulfil certain functions; the same cannot be said of Welkom's relationship with Bloemfontein.

The historical advantage of Bloemfontein as administrative capital of the province for over 150 years is confirmed by its central function. The traffic to and from Bloemfontein indicates that the town is still the transport centre of the province.

The above results of the study indicate that the study region cannot function as an economic region. The difference in basic economies of the respective towns and cities makes it difficult to establish a uniform basis for development. The ultimate implication of the study is that development for the region is essential. The region is becoming poorer with the result that the inhabitants have a rough time of it. As far as regional planning is concerned, the results give rise to two different possibilities for development, namely 1) no action can be taken, or 2) something must be done. Unfortunately, the former cannot be considered an option as it is not only irresponsible but also it cannot be planned. Planning is necessary and something must be done.

It is important to realise that this region does not have the potential at present to be planned as a development corridor. Existing strong points in the province can be linked to the development of a transport corridor from which the region can benefit. Important proposals will now be discussed.

The reasons must be examined why this region is not yet one of the ROI's identified in Southern Africa. If the ultimate aim is to help the study region onto a level of development and economic activities, it is necessary to expand the potential which the region already possesses.

This development must take place in a balanced manner, with equal emphasis on both growth and prosperity. Economic growth may not harm the prosperity of inhabitants. On the other hand, social issues may not impede economic development, because the two go hand in hand.

Certain conditions or prerequisites must precede such a development.



Development at regional level in a relatively poor area with few natural resources is dependant on political support. As such, the governing ANC (African National Congress) party must agree on both national and local levels on the importance and priority of development of this region. Once such a decision is taken on the political level, it can also be realised on the legislative and executive levels. The northern and southern factions of the ANC in the Free State will have to reach consensus in order to make the development of the R30 study region possible.

Another prerequisite is that the national government must be persuaded to support the development of the R30 study region. This prerequisite implies consensus on local level between the various municipalities and district municipalities before any progress can be made. The advantage of development for the region must be seen as a whole by all the municipalities concerned: even if individual decisions could have negative implications for a specific region in the short term, the end goal of development (growth and prosperity for the entire region) must be borne in mind. In this respect good cooperation with the private sector must be effected from the start.

A good start would be a coordinating committee incorporating the various role players in this development. This body would be responsible for drawing up policy documents and guidelines for the said development and for controlling its implementation.

Ultimately, not only the R30 study region, but also the Free State as province and the country at large will benefit from such development.

#### From transport corridor to development corridor

In order to develop the study region into a development corridor, the following recommendations for development must be addressed:

- Balanced demographic growth is necessary for the region. This can be done by means of information programmes, and a subsidy system for families with fewer children. These programmes must be initiated at national level and implemented at local level.
- The training level of the average population must be addressed urgently. Unskilled labour means few employment opportunities, whereas higher training level employment is in demand. Entrepreneurial training can also empower people to make a contribution to the economy. Bloemfontein and Welkom can be used as main training axes. Theunissen and Brandfort can function as satellites (Figure 10).

#### Environmental issues

- Existing and potential nature and conservation areas must be identified and protected.
- All further development must take these areas into account so as not to disturb them. There must also be a management plan for public open spaces (Figure 11).
- Mine heap rehabilitation is an issue that can benefit the development of the region on more than one level. Such action is especially necessary in Welkom and in the areas adjacent to Theunissen (Figure 11). This can improve not only employment opportunities for many people, but also the whole state of the region.

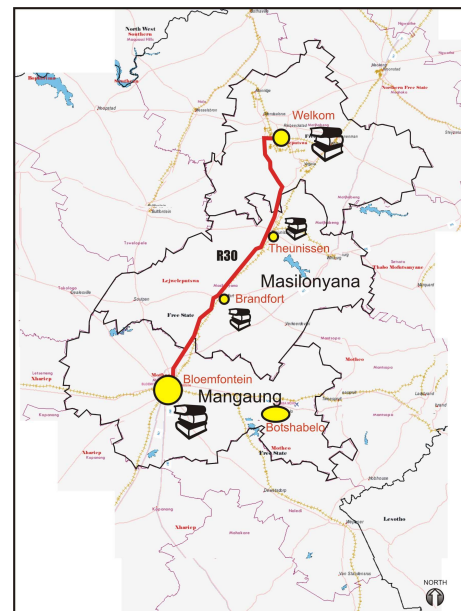


Fig 10 Demographic proposals

Key:  MAJOR EDUCATION CENTRUM  
 SATELLITE EDUCATION CENTRUM

## Infrastructure

- The present infrastructure can adequately support initial development. There are sufficient cheap buildings in the region to meet the first phase of development, and the costs of services are also low so that it can attract investors. The upgrading of the region's present infrastructure will, however, be necessary for further development. In particular, the state of the roads must be addressed, because heavy traffic places a greater burden on the road. The electricity network must also be upgraded as several installations are outdated. The railway system must also be addressed: the basic structure is not used optimally. Rail services can be used increasingly to benefit the region (Figure 12).
- The proposed tollgate between Bloemfontein and Brandfort will have a negative impact on the region as present economic development relies on transport activities. Tollgates should not be erected between Bloemfontein and Welkom so that the region can be used increasingly as transport axis. They should rather be erected on the other side of Welkom to channel more transport through the region. This decision must be supported on national level, as local municipalities do not have enough power to oppose such request (Figure 12).
- An investigation into the effectiveness of the consolidated municipalities unlike the earlier autonomous town municipalities is also recommended. The economic implication of the present large municipalities (such as longer distances between towns) must also be addressed.
- At local level, the municipality can make its regions more attractive for investors by using various strategies. They can, for instance, make industrial areas safer, upgrade services such as electricity and water, give reduced property tax on industries, and develop special entry areas for businesses.

## Economy

- The creation of employment is one of the most important economic issues that must be addressed both on local and national levels. The region will experience prosperity and growth once the unemployment figure drops. This aspect must be addressed by both the public and private sectors.
- Economic activities in the region must also diversify so that reliance on one business does not negatively impact on the economy. Economic activities must develop and expand so that they are not mining-orientated. Encouragement on national level can help to implement this ideal on local level (Figure 13).
- A more diverse economic region will promote mutual activities, thus forging a greater link on economic level in the region. Once more businesses in Welkom can make use of Bloemfontein's services, etc., and vice versa, the movement between these two points can lead to economic growth. This principle must be conveyed from the national level to the local authorities. Economic injections from the national government (such as the establishment of diverse key businesses in the study region) will be crucial (figure 13).

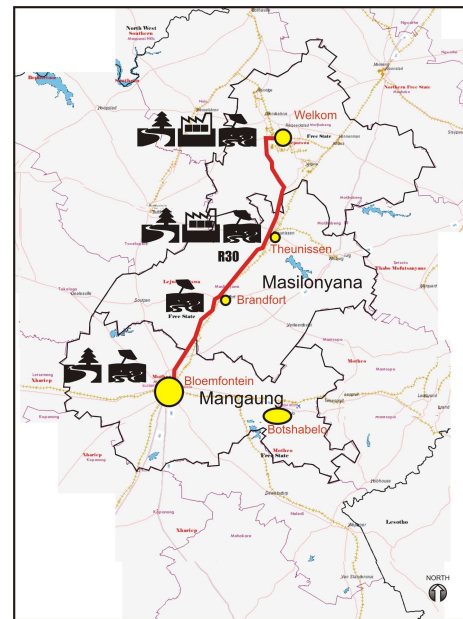


Fig 11 Environmental proposals

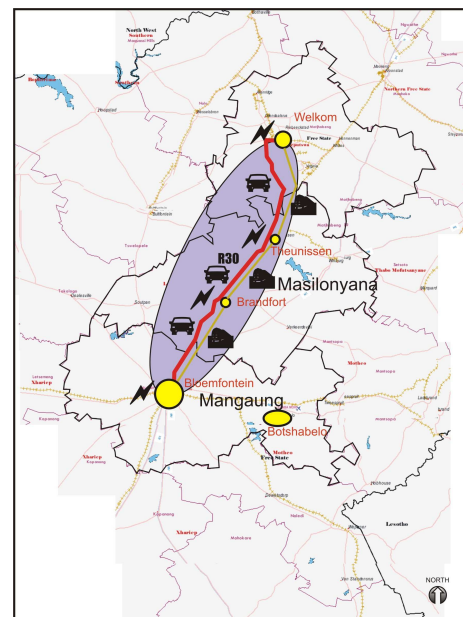
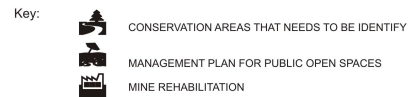


Fig 12 Infrastructure proposals





- New markets must also be created at both local and international levels. This liaison can, on the one hand, imply essential financial benefit for the region and, on the other hand, ensure that local money is spent on local markets.
- The link of the region's economy with Johannesburg (and other large centres) also deserves further investigation. It is possible that economic expansion in these directions can greatly benefit the region (see Figure 13).
- Rural development can also make a contribution to the economy. Small-scale farmers can settle in the area adjacent to the Erfenis dam and be given assistance by the Department of Agriculture. This development will have to take place with close cooperation with training instances such as the Free State University and Glen Agriculture College to ensure that the necessary support is in place. A system is proposed in which potential candidates must first undergo training before land is leased to them. Small-scale farmers who prove to be successful can then be given the option to buy the land (Figure 13).
- As far as tourism is concerned, the present industry must be supported and encouraged. Local municipalities, in particular, must protect and market existing tourist attractions. This marketing must be given through to provincial and national levels, so that joint marketing can be done. New attractions that will lure more tourists to the region must also be investigated.
- Public and private cooperation is also essential for a positive impact on the region's economy. Small- and medium-scale businesses must be supported by the state so that they can expand.
- The recommendation to build a cargo airport at Welkom is strongly recommended (Figure 13). This decision must be taken at national level so that the necessary institutional support can be given to this development. The cargo airport will not only add to Welkom's economy, but it will also mean more economic contact with other regions.

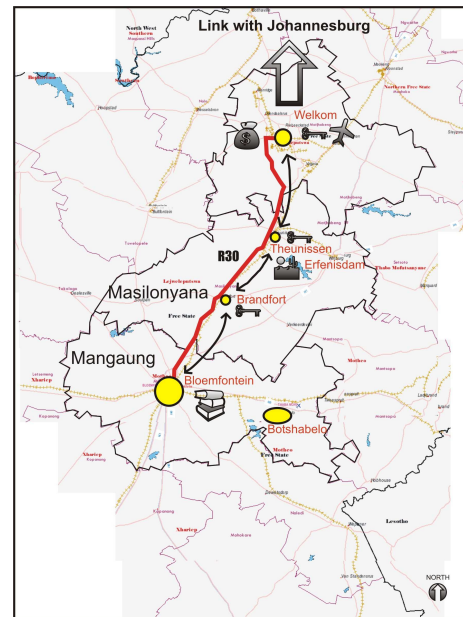


Fig 13 Economic proposals



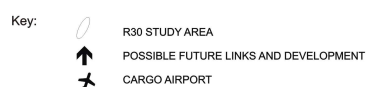
The Goldfields Development Corporation's expertise must be applied to help the region as a whole to develop. This instance has many years' experience in the development of a region. A proposal to expand the area of jurisdiction of the Corporation to the entire region (in other words, the other municipalities must also be included) must be seriously considered. Such a co-operation can lead to a R30 development corporation, which endeavours to promote the region as a whole.

### Spatial implications

Due to the central position of the study region, the region can serve as a link between other development regions. A northern link of the region with Johannesburg/Vereniging/Sasolburg and a North-western link with Klerksdorp/Potchefstroom must be considered. In the Western and eastern directions a further development can be investigated to link Kimberley via Bloemfontein with Maseru (Figure 14).



Fig 14 Spatial implications



The impact of the cargo airport should not be underestimated. The position of the region is one of the biggest assets for development and must be used as such.



### **Conclusion**

A region is more than just an economic success. The region must be developed in a balanced manner as far as its financial and social aspects are concerned. The R30 region needs development on various levels, but only time (and government involvement on the financial level) will tell whether the region will ever function as a development corridor. Although the region has much potential, the distance of 150 km is an obstacle in the link between Bloemfontein with Welkom.



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