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VISIONS for the Future

Anyone who walked through the city centres of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town twenty years ago could not help but notice the obvious dilapidation: a number of major companies relocated, smaller businesses closed down and the consequences of empty office buildings, falling rents, urban decay and an increase in crime was becoming the norm.

During this dark time Cape Town was the first to show a burst of renewal and today, a walk through the city streets, shows how much has changed in two decades. This trend was soon picked up by developers in Johannesburg and Durban and now those inner cities too have a zest all of their own.

But what is Cape Town going to look like in another twenty years and what does the future hold for the next phase of urban development? A few visionaries have clear ideas of what Cape Town could be like in the future. One of them is Guy Lundy, the Managing Director of Accelerate Cape Town, a business-led initiative aimed at bringing together stakeholders in the Cape Town region to develop and implement a long-term vision for sustainable, inclusive economic growth.

Guy Lundy knows that what a successful city needs, (just like a good business idea), is a clear vision. Cities like Dubai, Boston and Barcelona confirm this theory. What influenced the development of these cities most positively was not the mere changing of the existing building structure, but rather the development and implementation of urban planning based on future thinking.

In South Africa, a look at the *Vision Johannesburg* provides an interesting reference point. The *Vision Johannesburg* is aimed at a dynamic, functioning, safe, open and central city that is worth living in and that epitomises its cultural differences. The motto of the city: Johannesburg - Africa's Business Hub is essentially in line with the international acceptance of Johannesburg as a major economic driver in South Africa.

But how does the Cape Region present itself in comparison? At present, many people associate Cape Town with lifestyle, dream landscapes and culinary delights. On the other hand, it is also perceived as a bit sleepy, slightly off the economic pulse, and a bit too laid back. There is a general perception that truly profitable business is only possible in Johannesburg which gives the business owners in Cape Town a poor image and does not really promote foreign investment.

According to Guy Lundy, a Cape Town that is worth living in is not only determined by aesthetic aspects, but by its usability. This means good working practises, sufficient housing, a solid infrastructure, low crime rates, and attrac-

tive cultural and leisure activities. *Vision 2030* is the name of the ambitious project initiated by the interest group Accelerate Cape Town. It combines economic and social perspectives and highlights Cape Town as the global gateway of Africa promoting a city that is safe and efficient; whose people are educated and trained, connected and dynamic, open and caring. Its values are green and beautiful, culturally it is exceptionally colourful and these factors all contribute to a city unlike any other in the world. The top priority has to be safety and efficiency as these factors will rank a city as internationally desirable.

The main goal of *Vision 2030* is to attract the settlement of top companies in the region and to create an appealing location for highly-qualified university graduates. For a few years already, Cape Town has been a popular production site for the media and film industry as well as the advertising industry. International conferences and exhibitions with 20,000 delegates or more, are also a common feature. Boat building and repairs, particularly focused on servicing the enormous oil fields of West Africa, are considered world class, thanks to the large numbers of skilled and semi-skilled artisans available in the Cape.

This potential together with the region must be exploited in order to establish a location where creative and intellectual manpower will find a place to flourish.

Cape Town and its surrounds offer many career opportunities. Training, promotion of talent and incentives to attract good employees in all economic sectors are therefore priorities. Cities worldwide compete with each other as far as qualified personnel are concerned, in particular in the age group between 25 and 34. Talented staff create an economic upswing and other economic benefits. Today, top young personnel are very mobile and selective as far as the workplace is concerned. According to a US survey, 64% percent of American university graduates choose their workplace by the location.

In the case of Cape Town, qualified staff are moving to Johannesburg. Accelerate Cape Town has therefore initiated projects that aim at doubling jobs for university graduates in the region by 2030. To achieve this goal, local interest groups, chambers of commerce, universities and state institutions, work together intensively.

The first successes are noticeable. Investment in infrastructure as a result of the FIFA World Cup has produced a clear upturn. In the past, public passenger transport in the region was only rudimentary. In the future, a new Bus Rapid Transit System will offer safe, fast, economic and well-connected public transport within the region for both inhabitants and tourists. Another goal of *Vision 2030* is to create profitable ventures for the entire society of Cape Town in the long term and this is already producing the first results.

Accelerate Cape Town also supports compliance with international safety regulations in trade, economy and the traffic at airports, seaports and in particular on roads. In South Africa, more people die or get injured in traffic accidents than as a result of crime.

To give the region a green and beautiful image, one of the areas that the interest group is engaged in is the re-opening of the Camisa River. Springing from Table Mountain and flowing into the Atlantic Ocean, the river connects the two landmarks of Cape Town. A visible connection of mountain and ocean would give the city a greener and friendlier face. At present, the river flows underneath the city centre.

The FIFA World Cup offered a unique opportunity for putting *Vision 2030* in the international spotlight. It could become a model project for other cities in the world provided that all stakeholders act in accord and use the exceptional beauty of the landscape to promote its implementation. The likely motto for the region is 'The Southern Tiger' and that says power, beauty and grace in more ways than one.

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Yours

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