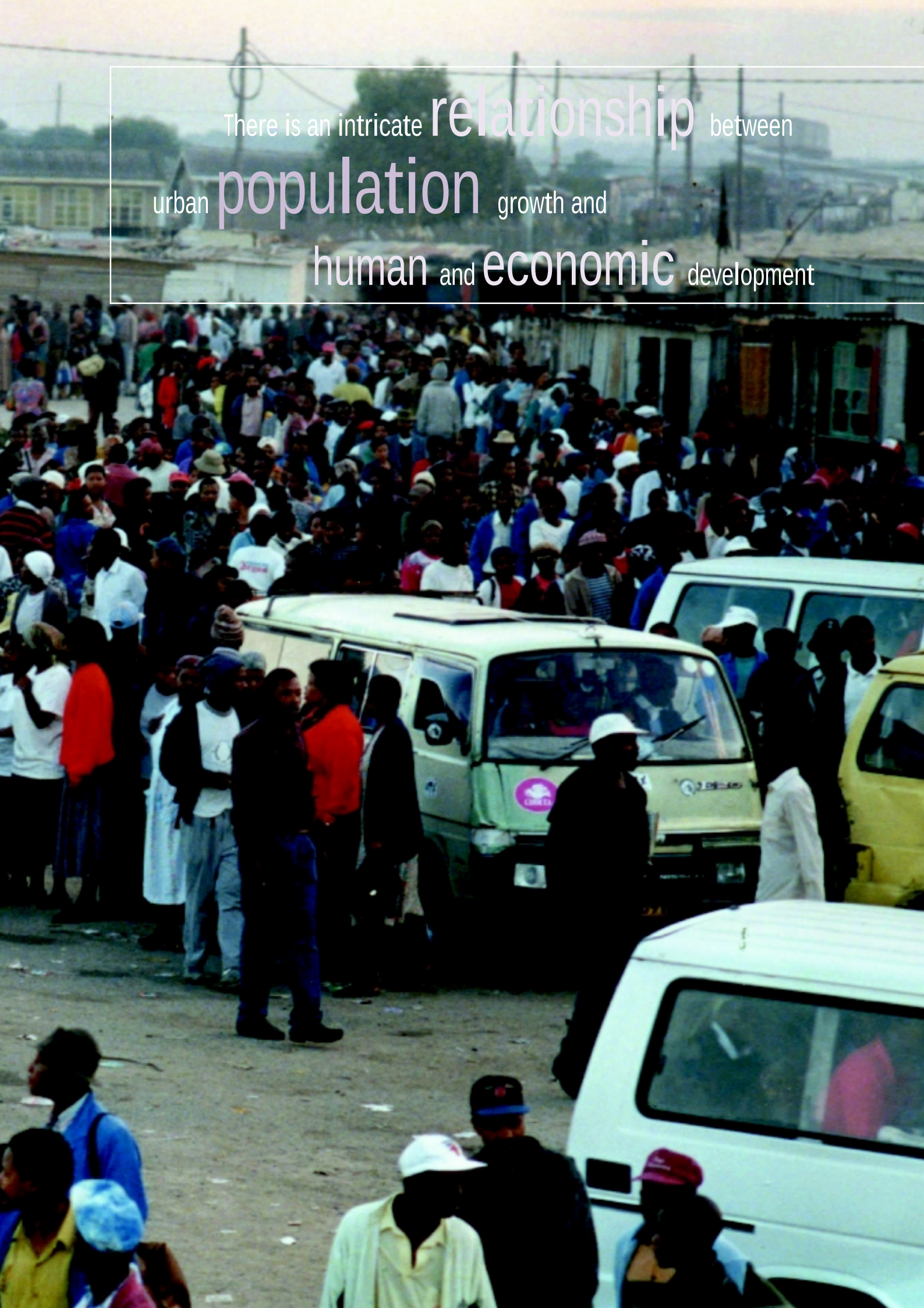
CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHICS


There is an intricate relationship between
urban population growth and
human and economic development

CHAPTER 3. THE STATE OF THE URBAN POPULATION

South African cities are being shaped by powerful forces. If they are to contribute meaningfully to the future of cities, all spheres of government need to understand these forces and respond appropriately to them. To plan effectively for their cities municipalities need to think deeply about demographic, economic, social, built environment and institutional trends, and whether these might imply greater opportunity or adversity in future.

UNDERSTANDING DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

One of these trends is the demographic shifts changing the face of South Africa's urban population. Two perceptions dominate thinking on what is happening. The first is that urban populations are growing rapidly as more and more people, previously prevented from moving from rural areas by apartheid laws, migrate to the cities. The second is that where normally a positive relationship between urbanisation and development could be expected, in a country where the urban labour market cannot absorb many new entrants, high population growth will constitute a major future challenge for cities.

These ideas are generally valid, but they need to be questioned, especially for some urban centres. It is hard to predict what is going to happen to urban populations in the decades to come, because the real dynamics of migration and the ultimate impact of HIV and Aids are unknown. The intricate relationship between urban population growth and human and economic development cannot yet be modelled. Relatively 'under-urbanised' and slow-growth urban populations may ultimately pose a far greater challenge to cities than rapid urbanisation, even in a context of scarce formal sector jobs.

AN URBANISING SOUTH AFRICA

Following a general trend

The world is gradually urbanising. The developed world is already 75% urban, and this figure is still increasing, although very slowly. By contrast, the developing world is now seeing the demographic tectonic event the developed world saw in the mid-to-late 1800s as a result of the industrial revolution. Urban growth in the developing world is accelerating. Urbanisation stood at 27% in 1975 and was dramatically up to 40% in 2000. Over the next three decades, the urban population of the developing world is expected to grow at 2,4% per annum, double the average rate of population growth as a whole at 1,2%. Urban growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is even faster than this. Sometime early in the 21st century we will cross that invisible threshold when more than 50% of the global population will live in urban areas. And by 2030, some 5 billion people, 60% of the world's population, will be urban. Most will be living in large cities in the developing world. By 2015, there will be approximately 550 cities of over 1 million people and 426 of these will be in developing countries. The world is also projected to have at least 21 mega-cities of over 10 million people. All but a few of these will be in the developing world.

South Africa is following this trend. It is already ahead of the global curve and well ahead of Sub-Saharan Africa. In 1996, 53,7% of the population was urbanised. Now this stands at 58%, compared to 34% in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is projected to rise to 64% in 2030, whereas Sub-Saharan Africa in general will be where South Africa was in 1996, at 53%.

This broad urbanisation picture is an important backdrop, but it also contains some commonly held perceptions that require further examination. At first glance, the current South African city growth statistics seem to line up with the developing world trends.

Between 1996 and 2001, the population of the largest 21 urban centres in South Africa rose from 18,4 million to 21,1 million – 14,23% over the period. This was a growth rate of 2,7% per annum on average (compared to developing world average of 2,4%). By contrast, the annual average rate of growth of South Africa's population as a whole was 2,01% (developing world 1,2%), and excluding the 21 largest urban centres, 1,41%.

But to focus only on the last half decade and on average growth rates is to miss a much bigger and more nuanced picture.

	NINE CITIES	SA POPULATION	SA OUTSIDE 9 CITIES
1946 population	2 894 710	7 369 709	4 474 999
2001 population	16 581 772	44 819 778	28 238 006
Growth rate 1946-2001	3,22%	3,34%	3,41%
Growth rate 1946-1960	3,56%	5,69%	6,83%
Growth rate 1960-1970	3,31%	3,14%	3,06%
Growth rate 1970-1980	2,71%	1,39%	0,77%
Growth rate 1980-1991	2,13%	1,96%	1,88%
Growth rate 1991-1996	6,05%	5,54%	5,27%
(adjusted 1991-1996)	**(4,54%)**	**(5,54%)**	**(5,96%)**
Growth rate 1996-2001	2,80%	2,01%	1,55%

The long-term view

Over the last 55 years, between the 1946 census and the 2001 census, the nine SACN cities saw an average annual population growth rate of 3,22%. This was marginally slower that the average growth rate of the South African population outside the nine cities, at 3,41%. This has a lot to do with the distorting effects of apartheid spatial planning, in particular the removal of millions of people to areas of so-called 'displaced urbanisation', as well as misguided decentralisation policies during the 1980s. The table above shows that since the 1970s cities have been growing much faster than the national population, but the growth picture is distorted by the establishment of the so-called TBVC states. These apartheid constructions were never covered by the South African censuses.

The current rate of growth in the nine SACN cities is fast, but not nearly as fast as it was in previous periods. Two periods are important. First, not surprisingly, the end of apartheid saw a sudden jump in the rate of city growth. The exact picture is obscured by the fact that some of the SACN cities' new boundaries now include areas that were previously part of the TBVC states,

The mass African migration to the cities in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s was overwhelmingly unskilled and people found work in the mines or in the production of standardised wage goods using simple technologies. Employment was at low wages, but it grew as rapidly as the population. Conditions at the beginning of the twenty-first century are different. There is high unemployment in the cities, especially in the African townships and informal settlements. And the demand is increasingly for skilled labour, whose supply is constrained by the poor functioning of the educational system. Migration from areas in South Africa outside the cities cannot supply the need; in general, the educational level among such migrants is lower than the inadequate urban level, not higher. In short, the era of mass unskilled in-migration is over: there is no incentive on anyone's part to continue it.
(Demographic report for iGoli 2010 and Joburg 2030, City of Joburg, 2000)

and so their re-incorporation in the early-to-mid 1990s looks like an abnormally large spike in population growth, both for affected cities and the South African population as a whole. However, even if this anomaly is taken into account by removing the affected cities from the picture, the average annual SACN city growth rate was still 4,5% between 1991 and 1996. The current average annual growth rate of 2,8% therefore represents a slowing down from a more rapid urbanisation trend of only a few years earlier. This is independently confirmed by data from the 1998 October Household Survey. Migration of heads of households leapt 82,2% between the periods 1985-89 and 1990-94. It fell by -5% between 1990-94 and 1995-99.

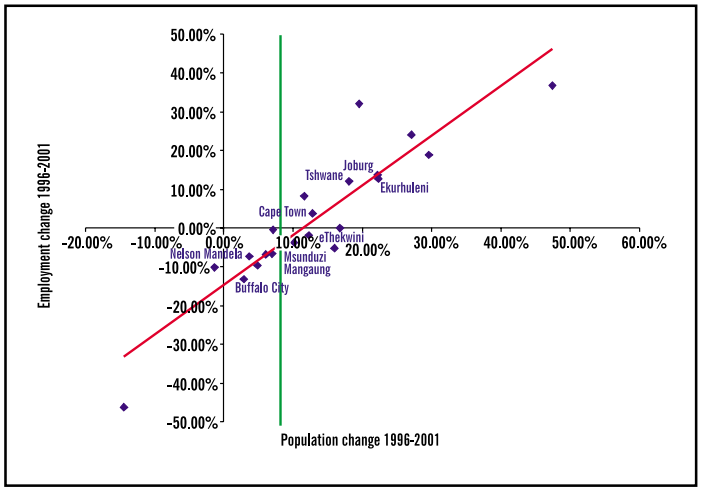
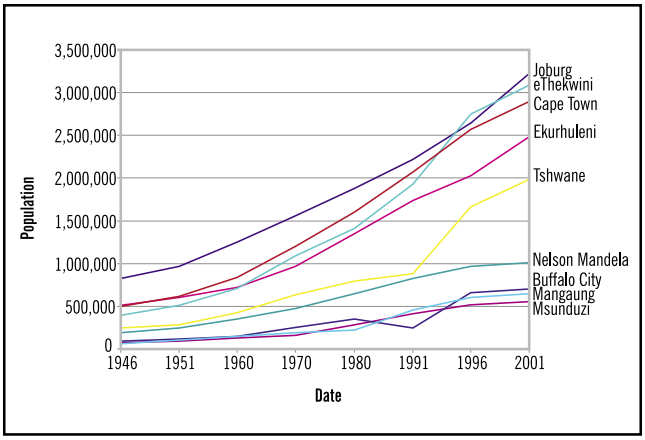
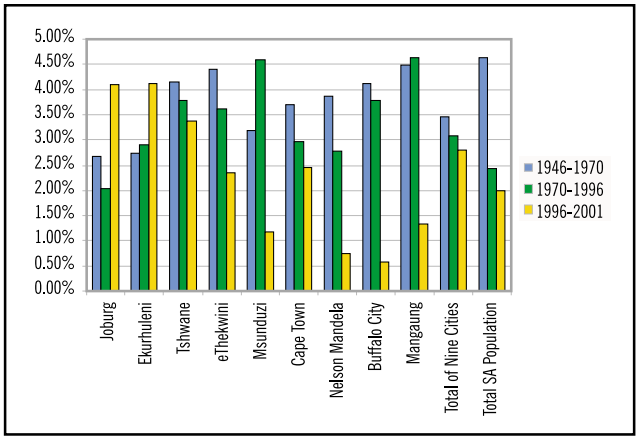


Figure 4. Growth and decline. A correlation of population and employment change between 1996 and 2001 in 21 key SA cities.

Second, current city growth is much slower than it was in the first half of the last century. During Johannesburg's *iGoli 2010* planning process in 2000, demographic experts argued that very fast city growth now lies in South Africa's past (the 1991-96 post-apartheid settlement adjustments notwithstanding). As it turns out, the argument is less valid for the city for which it was put forward: Johannesburg grew at a rate of 4,1% per annum in 1996-2001. But the argument does seem valid in more general terms. There now appears to be a return to the general pattern of slower-than-previous city growth established in the 1970s and 1980s.

Figure 5. Growth rates in the nine SACN cities and a further 12 'secondary cities'.





	Joburg	eThekwini	Cape Town	Ekurhuleni	Tshwane	Nelson Mandela	Buffalo City	Mangaung	Msunduzi	21 city growth 21 cities	Growth out-side
1996	2 639 110	2 751 193	2 56 3612	2 026 807	1 68 2701	969 771	682 287	603 704	521 805	18 464 011	22 119 559
2001	3 225 812	3 090 122	2 893 247	2 480 276	1 985 983	1 005 778	701 890	645 441	553 223	21 091 465	23 728 313
5y growth	22,23%	12,32%	12,86%	22,37%	18,02%	3,71%	2,87%	6,91%	6,02%	14,23%	7,27%
Gr/annum	4,10%	2,35%	2,45%	4,12%	3,37%	0,73%	0,57%	1,35%	1,18%	2,70%	1,41%

	Emfuleni	Polokwane	Mbombela	King Sabata	Matjhabeng	Rustenberg	Newcastle	Mogale City	uMhlathuze	Emalahleni	Mafikeng	Sol Plaatjie
1996	597 948	424 976	425 663	395 945	476 927	311 326	287 260	223 657	196 183	236 680	242 193	204 263
2001	658 421	508 277	474 806	415 229	408 170	395 540	332 981	289 724	289 190	276 413	259 478	201 464
5y growth	10,11%	19,60%	11,55%	4,87%	-14,42%	27,05%	15,92%	29,54%	47,41%	16,79%	7,14%	-1,37%
Gr/annum	1,95%	3,64%	2,21%	0,96%	-3,07%	4,90%	3,00%	5,31%	8,07%	3,15%	1,39%	-0,28%

Differences between cities

Not all the cities are growing at the same speed. Some of the cities (Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane) are seeing strong growth, at between 3,3% and 4,1% per annum. Other cities (eThekwini and Cape Town), are more stable. They are growing, but not much faster than the natural national population growth rate of about 2% per annum. Four cities (Nelson Mandela, Buffalo City, Mangaung and Msunduzi) are growing very slowly, slower in fact than the mainly rural areas outside South Africa's largest 21 cities and towns (a rate of only 1,4% per year).

On average, the nine cities in the SACN are growing faster than the next strata of 'secondary cities'. But again the average may be deceiving. Some of the fastest growth is being seen in these secondary cities. The four fastest growing SACN cities (Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, Tshwane and Cape Town) together had a growth rate of 3,5% in 1996-2001. By contrast, the four fastest growing second-tier cities (Mogale City, Polokwane, Rustenberg and uMhlathuze) together grew at 5,1%.

The nine cities show a rough correspondence between population growth and employment growth. Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane all have the fastest population growth, and also the largest increase in employed people, between 1996 and 2001. Ethekwini and Cape Town both showed growth close to the national average, and largely stable workforces. The four cities with the weakest population growth all showed declining employment.

On the other hand, one or two cities are in steep decline. The most notable is Matjhabeng (Klerksdorp). This town lost a remarkable 68 757 people between 1996 and 2001, with a population decline of -3% per annum, and an even more staggering loss of 82 409 jobs, a decline of 46,3% in the employed population in the space of five years.

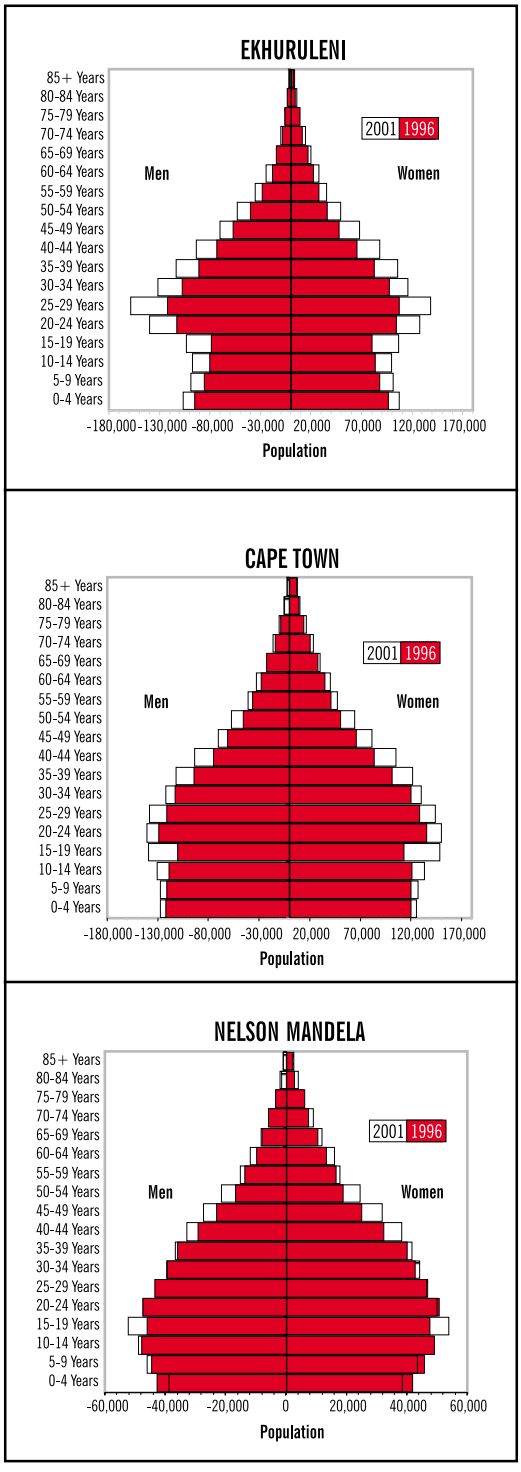


Figure 6. Population age and gender pyramids for a sample of 3 cities, one in each group showing 'rapid growth', 'stable growth' and 'weak growth'.

Understanding population shifts

The populations of the nine cities are changing fast. But dynamics are not easily understood simply by talking about 'rapid urbanisation'. Urban population growth is happening, in some cities very quickly, but the trends suggest that it is not enough just to think about 'the shift of population from rural to urban areas'. Population changes are complex and confusing, and are yet to be fully understood in city planning processes. Few of the SACN cities are currently able to accurately project their population movements. It is clear that deeper thinking around what is happening to the cities' populations is needed. A noted demographic expert, doing population projections for Johannesburg's *iGoli 2010* planning process, says it best: 'A population projection is a way of organising current information about demographic magnitudes, not an infallible method for predicting the future. Demographic conditions never unfold exactly in accordance with a projection. But the advantage of having a projection is that the various factors bearing on population growth are brought

	CITY PLANNING ESTIMATES CIRCA 2001	2001 CENSUS ACTUAL FIGURES	DIFFERENCE IN ESTIMATED VS CENSUS
Nelson Mandela	1 500 000	1 005 778	- 494 222
Buffalo City	959 975	701 890	- 258 085
Johannesburg	2 833 226	3 225 812	+ 392 586
Ekurhuleni	2 026 381	2 480 277	+ 453 896
Tshwane	2 200 000	1 985 983	- 214 017
Cape Town	3 121 532	2 893 246	- 228 286
Mangaung	739 535	645 441	- 94 094
eThekwini	3 064 624	3 090 121	+ 25 497
Msunduzi	523 470	553 223	+ 29 753

into systematic relationships with one another. When outcomes vary from projections, it prompts a search for reasons why.'

EXPLAINING TRENDS: MIGRATION AND DISEASE

Temporary rural/urban migration

After apartheid, many observers believed that the cities would see mass permanent rural to urban migration as those people who wanted to be urban, but were previously barred by law from living in cities, could now settle where they wanted to. This seemed so obvious that questions around temporary or circular labour migration all but disappeared from StatsSA surveys. In South Africa, people are moving to cities. Analysis of data from the October Household Survey in 1988 shows that 969 941 heads of households moved into the nine SACN cities between 1990 and 1998, compared to 760 065 over the entire period 1940-1989. But does this urbanisation mean that people are giving up rural lives to settle in cities and towns? There is some evidence that the movement from rural to urban areas is not always steady, one-way and permanent.

Various demographic studies on rural to urban migration in South Africa present a picture of very tentative urbanisation, despite the fast growth of some cities. One very important study is a comprehensive Demographic Surveillance Survey conducted in the Agincourt village of Bushbuckridge by the Wits School of Public Health. This interviews every household in the village annually, to give a changing picture of some 68 000 rural lives. The results from 2001 show that there has been some permanent migration to urban areas since 1992, but a relatively small number of households are moving permanently out the village to cities. Of 'out-migrations' from the survey-district, 15% went to rural towns and only 6% went to cities. The rest went to other rural villages. Very significantly, migrations to towns and cities were balanced by permanent return migrations from urban areas.

Census data suggests at least two trends worth watching.

First, mapped population density data from the 1996 and 2001 censuses does show increases in the densities in major urban areas. But it also shows large density increases in typically rural areas and small towns. This confirms the Agincourt evidence of people migrating to other villages and rural towns, and suggests a possible future pattern of people coagulating into smaller, more diffuse settlements.

Second, the apartheid migrant-labour pattern of rural youth moving to urban areas, only to return whenever urban opportunities are closed off, or when a store of capital has been built up to invest in rural homesteads, seems to be continuing. People appear to be migrating at younger ages. Hence the large increase in population in the 15-19 age group in all the cities. This could be due to the accelerated disintegration of rural families, or perhaps to youths being sent to finish schooling or start post-school training in better urban based educational institutions. Reports from the start of the 2004 school year suggested that Gauteng schools had to accommodate an unexpected additional 70 000 migrant pupils from outside the province.

'The hinterland is emptying, but it is doing so in strange and disturbing ways, throwing the countryside into a painful interregnum… Practically every member of the last two generations of peasants and farm workers has migrated to the cities in early adulthood, swearing they would rather starve than work the land. However, their life stories seldom turn out as they had imagined. They keep coming back, again and again, throughout their adult lives, to the heritages they have disclaimed. For the truth they soon discover is that urban SA treats newcomers from the hinterland like dirt. In the mid-20th century, industry absorbed unskilled migrants in their hundreds of thousands. Today, all but a lucky few find that they are sentenced to live their lives on the periphery of the metropolis, their homes tin shacks, their neighbours untrustworthy strangers, the wages they get when they find work barely better than in the countryside. Many end up journeying back to their ancestral homes incessantly during the course of their failed adult lives. They are drifters, not yet properly urban, no longer properly rural, scavenging what they can from both the cities and the rural villages.'
(Jonny Steinberg (author of Midlands*) 'Rural SA still a dumping ground of the unwanted', Business Day, 29 August 2002)*

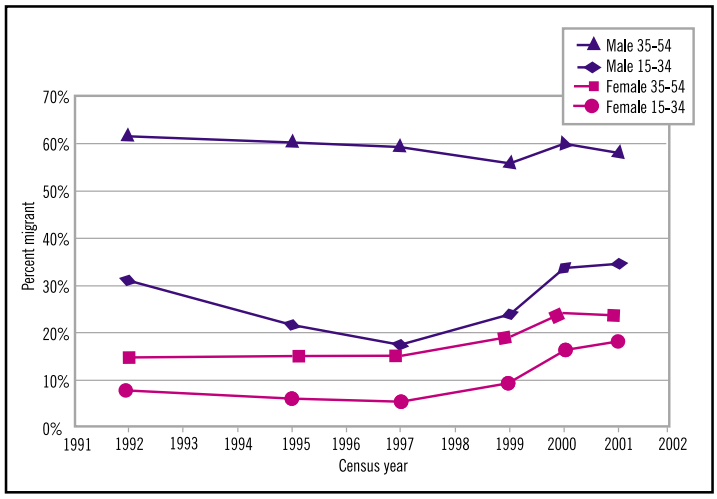
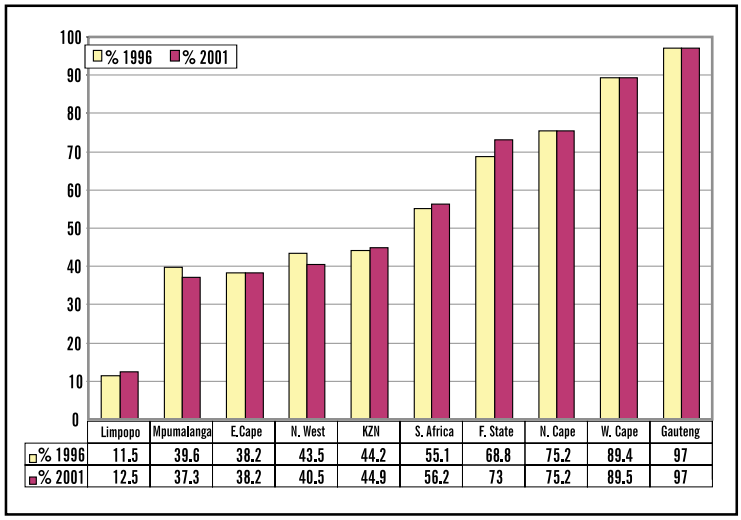


Figure 7. Agincourt, Bushbuckridge Demographic Surveillance Survey, migration module results for 2001.

Regardless of this trend the data continues to tell of patterns of return later in life.

We currently tend to think about our cities as being overwhelmed by rapid urbanisation, but it is possible that our cities are also being affected by what could be called 'under-urbanisation', a lack of full investment by rural in-migrants in their new urban lives.



	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	E.Cape	N. West	KZN	S. Africa	F. State	N. Cape	W. Cape	Gauteng
% 1996	11.5	39.6	38.2	43.5	44.2	55.1	68.8	75.2	89.4	97
% 2001	12.5	37.3	38.2	40.5	44.9	56.2	73	75.2	89.5	97

Figure 8. From StatsSA's investigation into appropriate definitions of rural and urban areas, this graph compares percentages of population living in urban areas in 1996 and 2001 across provinces, taking into account a new definition of urban, and correcting for the misclassification of many small towns as rural in 1996. The 'trends' shown are dependent on the potentially troublesome definition or 'urban' discussed earlier, but do suggest that some areas are seeing anything but a mass movement to towns and cities.

Moving from city to city

City-to-city migration may be increasing. The census data suggests that those cities that are currently seeing employment growth are also receiving more than their fair share of jobless migrants. In turn, those seeing very weak employment growth are losing population, both relatively and in absolute terms, especially in the 20-24 and 25-29 age cohorts.

The trends can be seen by comparing Cape Town and Buffalo City. Cape Town grew employment by 3,7% over the five years between 1996 and 2001, but its unemployed population grew 76%. By contrast, even though it shed 13,1% of its available jobs, Buffalo City's unemployed population grew only 55,4%. This suggests that as the unemployment rate in this city climbs to over 53,1%, the long-term and newly unemployed have started to abandon it in search of work elsewhere. It is possible that they are migrating to rural areas, but more likely that they are moving to other towns and cities, such as Cape Town.

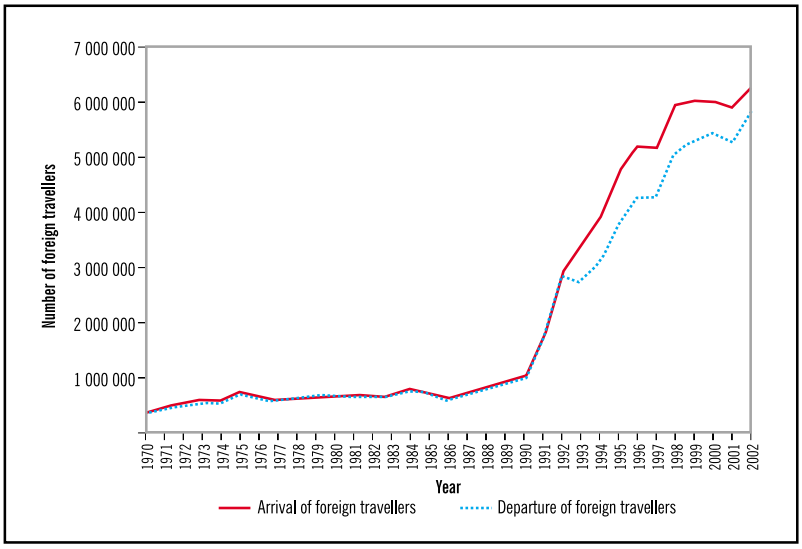
City-to-city migration may be more permanent than rural to urban migration. It is possible that, over time, the relative size of cities such as Cape Town may increase faster than that of Johannesburg or Ekurhuleni, cities whose current very-fast growth may be attributable more to temporary/circular rural to urban migration patterns.

Intra-provincial and intra-city migration

Across the nine SACN cities a remarkable 73,6% of residents were living in the same suburb in 2001 as the one that they were living in 1996. A further 8,8% moved house within the city. 9,1% of those living in the SACN cities in 2001 were new-migrants into the city. As expected, this figure drops to as low as 5,5% in Nelson Mandela, one of the four slow-growing cities, and it rises to above 10% for the three fast-growing cities in Gauteng. This figure in turn has to be qualified however. For example, 13,7% of new migrants on Johannesburg came from Ekurhuleni and Tshwane, and a further 10,4% from other parts of Gauteng. In addition, whereas Johannesburg received 88 071 of its 364 792 new migrants from the rest of Gauteng, it also lost 92 396 people to the rest of the province (47,5% of its total out migration). Figure 9 for in and out migration to and from the cities and the remainder of their provinces are shown in Appendix 1 in the Statistical Almanac.

The differences in the extent of intra-city movement are worth noting. 11% of total population in Cape Town moved house between 1996 and 2001, and 10% moved in Tshwane. However, only 5,9% moved suburb in Msunduzi and 7,1% in eThekwini. It is recognised that these intra-city movements are as important in the shaping of post-apartheid cities as are inter-city and rural-urban migration, but why and how they occur remain unclear.

Different cities are likely to see very different dynamics. For example, the movement in Cape Town may be accounted for by a more liquid property market in which predominantly white residents are trading up in homes. The relatively high level of intra-city movement in Tshwane may reflect a very different dynamic, such as the movement of peri-urban populations in the Winterveld into more conveniently located housing developments and the inner city. Chapters 6 and 7 consider one dimension of this intra-city movement, namely the shift of large numbers of households out of formal and informal dwellings in the backyards of township and suburban properties.



International migration

Much has been made of the increasing number of foreign migrants in South African cities. Trends here are notoriously difficult to track. The census cannot assure accurate statistics for people who, as a general rule, do not want their presence to be officially registered. Some estimates have been made over the last decade, but these have tended to be more speculation than fact. Two dynamics are important.

First, there was a sudden increase in the number of foreign migrants in the country illegally in search of work opportunities in the early 1990s. Some cities are convinced that this number is growing all the time. The available evidence suggests that the numbers of people entering the country legally on holiday or business visas, and then staying on illegally, have stabilised at a few hundred thousand.

Second, there is an increasing number of migrants here legally on long-term study permits, work permits or as asylum seekers/refugees. The asylum seeker trend is the most interesting. The Department of Home Affairs and United Nations High Commission for Refugees keep records of people applying for asylum at its five reception points in Johannesburg, Tshwane, eThekwini, Nelson Mandela and Cape Town. In the year 2000, 2 728 people applied for asylum, and in 2001, 4 786. Then the country saw a huge jump in the numbers of asylum seekers to 20 842 requests for asylum in 2002. Preliminary figures for the first two quarters of 2003 are similar.

Three things are driving this trend. The first is ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The second is resistance to repatriation of refugees from Angola and Africa's Great Lakes region, currently in camps in Zambia and Tanzania. Although conflict in their countries has subsided, they do not yet want to return home, and are instead are seeking to move southwards, increasing the numbers of applications in Malawi and Namibia as well as South Africa.

The third is the stricter immigration provisions in the new Immigration Act, introduced early in 2002. This imposes harsh penalties on anyone giving illegal immigrants work or shelter. With their options closing because of this law, many economic migrants may be trying to legalise their presence by applying for asylum, since the Refugees Act holds that no-one who has applied for refugee status may be removed until their application has been considered, and there is a substantial backlog in the processing of applications.

	1996	2001
Johannesburg	65 205	102 326
Ethekwini	20 764	21 696
Cape Town	31 914	37 222
Ekurhuleni	37 432	46 996
Tshwane	16 049	23 679
Nelson Mandela	4 410	4 885
Buffalo City	2 563	2 618
Mangaung	2 274	4 402
Msunduzi	2 692	3 803
Total	**183 303**	**247 627**

Figure 10. Table of number of persons in each SACN city with non-South African citizenship, 1996- 2001. Graph of the gap between the number of foreign travellers arriving in and leaving South Africa, 1970-2002. The numbers in the graph are distorted by the inclusion of various categories of travellers for the first time around 1991, notably tourists and contract migrant workers from Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Namibia. The gap is what is important.

The impact of HIV and Aids

Information on how the HIV and Aids epidemic is, or will be, affecting South Africa's cities is currently sketchy. What is almost certain is that there will very soon be a drop in the population of those age groups that were sexually active some 10 years ago. The Actuarial Society of South Africa (ASSA) has developed a model of the likely progress of the disease. The results of even a reasonably conservative scenario, factoring in various preventative measures, indicate that the country's population as a whole will decline slightly after 2007 as a result of the epidemic. Other research disputes that HIV and Aids will cause a negative growth rate, but nonetheless agree that its impact on population growth will be significant. Cities are unlikely to escape this demographic event. In fact they may be more seriously affected as late-stage Aids sufferers, unable to secure meaningful care in over-crowded urban health centres, return to rural homesteads to be cared for by extended family.

A close study of population curves does already show relative declines in population in the age groups 20-24, 24-29 and 30-34 between 1996 and 2001. There is also a steep decline in the numbers in the 0-4 age group, suggesting the drop in fertility that accompanies the epidemic. However, these declines are most notable in what this report has called 'weak-growth' cities. They could therefore equally be explained by the out-migration of work-seekers of child-bearing age. It is interesting, though, that decline in these age-groups is much more evident on the female side of the population curve. We know that women are less likely than men to migrate, and are much more vulnerable to contracting HIV and to the repeat infections that bring the more rapid onset of Aids. The drop in the number of women could also be due to earlier than anticipated returns of the greater numbers of women migrants noted in the Agincourt study (see figure 7). Whether this is a result of the onset of Aids, or simply to early disengagement from urban contexts that are unable to provide women with meaningful opportunities, cannot be known at this stage.

IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT TRENDS

Perspectives on demographic trends in South Africa's major cities have been dominated by the notion that, like the rest of the developing world, and especially Sub-Saharan Africa, our population is rapidly urbanising. The trends analysis suggests that, although certainly true for some SACN cities, this broad understanding of demographic developments must be nuanced. There are a number of possible scenarios for the nine SACN cities.

- Some cities may continue to see fast urbanisation. Under certain conditions, such as the failure of urban economies in other parts of the country, some may see much faster growth than currently, and a few may even follow those secondary cities that have become hyper-growth centres. In this scenario fast growth in some cities goes hand in hand with much slower growth in others, as people abandon those centres in search of urban opportunities elsewhere.
- It is just as likely, however, that the current fast-growing SACN cities will drop back to 'stable-growth' rates under the impact of under-urbanisation and HIV and Aids, and that the current stable and weak-growth cities will continue to develop at their current pace.

ASSA 2000	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total pop	47 685 361	47 757 797	47 751 189	47 687 369	47 591 195	47 486 822	47 394 750
Aids infect	6 994 937	6 824 732	6 592 727	6 320 107	6 030 322	5 746 036	5 486 208
Aids death	563 427	628 215	676 839	705 316	712 535	700 360	672 894

Figure 11. ASSA 2000 Aids and Demographic model, showing South African population and Aids mortality trends in 2006 through 2012, 'Change Scenario'.

- The impact of HIV and Aids and under-urbanisation may be greater than expected, dragging all the cities towards a weak-growth trajectory, and causing a few to fall into the malaise of population decline or even hyper-decline that has affected some secondary cities.

This more complex picture has important implications for how SACN cities understand and plan for their possible futures.

When the primary challenge facing cities is understood as unexpected 'over-population' from urbanisation, the appropriate strategic response is naturally how to deal with the basic needs of huge numbers of new residents within the limits of the municipal budget. Since jobs for newcomers cannot be guaranteed, cities fast filling up with new rural in-migrants must quickly face up to the prospect of deepening urban poverty, spreading slums, and increasing social welfare demands. The principal planning concern must be how to try address widening backlogs in the facilities needed for social reproduction. This translates into rolling out basic-service infrastructure as quickly as possible to new households, and getting as many as possible involved in the economy.

But what is an appropriate strategic response if cities are instead facing the spectre of slower growth due to HIV and Aids and under-urbanisation? Some municipalities may look on weaker growth with relief. But this is to miss the fact that there may be some real dangers in lower than expected growth.

The key challenge may be population instability and under-investment, not 'over-population'. Some cities may need to be much more concerned with 'assimilation' – how to ensure that their floating 'not yet properly urban, no longer properly rural' residents commit more fully to urban life.

On the opportunity side may be the new arrival of large numbers of 15-19 year olds, either in search of a good education or a first chance at making a living. Another very significant opportunity may be the arrival of asylum seekers and economic migrants from elsewhere in the world and especially Africa. The presence of foreign nationals in South African cities is often placed on the liability side of the balance sheet by city leaders. There is a perception that immigrants 'steal jobs', or put added pressure on already strained urban services. Their social and economic contribution to the country, and cities, is routinely discounted. Studies in other countries have often concluded that immigrants contribute far more to local economies and, in turn, the public purse, than they take away. Most importantly, cities with diverse, multicultural populations, with significant foreign national minorities well-networked back to home countries, have found that their cosmopolitanism is a major strength in a globalising world.

On the cost side may be the need to minimise the impact of large numbers of residents shifting household expenditure into medical costs, and/or choosing to leave the city with whatever capital they have been able to accumulate.

In a country in settlement transition, a town that has no poor would be evidence that that town is not playing its part in the necessary restructuring of settlement patterns: it would be an apartheid town. So it is not the presence of poor people in town that should cause concern, but the average time taken to assimilate migrants. Very broadly speaking, one of the prime functions of towns is to make an increasing number of people realize that they need to achieve a standard of living, a level of expenditure and income and a level of productivity above the average of their present environment, to provide these people with incentives to move, and to help these 'new poor' assimilate rapidly into their new surroundings.
(Jean-Marie Cour, paper on West-African population dynamics for World Bank Workshop on Urban-Rural Linkages, 9 March 2000)

NEW ROAD, MIDRAND

On the N1, midway between the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria, New Road is in the heart of one of the fastest-growing investment centres in Southern Africa. Built in the 1990s it was a symbol of new things to come: the energy and hope of the new South Africa and the intensity in productivity and growth that economies of agglomeration and knowledge concentration bring. Cemented on the promise of foreign direct investment after decades of sanctions and isolation, this was South Africa's dialup to the IT and telecommunications highway; an off-ramp to the new economy.

New Road has made access to Midrand easier. The intersection with N1 is widely regarded as an engineering and construction feat. It's a landmark with a multiplicity of road markings and signs, two large fuel stations and a restaurant.

The recent story of Midrand is one of rapid economic and social change.

A decade ago this was home to few people, the majority living on plots or agricultural holdings. Around the industrial area, the remnants of this rural way of life are still visible. For the *plotrotte*, as residents escaping the city life were known, Midrand was a space on the margins, a safe place where they could escape the evils of city life and often the tentacles of an authoritarian state. From the 1960s, it was a haven for gay and mixed-race couples, and for artists. There was little development partly due to the agricultural zoning but also because apartheid planning designated the peri-urban area for black township development.

In the last decades of the century, the landscape changed dramatically. Led by the breweries, companies started building factories and offices, as the site's potential for commercial urban development was realised. Now it's home to major players in the fields of telecommunications, IT, pharmaceutical, biotechnology, electronics, defence and aerospace, motor and security, warehousing and distribution-related businesses. Glass and concrete office buildings – with electric fencing and security personnel at the boomed and gated entrances – are a striking feature of the landscape.

In the 90s Midrand was the fastest growing investment town in Africa. In 1999, R720-million worth of building plans were approved, nearly 4% of the national market share, with a growth rate in excess of 20% per year for the last couple of years. Since then, enthusiasm has cooled a little, with an oversupply of office space and some negative perceptions towards the area's inclusion in the City of Joburg.

There are other changes too. Developers have responded to the growing number of people commuting to Midrand by building large town-house complexes. The majority are owned or rented by the black middle and affluent classes, with the remaining plots still home to an older white generation.

However, most of Midrand's population lives in informal settlements. Ivory Park, with about 225 000 people, accounts for 80% of Midrand's entire population, and has grown steadily over the last decade, although it occupies only 7% of the land area. Most residents are poor: 70% earn less than R2 500 pm, and of these 34% have no formal employment.

Change, as they say, is never total and complete. To the west, New Road quickly diminishes into a bumpy single lane, with fenced plots on both sides of the road. A mere kilometre away from one of the busiest intersections in South Africa is peri-urban countryside. To the east, New Road, where Grand Central Airport and a few light industries are scattered, is as dilapidated. Here too are those left behind in the new economy: street vendors selling fruits, cigarettes and vegetables, and unskilled workers who find no other place in this skills economy than cleaning large offices or guarding expensive cars. Walking east along New Road, or taking a taxi to an informal settlement where the roads are not quite as new, if they are there at all.