

# Urbanisation in South Africa: a critical review of policy, planning and practice

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## Abstract

*The purpose of the study was to assess the extent to which urban policy, planning and practice are adequately responding to the inherent demographic and economic forces that underpin South Africa's urbanization. The methods involved the analysis of data on population size, change and household income and official policy and planning documents to trace trends, key principles of urban policy, planning and practice. Based on the eight metropolitan municipal areas in South Africa, spatial development frameworks (SDF) were analysed to establish the extent to which they indicate alignment between policy-planning and practice. The results indicate limitations of urban policy design; the low priority accorded to population change in the urbanisation process, planning outcomes out of tune with policy objectives, failure to reform the urban land market and continuing growth of informal settlements on the urban edge. The findings call for a radical review of urban policy, planning and practice.*

**Keywords:** Population change, process, spatial development framework, urban form, urban growth

## Résumé

Le but de l'étude était d'évaluer le point auquel la politique, la planification et la pratique urbaines répondent en juste proportion aux forces démographiques et économiques inhérentes qui soutiennent l'urbanisation de l'Afrique du Sud. Les méthodes ont impliqué l'analyse des données sur la taille de population, le revenu de changement et de ménage et des documents de la politique et de la planification de fonctionnaire pour tracer des tendances, des principes principaux de la planification urbaine de politique et pratique. Basé sur les huit secteurs municipaux métropolitains en Afrique du Sud, les cadres spatiaux de développement (SDF) ont été analysés pour établir le point auquel ils indiquent l'alignement entre la politique-planification et la pratique. Les résultats indiquent des limitations de conception urbaine de politique ; la basse priorité s'est accordée au changement de population du processus d'urbanisation, projetant des résultats hors de l'air avec des objectifs de politique, manque de reformer le marché urbain de terre et continuant la croissance des règlements sans cérémonie sur le bord urbain. Les résultats réclament un examen radical de la politique, de la planification et de la pratique urbaines.

**Mots-clés:** Changement de population, processus, cadre spatial de développement, forme urbaine, croissance urbaine

## Introduction

Current projections indicate that 50% of Africa's population will be urbanized by 2034 (UNO 2012) while the total population of Africa will reach a staggering 2 billion by 2050. Of these, at least 60% will be urbanized (Silva 2012). In South Africa, the 2011 census (StatsSA 2012) indicate that the country had a population of roughly 51.8 million people as of 2011 with an annual growth rate of 1.5% (Stats

SA2012) and an urbanization rate at 61.7% (UNO 2011a). According to UN data (UNO 2011a, 2011b) the rate of urbanisation accelerated in the 1980's reaching a peak at 3.3% in 1993. Since then, there has been a general drop to about 1.3% in 2012 with a projected rate of 1% by 2025. Turok (2012) reports that the urban population exceeded the rural population around 1986-87. Planning for urbanization requires an understanding of the

demographic changes taking place within the city itself and the regional context of rural-urban migration. It calls for an urban policy that facilitates orderly development along a pre-determined spatial trajectory that should inform the actual practice of growth. Often, however, other developments must by necessity be aligned. The result is that in the case of South Africa, it is not clear whether the pre-occupation with shaping an urban form that facilitates the delivery of an efficient service-infrastructure-governance-platform provides adequate space for factoring into the model demographic elements of urbanization. In the absence of planning, however, other options would generate chaotic forms that would contradict the long term aims of orderly development.

In line with this background, the research problem which needs investigation is whether the state of urban policy, urban planning and the practice represent a sound and adequate response to both population growth and urbanization at the level of metropolitan cities. Several objectives are advanced to address this problem; the first deals with a brief outline of recent urbanization trends in order to provide the physical context of the built environment, the second objective traces parallel developments in this environment that are driven by population change, the third objective presents key principles of South Africa's urban policy and planning- in order to see whether these represent an appropriate response to on-going changes in urban form and population, the fourth deals with planning outcomes on the ground (practice) while the fifth represents a synthesis of findings to test for alignment and adequacy. Put together, these objectives are justified given that they provide the means for assessing the internal linkages between planning, policy and practice seen in the context of the urbanisation process. The rest of this paper is made up of five parts: part two covers literature and a brief theoretical background, part three addresses data and methods, part four results and discussion in part five and a conclusion in part six.

### **Literature review**

A significant body of literature exists on urbanization theory (Parnell and Robinson 2012; Morinière 2012) and supplementary approaches centred on urbanisation economies (Jofrey-Monseny and Marin-López 2012; Lin 2010), agglomeration (Ruihiga 2013a), sustainable cities (Shen *et al.* 2011; Solecki *et al.* 2013) and the knowledge economy. Parallel

these approaches has been the development of urban and town planning that has to respond to a continually evolving socio-economic environment (Aggrawal and Butsch 2012; Bacini 2012; Grant 2013; Nhlapo *et al.* 2011) and yet produce an urban form that is integrated, responsive and spatially efficient. Today, urbanization theory (Roy 2009) and urban planning (Fox 2012) remain inter-twined but display divergent approaches that are place and regionally based, depending on the dominant schools of thought at the time and their impact on the actual practice.

The basis of urban theory (Roy 2009) revolves around flows of people, products and information in a time (Fox 2012)-space-continuum underlain by the forces of convergence, agglomeration economies (Ruihiga 2013a) and divergence (dispersal tendencies) which in turn generate patterns of change within the socio-economic landscape. Towns develop on this landscape (Grant 2013) as a response to these changes spurred by increasing population (Potts 2012; Linard *et al.* 2012) labour specialisation, technology and production systems (Ruihiga 2011a). Urban policy, urban planning and practice cannot ignore this theoretical foundation for it impacts on subsequent developments. Urban policy identifies the key principles that guide orderly planning. Planning by necessity translates policy guidelines into the actual practice of land use allocation. But such an allocation has to be sensitive to key elements of urban theory on one hand and the changing characteristics of the urban population on the other hand. Recent research on South Africa's urbanisation process, urban policy and planning is reported in Landman (2012); Marais and Ntema (2013), Nhlapo *et al.* (2011), Napier (2009) and in , Oranje and Merrified (2012). South Africa's urban policy before 1994 was essentially guided by four principles: the need to control the inflow into towns of predominantly African people (Pillay *et al.* 2006), a segregated urban form that allocated residential districts as per ethnic composition (Oranje and Merrifield 2010), the setting up of purely African border towns in the bantustans (Africa homelands) to provide cheap labour to the nearest white town dominated by people of European origin (Nhlapo *et al.* 2011), and a differential infrastructure and service provision system (John 2012) disadvantaged people all at different scales save for purely white areas. The cumulative result of these principles was that the

country had urban areas that were spatially distorted and fragmented (Turok 2012; Napier 2009; Pillay 2008), inefficient and expensive to administer (Didier *et al.* 2012). Since 1994, urban policy (Turok and Parnell 2009) and planning (Todes 2012; Landman 2012) has been driven by the urgent need to address the perceived inequality and injustices of the past, by removing restrictions on free movement and settlement, by removing housing segregation based on ethnic identity, by restricting urban sprawl through infill programs (Marais and Ntema 2012) and by re-engineering an alternative urban form through the spatial development framework (SDF) (Oranje and Merrifield 2010; Landau *et al.* 2011). These developments are best expressed in South Africa's metropolitan areas: Pretoria (Tshwane), Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni (East Rand), Ethekewini (Durban), Mangaung (Bloemfontein), Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth), Buffalo City and Cape Town. But the extent to which there is empirical evidence of change as a response to these interventions vary in time and space. Overall, the characteristics of the apartheid form (Nhlapo *et al.* 2011) has persisted and changing socio-economic indicators may in fact reinforce this, not because of racial discrimination as in the past, but because of persistent inequality in disposable-income (Sutherland and Lewis 2012; Pieterse 2010). This is also echoed in Leibbrandt (2010) who reports on the failure to address poverty and inequality. These developments have to be placed in the wider context of demographic forces shaping continuing urbanisation in the developing world (Sciubba 2012). The UNO (2012) reports that developing countries are characterised in the urbanisation process by a predominantly youthful population and a transitional age structure with reference to the demographic transition model. In the case of South Africa, this is

made worse by a long history of separate development for different population groups which has interfered with urbanisation per se as a historical process (Fox 2012)

### Data sources and methods

The eight metropolitan areas appearing in Figure 1 constitute the study area of interest. The methods involved the use of official data sources and publications from Statistics South Africa and non-governmental agencies on population size and on changes in annual household income to trace trends in urbanization. Population growth rates for the selected metropolitan areas are computed using the natural growth model from demography. Growth rate

$GR = \frac{P(t_2) - P(t_1)}{P(t_1)}$  where GR= growth rate; P=period,  $t_1, t_2$  =are the two specified periods for which the growth is computed. The change in population is commonly expressed as a percentage. Note that the GR value has imbedded within it (B-D) + (I-E) where B,D,I,E stand for birth, death, immigration and emigration consecutively as growth determinants. Official government documents provided information on key principles of urban policy and planning while the annual reports of the municipalities and the integrated development plans (IDPs) were used to trace the extent to which the resulting spatial development frameworks for the metropolitan cities indicate alignment. Deviations between planning and policy were imposed on a rapidly increasing urban population to generate possible growth scenarios for the future. As a review paper, the work is solely based on secondary data sources already in the public domain and on previous analyses.



**Figure 1: Metropolitan areas as of 2011**

Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_the\\_metropolitan\\_municipalities\\_of\\_South\\_Africa\\_\(2011\).svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_metropolitan_municipalities_of_South_Africa_(2011).svg)

## Discussion

### Recent urbanization trends

Results in Figure 1 show that Gauteng alone has three of the seven metropolitan areas with a combined urban population of about nine million as at end of 2011. Cape Town, Buffalo City, Nelson Mandela Bay and eThekweni are coastal port cities whose growth is partly linked to international shipping. Other than those cities in Gauteng, only Mangaung is an inland city. The actual size of these cities- Table I- is reported with caution because the disparity in actual values across different sources arises as a result of continuing boundary changes since 1995. Overall, South Africa registered an urbanisation rate of 61% in 2011 (Stats SA 2012).

**Table I Population and population growth rates of major urban areas in South Africa, 1996-2011**

City	Population			Population Growth Rate	
	1996	2001	2011	1996-2001	2001-2011
Pretoria	1682701	2144505	2921488	5.5	3.6
Ekurhuleni	2026807	2478651	3178471	4.5	2.8
Durban	2751193	3090122	3442361	2.5	1.1
Cape Town	2563612	2892243	3740026	2.6	2.9
Bloemfontein	603704	645400	747437	1.4	1.6

East London	6822 87	6952 78	7552 00	0.4	0.9
Port Elizabeth	9697 71	1005 779	1152 115	0.7	1.5
Johannesburg	2639 110	3225 309	4434 827	4.4	3.8

The actual rates of urban growth vary across different metropolitan areas. Growth rates for the period 1996-2001 and for the period 2001-2011 are computed to generate information in Table I. For the 1996-2001 period, Pretoria (5.48%), Ekurhuleni (4.46%) and Johannesburg (4.44%) register the highest mean growth rates. Buffalo City (East London, King Williams Town, Bhisho) and Port Elizabeth score less than 1%. For the 2001-2011 period, a relative drop in growth rates appear for Pretoria, Ekurhuleni, Durban and Johannesburg. For the largest cities, only Cape Town indicates a higher rate relative to the 1996-2001 period. The rest maintain an upward trajectory.

#### Developments in population change

Variations in population change in Table I are a result of internal shifts within individual cities and the role of rural-to-urban migrations (Muhwava *et al* 2010). Differences in the natural growth at the level of the individual city are often a reflection of the effects of social-economic forces which in turn impact on the demographic transition model. Cities located in those provinces which still exert a noticeable pull on migration (Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape) are likely to remain the most dominant for several years to come.

#### Key principles of urban policy and planning

South Africa's urban development policy as appears in the government's white paper (DOH 1997) highlights a vision governed by a series of long-term goals. Pillay *et al.* (2006:4) highlighted four types of urban areas: (i) tribal areas; (ii) rural formal/commercial farming area; (iii) an urban formal area; and (iv) an urban informal area. Metropolitan cities covered in this study comprise of types (iii) and (iv). These include urban areas that are a spatially and socio-economically integrated. In the case of South Africa, these cities are economically competitive internationally. They are centres of economic and social opportunity with vibrant urban governance. These cities are managed by democratic, efficient, sustainable and accountable metropolitan governments. The issue of environmental sustainability marked by a balance between a quality built environment and open space;

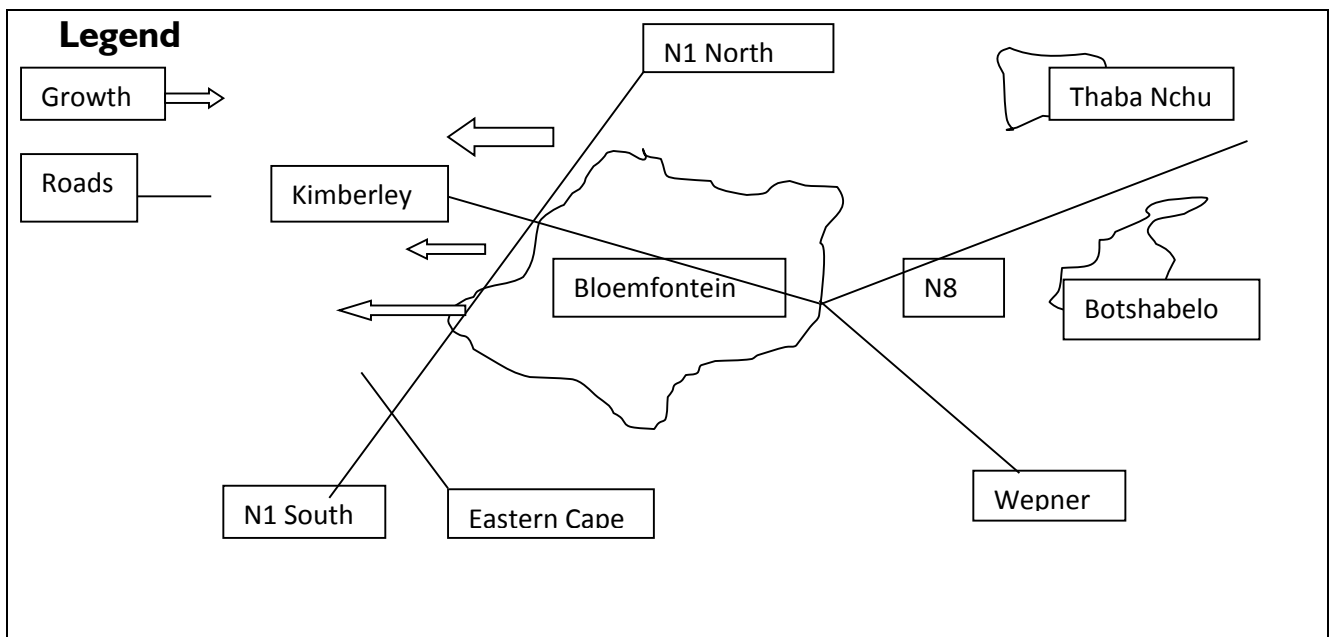
as well as a balance between consumption needs and renewable and non-renewable resources remains essentially an ideal. The same applies to good housing, infrastructure and effective services for households and business which would provide a basis for an equitable standard of living. On the basis of this vision, a major priority remains the need to overcome the separation between spatial planning and urban economic planning. Integrated planning is meant to ensure that planning determines which projects are approved and which elements become the focus of development within urban environments. Several considerations appear to underpin a viable urban development policy in South Africa. Landman (2010) raises doubts about current urban development patterns which appear to worsen levels of inequality and poverty. The Development Facilitation Act (RSA 1995b) provides guidelines on the supply of infrastructure. Government and the private sector should seek to integrate cities and towns by focusing infrastructure on centrally, well-located land to ensure that apartheid patterns are not reinforced. Undoing the apartheid city should focus on: linking the component parts of the city through high-density activity corridors; township upgrading; urban infill; development and integration of apartheid developed "buffer zones", inner city redevelopment; and development and provision of adequate open spaces for recreational purposes (DOH 1997; RSA 1997; RSA 2001). They are meant to negate apartheid-induced segregation, fragmentation and inequality. Today there is evidence that for most of the metropolitan areas, urban infill programs linked to low-cost and middle-class housing have been initiated in spite of opposition from certain sections of civil society. The focus is on integrated planning, rebuilding and upgrading the townships and informal settlements, planning for higher density land-use developments, reforming the urban land and planning system, urban transportation and environmental management. Four priority areas remain the focus of urban development. The first deals with improving housing and infrastructure which involves upgrading and the construction of housing, restoring and extending infrastructure, and increasing access to finance, social development, and designing habitable urban communities (DOH 1997).

The second pillar deals with promoting urban economic development in order to enhance the capacity of urban areas to build on local strengths to generate greater local economic activity, to achieve

sustainability, to alleviate urban poverty, to increase access to informal economic opportunities and to maximise the direct employment opportunities and the multiplier-effect from implementing development programs (DOH 1997). There is evidence that since 2009, Gauteng Province has seen massive infrastructure developments around the main national highways and the completion of Gautrain has had a major impact on the construction industry. Creating institutions for delivery requires significant transformation and capacity building of government at all levels and clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the different government spheres.

**Planning practice and outcomes**

Apart from creating institutions for service delivery, the rest of these programs are best expressed through the spatial development framework (SDF) (Landau *et al.*2012) for each of the metropolitan areas under study. The SDF is flexible and indicative rather than prescriptive (Buffalo City 2011) and this as will be seen later may in itself offer opportunities for departures from expectations. The framework for the Mangaung Metro, Figure 3, provides a futuristic visual image of how the city will look like in example future.



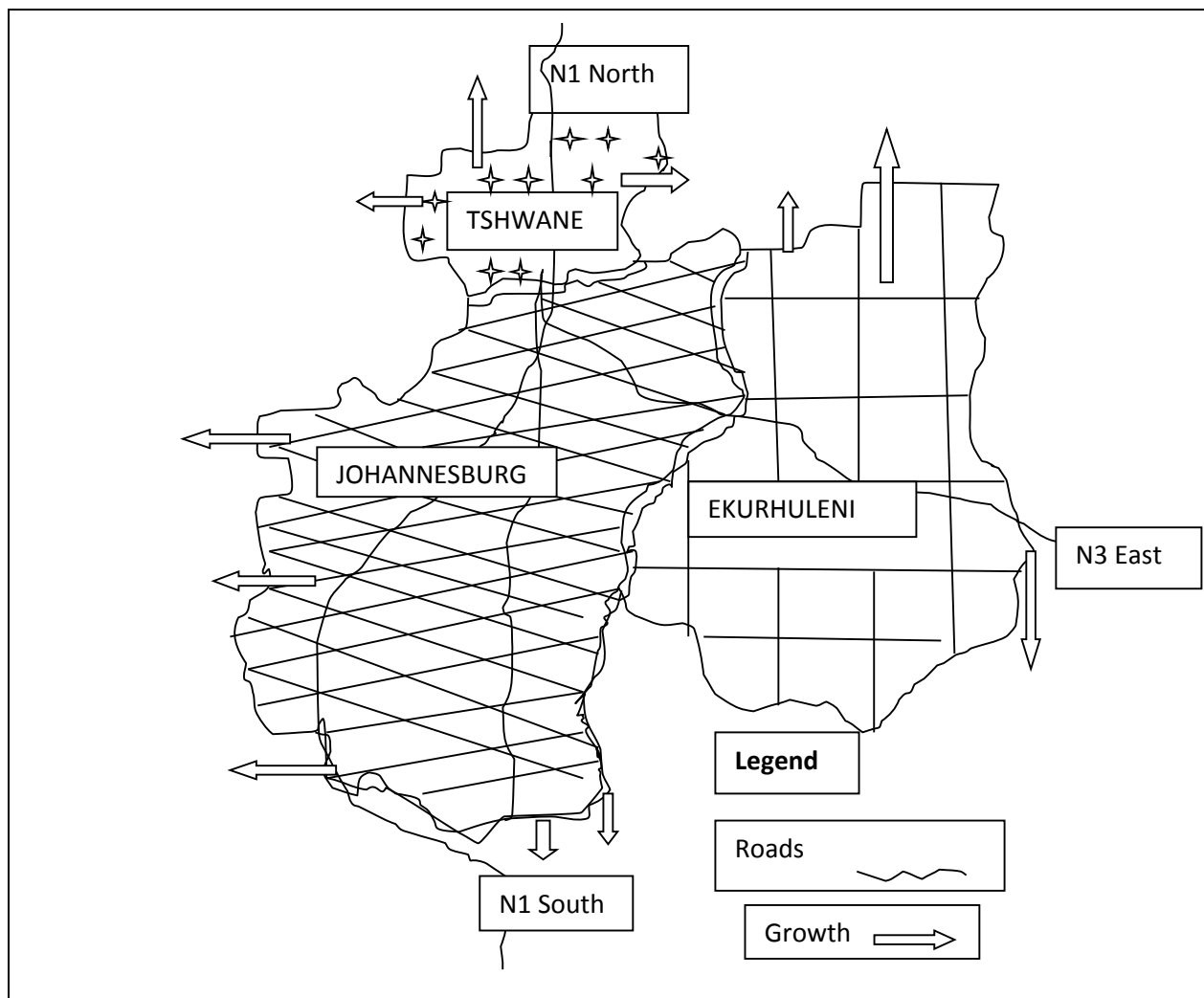
**Figure 3: The SDF of Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality**

Source: Author

In theory, all developments are supposed to be tied to this SDF to assure orderly urban growth. In Figure 3, the extensive undeveloped space between Bloemfontein proper, Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu to the east along route N8 is not indicated as an urban growth priority. This means that the spatial form of Mangaung is unlikely to witness major alterations in the near future. The urban form of the pre-1994 era has been retained such that while growth is towards the north and east, the existence of a buffer zone between the city and

African townships on the eastern margins remain spatially separated.

In the case of Johannesburg, Bond (2002) reports that since excellent infrastructure existed in the largely-white, spacious, upper income suburbs, the failure to specify how existing resources could be more efficiently used was inconsistent with the broader, market-oriented theme of the 1997 White Paper on urban Policy.



**Figure 4: SDF of City of Johannesburg, City of Tshwane and Ekurhuleni**

Source: Author

There was no mention of curbing land speculation, applying taxes to unutilised land, or land acquisition through state rights to expropriate using the principle of eminent domain (all of which are standard techniques for urban land management in other countries). Omitted from the strategy of "Investing in Urban Development" was any concession that most of the main state programs were widely considered to be failures, including Special Presidential Projects on Urban Renewal, and the National Housing Programme. Because these failures were not acknowledged, there was no attempt to learn from past mistakes and take corrective actions in subsequent interventions. While in Figure 4, the outline of the boundaries separating Johannesburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni are shown (City of Johannesburg 2012; City of Tshwane 2012; Ekurhuleni Metro 2012), on the ground, the actual separation is hardly visible because of the density of housing-commercial premises, factories and small holdings. Literally, the

entire area is rapidly being built up. For City of Johannesburg, growth is towards the north and west. For City of Tshwane, continued growth has seen expansion in literally all directions while for Ekurhuleni expansion to the east along the N3 has not occurred as fast as that towards the west and north. But these developments do not appear to correspond with population change in these cities, as earlier indicated in Table I.

The SDF of Ethekewini (Ethekewini Metro 2012a, 2012b) shows that future developments will focus along the coastal strip to the north and south and eastwards along the route to Pietermaritzburg. It also identifies rural localities within city boundaries that are potentially investment destinations in the future. The SDF of Cape Town shows that the existence of significant buffer zones erected during the apartheid past to separate residential districts along race lines are not likely in the near future to be deleted through urban infill programs. The Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan SDF (Mandela Bay Metro

2012) shows that the greatest growth direction will remain the linking corridor to Uitenhage in the west meaning that the present urban form will not see any major restructuring of the urban form because current economic forces are likely instead to reinforce existing distortions. The Buffalo City SDF (Buffalo City 2011) is built around two major nodes; East London and King Williams Town and future growth is planned for the main N2 road link through these forming a corridor that takes linkages to Mdantsane, Berlin, Bhisho and Dimbaza with road links to Mdantsane and Zwelitsha, the two largest African townships in the area

Recent urbanisation trends for South Africa's metropolitan areas do not indicate any explosive surge as has been witnessed in Kinshasa (DRC), Lagos (Nigeria) and Luanda (Angola) (Ruhiiga 2013b) and in Eastern Africa (Ruhiiga, 2013a). This is in agreement with growth projections for Africa which show a steady decline (UN-Habitat 2010, 2009), though variable for most countries. But backlogs of service and infrastructure provision (PICC 2012; KZN 2013) for the masses of the urban poor mean that far higher levels of direct state investment is called for if conditions are to improve and if increasing inequality is to be addressed. City of Johannesburg, for example reported backlogs in electricity for lighting at 9.2% of households; sanitation at 5.4%; population with no access to rubbish disposal at 0.5% while informal houses (shacks accounted for 17.4% in 2011- a slight improvement from the 20.2% of 2001 ( Stats SA 2011; COJ 2012). For City of Cape Town, at least 20.5% of households lived in informal shacks and for Black African households, at least 43% lived in informal dwellings; 0.7% of households had no access to piped water and a similar number for rubbish disposal services (CCT 2012). The results on population change show that South Africa's metropolitan areas will remain the foci of natural growth and rural-urban migrations (Boraine et al 2006; StatsSA 2012) and inflows of immigrants from beyond the country's borders. High levels of rural-urban migrations, especially to Gauteng, Durban and Cape Town are a result of rural poverty. Since 1995, no radical transformation in rural production systems has occurred especially in the former homelands. These have instead remained source areas of labour supply to the mines and to the cities. Due to major income differentials between urban and rural areas (Stats SA 2012), what in essence is

occurring is a massive transfer of poor rural migrants into metropolitan areas thereby boosting the relative percentage of the urban poor.

The dominant feature of population structure is the high youth component in the 20-34 years age group (StatsSA 2012) putting greater demand on services and employment. For City of Johannesburg, this group accounted for 18.1% and 16.8% for males and females, respectively. For Cape Town, comparable values were 15.1% and 14.5% respectively. For Ethekewini (Durban), at least 66% of the population is below 35 years of age and comparable values were 16.3% and 15.7% respectively. These patterns are supported by the individual population pyramids of metropolitan cities as of 2011 census. Population growth is taking place against a backdrop of the increasing failure of urban economies to provide new employment opportunities or even to sustain 2010 levels.

With reference to urban policy and planning (RSA 2000; RSA 1995b; DLA 2001), South Africa has put in place an urban policy and planning regime that fairly addresses the long term needs of urbanisation. Inherent limitations of the urban policy centre around the sources of financing urban development and the reluctance of government to be actively involved in these processes beyond projecting itself as a facilitator of change (Ruhiiga, 2013c). The integration of both purely urban and rural components in the individual SDF's means that there is an appreciation that the spatial concerns of where development should occur is beginning to feature in government thinking (Atkinson 2012). But the so-called integration of the planning system into the economic development equation does not seem to be working because planning is still pre-occupied with the urban form and less attention is paid to the internal elements of the city as a social organisation (Pacione 2009). In a similar vein, Bond (2002) argued that the Urban Development Strategy (UDS) (RSA 1995b) was the most comprehensive statement of how post-apartheid cities and towns would develop. A subsequent Urban Development Framework (DOH 1997) merely codified and softened the UDS into a more accurate reflection of the existing neoliberal policies, particularly with regard to state financial capacity; the respective roles of the market, the state, and civil society; de-concentration policies; the quality and cost of housing and related services; and reform of urban finance and transport. Whether in pursuit of the neoliberal agenda or that of the



radical school of thought, the result of policy and planning today is that the pre-occupation with the physical ordering and regulation of land use through SDF's has tended to overshadow the critical place of population and population change in the urban growth process. It shows an apparent reluctance through policy and practice to radically intervene in the urban land market (Napier 2009) in order to cause it to respond to the long term goals of policy and planning.

Understanding population change and its place in the urbanisation process presupposes a deeper interrogation of the socio-economic forces at play in and through time. So far, little has been done to drive a land market reform program (Nhlapo *et al.* 2011) that would clear most of the obstacles facing the provisioning of land and services for low cost housing (Mafikudze and Hoosen 2009). While residential desegregation of middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods has occurred relatively smoothly, most other features of urban life today embody yet more severe inequality and uneven development than occurred under apartheid (Bond 2002). Without a major reform of the urban land market, opportunities for achieving settlement densification are lost. Densification could in turn facilitate infill programs and contribute in turning the city into an efficient social organisation. Continuing fragmentation of the urban built up area characteristic of urban sprawl (Bett *et al.* 2011) is made worse by the explosion of informal settlements on the urban edge which in turn creates spatial distortions (Turok 2012), something that urban policy is meant to counter. Fundamental macroeconomic reforms since 1995 and recently, the launch of the NDP (PICC 2012) and the national infrastructure plan have initiated a noticeable policy shift at the level of individual cities. This shift is reflected in the flexibility shown in the IDP documents where management of these cities targets as a priority, the attraction of inward investments, a balance between environmental protection and economic growth. Parallel to these developments, however, has been the noticeable expansion of informal settlements across literally all metropolitan cities. In Ethekwini, backlogs in water translating to 73460 consumer units will require 29-37 years to address based on current funding levels; for sanitation, comparable values are 226557 consumer units, at 23-28 years to address while, for electricity, the values reach 301 448 consumer units that will require 23-37 years (Ethekwini, 2012).

Housing backlogs officially stood at 410 000 units as at the end of 2011. Assuming that an annual delivery of 5000-10 000, this would take 41-82 years to clear. For Cape Town, the official waiting list for houses was at 400 000 in 2011 made up of people that did not have houses in the period 1984-1994!

In terms of urban development practice, the translation of the urban policy into planning instruments is best expressed through the spatial development framework (SDF) (Oranje and Merrifield 2010). A scrutiny of the individual SDF's of the eight metropolitan areas in this study indicates contradictions that arise in attempts at imposing a preferred spatial form on a platform which has not been adequately transformed. Consistent in almost all the SDF is evidence that actual developments on the ground do not appear to be responding to the spatial ordering in the SDF's. While in Ethekwini, actual growth along the coast and eastwards appear roughly to agree with projections, the case of Mangaung (Figure 3) shows the opposite- where growth to the west reinforces and undermines the desire towards a compact city. In the Buffalo City area, housing densification and urban infill are hardly showing any effects on the existing fragmentation of the built up area. In Nelson Mandela Bay area, controlling urban sprawl to within the dictates of boundaries as per the SDF is not working. While responding to the transportation nodes and corridors typical of SDF planning, other developments in these cities appear to be already out of alignment. The same is true for City of Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and City of Tshwane (Figure 4).

As earlier noted, it is not obvious that the long term planning that the SDF represents includes a strategic factoring into the urban growth process, the impact of population change. The neoliberal economics that underpin the urban policy and planning has generated unintended outcomes because of the contradictions between the long-term goals of government and the implementation process through which they are to be achieved. Overall, the socio-economic canvass of the urban space of the metropolitan areas has not been positioned so that planning and practice become more flexible and are geared to respond better to the needs of the urban population. Instead, Landman (2012) believes that policy has been used to locate housing for the poor on urban peripheries thereby limiting access to employment and services. With reference to periodic illegal land invasions in for

example City of Johannesburg, government does not seem to have a clear urban planning policy, but there is often reactionary response, as people invade land and refuse to be moved to alternative sites. Contrary to this position, government indeed has an urban policy; the problem may be in the processes of implementation when the overall long-term SDF's have to be cascaded down to localities in order to respond to incidents of land conflicts, mushrooming informal settlements, and provision of infrastructure and services to unplanned settlements in general. Beyond urban policy and planning, urban management becomes critical.

The fact that in practically all metropolitan areas, the greatest expansion in human settlements for the majority of African people falls outside specified settlement growth nodes as per individual SDF's would appear to indicate a disconnect between the urban vision for the future and developments on the ground. Bond (2002) argues that post-apartheid, planning frameworks and regulations are essentially technicist and disempowering, generally an inadequate substitute for a transformation in the balance of forces. But others are of the view that while resources allocated for urban regeneration are quite significant, it is the implementation of urban projects which is often flawed because of inefficiencies in municipal service delivery (Ruhiiga 2013b; Ruhiiga 2013a; Nhlapo *et al* 2012). The findings of this study appear to confirm some of these positions, however, it is argued that the managerial and theoretical foundations of the urban policy generates inherent limitations centred on the assumptions about the drivers of urbanisation in a time-space continuum. It was earlier indicated that the socio-economic forces associated with population change that drive the urbanisation process have not been adequately addressed in both policy and planning. It was also argued that the SDF as a flexible structure for regulating urbanisation has not been particularly successful in meeting the long term goals of urban policy. It is noted that the implementation process (practice) is beset by problems of municipal service delivery which in turn raise doubts about the management capacity of these institutions, a finding that agrees with Turok and Parnell (2009) who raise doubts about the capacity of local governments to manage urbanisation.

## Conclusion

This study has shown that population change and urbanisation are inter-linked processes in time and space. South Africa's urban policy, planning and practice have been presented through a survey of requisite statistics on population size at the level of metropolitan cities. The focus on the spatial development frameworks has provided the vehicle for analyzing policy and planning against the practice on the ground. It has been shown that there are inherent limitations in the country's urban policy design and the translation of this into planning interventions. The discussion shows that population change and the resulting socio-economic forces that drive urbanisation cannot ignore the major role played by rural-urban migrations which in turn have impacted on income distribution in metropolitan areas. The practice of implementing the urban policy is beset by challenges centred on the inadequate reform of the urban land market, municipal service delivery, and questions about management capacity. Simultaneously, continuing urbanisation is witnessing the expansion of informal low cost settlements on the urban edge, a development that contradicts the long term goal of achieving a compact urban form

The implication of this study is that urban policy needs an urgent review if it is to be used as a platform for informing planning and practice. Such a review is justified given that its neoliberal platform may not be appropriate for addressing South Africa's urbanisation trajectory. Planning and practice also need to be reviewed so that population change and resulting socio-economic forces that underpin urbanisation are adequately used in informing the components of the SDF's. But for this to occur there is an urgent need for a land reform program aimed at regulating the land market and freeing land for orderly human settlements. Further research is needed in the area of urban spatial ordering, urban regeneration, adaptive planning regimes and the restructuring of municipal urban governance.

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