Contemporary South African Urbanisation Dynamics


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Introduction

South African urbanization was shaped historically by policies to control the movement and settlement of black people. Policies attempted to limit access by Africans to cities, and to confine many of them to ‘homelands’, most of which were predominantly rural and with limited economic bases. These policies however began to break down from the 1980s as people moved to the cities, although some settlement patterns have been remarkably persistent, and movement to cities has not been as rapid as was expected. As is occurring internationally (Cohen, 2003), urbanization rates have declined, and are now lower than under apartheid.

Research on urbanization and migration in South Africa post-apartheid has been uneven and has been hampered by a paucity of reliable systematic data. In the context of these deficits, this paper draws together available studies to provide an overview of urbanization patterns and trends in the current era in South Africa, focusing in particular on the key dynamics and driving forces underlying migration and urbanization.

The paper begins by providing a background on overall demographic trends with regard to migration and urbanization, and points to some of the difficulties with data, and with the analysis of trends and patterns. The bulk of the paper however focuses on the dynamics underlying patterns of urbanization and migration. It explores the changing rural context and some of the key processes there: large scale displacement of black people off farms, the impact of land reform, and conditions in the former homeland areas. Circular migration continues to be an important way in which households in rural areas survive. The paper reviews these patterns, but also points to a literature showing how some are unable to move, and are falling out of these networks. International migration mainly to South Africa’s cities is another significant process addressed in the paper. The paper considers why international migration is occurring, and examines what is known about migrant numbers. The draw of the cities, their significance in terms of economic growth and employment are then discussed. Continuing migration to cities is a challenge for city management, but trends towards declining household size and the splitting up of...
households are perhaps more important in driving the physical growth of cities, and demands for housing, services and infrastructure.

**Urbanization and Migration Trends**

By the time of the first post-apartheid census in 1996, just over half of the South African population (55.1%) lived in urban areas, and this number grew to 57.5% by the time of the next census in 2001. These figures reflect Statistics South Africa’s (2003) definitions which focus on classification of types of enumerator areas, but their own exploration of alternative definitions based on density\(^1\) shows that South Africa could be seen as far more urbanized: 64.8% in 1996 growing to 68.5% in 2001 (Statistics South Africa, 2003).

There is a growing recognition internationally that ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ are not mutually exclusive categories: boundaries are blurred and there are many interlinks (United Nations, 2003; Tacoli and Satterthwaite, 2003). South Africa’s apartheid history makes defining ‘urban’ versus ‘rural’ particularly problematic. Dense (and often large) settlements were created in rural areas through processes of resettlement from African freehold land, displacement from commercial farms in areas defined for white occupation, and ‘betterment planning’ in what were homeland areas. Some commentators have questioned whether these areas can really be defined as ‘rural’. Many of these settlements have a limited agricultural base, and households are dependent on a combination of commuter income, remittances, pensions and other sources. Industrial decentralization policies aimed to create manufacturing employment in some of these areas, but in many such places, industrial development never took off, and in some of the others (particularly the more spatially peripheral areas) manufacturing growth that did occur has collapsed (Harrison et al, 2007).

Figure 1 shows the historical urbanization levels (percentage of the population living in urban areas) of the total South African population and by race from 1904 to 2001. It shows that urbanization rates were higher in previous periods than in the contemporary era, suggesting that post-apartheid urbanization has not been particularly rapid. Data on the growth of the nine largest cities also shows a declining rate of growth from 3.45% p.a. in the period 1946 to 1970, to 3.09% between 1970 and 1996, down to 2.8% p.a. between 1996-2001 (SACN 2004), although some of the largest cities, Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni, grew at rates which were faster than in previous periods. This decline mirrors national population growth rates, which fell from 2.7% to 2.4% to 2% p.a. over the same periods. As is the case internationally (cf. United Nations 2003), city growth rates are predominantly the result of natural increase. For instance, in Gauteng, South Africa’s dominant migration destination, some 70 per cent of growth between 1996 and 2001 was the consequence of natural increase (Cross et al. 2005).

\(^1\) Using a minimum population of 1000 per locality, and a minimum density of 500 people per square kilometer at sub-place level.
Migration levels have also been remarkably constant at around 12% over the three periods studied by Kok and Collinson (2006): during apartheid (1975–1980), a period of political transition (1992–1996), and a post-apartheid period (1996–2001).

Analysis of 1996 and 2001 census data has revealed several important trends. Perhaps the most important has been a movement of people to cities experiencing economic growth, particularly the Gauteng metropolitan areas, and some of the rapidly growing secondary cities. Both economic growth rates and population growth rates were variable in other metropolitan areas and secondary cities: while both were faster than average in the Cape Town and eThekwini metros, as well as in some secondary cities, others experienced net or absolute decline (SACN 2004, DBSA 2005). Similarly, there has been a net move away from the economically declining Eastern Cape and Northern Cape regions to the Western Cape, and to the north-east of the country (Tomlinson et al. 2003).

Figure 2 explores migration rates for different types of municipalities for the 1996-2001 period using Census 2001 Migration Community Profile data. It shows that small-town/rural municipalities had net out-migration rates, while the metros, cities and large towns were net migrant attractors. While small-town/rural municipalities also experience
considerable inflows of migrants, at the same time they tend to shed relatively large numbers of migrants who may be moving on to the larger cities and towns.

**Figure 2**

Different migration rates (1996-2001) for the various municipality types (in 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality type</th>
<th>Proportion of the 2001 population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan city</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary city</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large town</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-town/rural municipality</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Municipality-level analyses show that the second highest proportion of migrants to metropolitan cities originate in small-town/rural municipalities (25%), following the more than two-thirds (69%) of migrants to metropolitan cities originating in other metros. As would have been expected, by far the largest proportion (78%) of inter-municipality migrants into small town/rural municipalities moved from other small town/rural municipalities (Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

Destination types of inter-municipality migration between 1996 and 2001, by municipality type of origin
Not all movement follows economic growth however. Tomlinson et al. (2003) and Cross (2001) argue that there are significant rural-rural movements, and census figures for the 1996-2001 period show movements into some predominantly rural districts. In addition, the period since 1994 has seen a significant push off commercial farming areas as the following section shows. The availability of housing in small towns in some regions has also encouraged movement to these places in the absence of economic growth (Marais and Krige, 2000). Government policies have shaped movements in complex ways as well (Atkinson and Marais, 2006). Nor have people necessarily moved from areas of high unemployment, poverty or poor services. Kok et al. (2003) showed that areas with higher unemployment levels do not generate higher levels of out-migration. The same has been found in respect of under-serviced areas.

Data to inform patterns since 2001 is more problematic, since no new census has been undertaken. Annual provincial population estimates based on projections have been produced by Statistics South Africa, and these form the basis for municipal estimates by some agencies. Others use their own estimates and projections. In 2007 a Community Survey, covering almost 275,000 households, was undertaken by Statistics South Africa. These data do not replace the census, and the municipal figures reported here have been weighted using various statistical and demographic techniques based on provincial figures and projections of the 1996 and 2001 censuses. These figures are thus mere estimates, and there are some concerns about their accuracy due to difficulties with the weighting, inter alia.

Most data and projections however suggest that migration was concentrated on Gauteng, and to a lesser extent on the Western Cape. No figures on urbanization levels are available. Figures provided by Statistics South Africa for the nine largest cities suggest that most of these cities grew at relatively rapid rates during the period 2001–07 (Table 1), but only in a few cases more rapidly than in the previous, inter-census period. These figures differ from those reported in the State of Cities Report 2006, and from several other estimates (see SACN, 2006), and are generally much higher.

**Urbanization and Migration Dynamics**

The following sections explore the major drivers and dynamics shaping urbanization and migration in the current period. The rural context and its dynamics provide an important starting point for this discussion. Not only are they key to rural-urban movements, but they are also critical to understanding movements within rural areas themselves. Circular migration, as one of the main forms of movement receives particular attention. In the South African context, international migration is an important, but very different form of movement, and we explore its extent, drivers and main patterns. Clearly cities are providing a considerable attraction for movement from elsewhere, and we explore these issues, as well as the social processes within cities leading to internal movement and declining household size within the city.
## Table 1. Populations of the largest cities 1996-2007 and their growth rates since 1946: Census and community surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Data date</th>
<th>Johannesburg</th>
<th>eThekwini</th>
<th>Cape Town</th>
<th>Ekurhuleni</th>
<th>Tshwane</th>
<th>Nelson Mandela</th>
<th>Buffalo City</th>
<th>Mangaung</th>
<th>Msunduzi</th>
<th>Total or average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Survey Population</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3,888,180</td>
<td>3,468,086</td>
<td>3,497,097</td>
<td>2,724,229</td>
<td>2,345,908</td>
<td>1,050,930</td>
<td>724312</td>
<td>752906</td>
<td>616730</td>
<td>19,068,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census population</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,225,812</td>
<td>3,090,122</td>
<td>2,893,247</td>
<td>2,480,276</td>
<td>1,985,983</td>
<td>1,005,778</td>
<td>701,890</td>
<td>645,441</td>
<td>553,223</td>
<td>16,581,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2,639,110</td>
<td>2,751,193</td>
<td>2,563,612</td>
<td>2,026,807</td>
<td>1,682,701</td>
<td>969,771</td>
<td>682,287</td>
<td>603,704</td>
<td>521,805</td>
<td>14,440,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>growth rate</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2007</td>
<td>4.10%</td>
<td>1.94%</td>
<td>3.20%</td>
<td>1.57%</td>
<td>2.81%</td>
<td>0.73%</td>
<td>0.52%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2001</td>
<td>2.04%</td>
<td>3.62%</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
<td>3.78%</td>
<td>2.78%</td>
<td>3.79%</td>
<td>4.63%</td>
<td>4.59%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1996</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
<td>4.41%</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>2.74%</td>
<td>4.15%</td>
<td>3.86%</td>
<td>4.11%</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
<td>3.18%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-1970</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics South Africa
Rural Contexts and Dynamics

Since 1994, perhaps the most notable trend has been the large scale movement of black people off farms owned by others (mainly whites). A significant study by the Nkuzi Development Association and Social Surveys (Weberif et al., 2005) found that some 2.4m people were displaced from farms between 1994 and the end of 2004, of whom 942,303 were evicted. The remainder left of their own choice, but often as a consequence of difficult conditions on the farm (see also Atkinson, 2007). Ironically, numbers displaced were higher than in the 1984 to 1993 period, when some 737,114 black people were evicted from farms, and a total of 1.8m were displaced. While some workers moved to other farms, some 3.7m of those displaced and 1.6m of those evicted between 1984 and 2004, moved off farms altogether.

Although there has been significant displacement of black people from the farms, the scale of displacement is open to debate. The Nkuzi figures do not accord with census data, which showed a rise in the African population on commercial farms, but eviction survey researchers, who investigated this anomaly, argued that there might have been mistakes in Statistics South Africa’s classification of enumerator areas, and therefore in overall figures. Nevertheless, the scale of evictions and displacement are enormous, and are even higher than the 1.1m black people who were forcibly removed from white farms between 1960 and 1983, at the height of apartheid. It is possible that the Nkuzi figures are too high.

Some 67% of those who were evicted have settled in and around urban areas – usually in backyard shacks or poorer parts of townships (38%) or in informal settlements (29%). The largest number is in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, in part due to the scale of evictions there, but also as a consequence of the attraction large urban centres there provide to migrants seeking employment (Weberif et al., 2005). The study does not however make it clear to what extent evictees and other displaced farm workers have ended up in metros and large cities versus smaller towns. Yet it shows that access to employment is a smaller motivating factor in choice of location, with some 42% locating in places where they have social networks, and another 30% where they are able to access secure tenure.

Other research on displaced farm workers (eg. Atkinson, 2007; and studies summarized in Todes, 1999) found that they often locate in small towns, some of which have weak or declining economic bases. Similarly, Cross et al (1997, 1999) found that not many are able to move directly to metro cities; instead, most are likely to move to the nearest small town, with many remaining there indefinitely. In some provinces, a disproportionate supply of housing in small towns has also encouraged location in these places (Marais

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2 On census figures, some 2.9 million black South Africans still lived on farms owned by others in 2001
3 Census data discussed in the previous section suggests that while there is considerable migration into smaller towns, this is matched by out-migration. These figures suggest that there must be considerable onward migration in these settlements and/or that different experiences between settlements are being aggregated in the figures.
Displaced and evicted farm workers are poor, and relatively unskilled in terms of employment that is available, and unemployment levels are high (Atkinson, 2007). Small towns frequently have limited capacity or revenue to absorb migrants, and CDE (2005) links service delivery protests in 2005 to these pressures.

According to Wegerif et al. (2005), some two-thirds of farm evictions are work-related. They locate evictions from farms within a context of stresses on commercial agriculture, which has led to a decline and casualisation of agricultural employment. Regular employment has declined by 170 000 in 1993 to 480 000 in 2002, while casual work has increased by 14000 to 460 000 over the same period (Aliber, 2007). In the last few decades, there has been a deregulation of the agricultural sector with the removal of marketing boards, subsidies and most tariff protections. South Africa operates in an increasingly globalised market, in competition with several countries, many of which depend on subsidies. Countries in the European Union and the USA, for instance still benefit from massive agricultural subsidies. In response to these pressures, commercial farmers have introduced new technologies and mechanized further. Extensive consolidation has occurred, with the number of farms dropping from 57 980 in 1993 to 45 818 in 2002. Periods of drought have also been associated with high levels of farm evictions, as has the introduction of minimum wages for farm workers (Wegerif et al., 2005).

In addition, farmers have responded to legislation granting tenure rights to long-standing farm workers by illegal evictions. In some cases, farmers have used the development of RDP housing schemes in towns as a way to move workers off farms (Wegerif et al., 2005). Fear of crime by white farm owners is cited by CDE (2005) as a further significant reason for displacement from farms.

For farm workers, living in town enables better access to services and facilities and there is greater freedom, but living costs are higher and there is less opportunity to supplement incomes through farming (Wegerif et al., 2005; Atkinson, 2007). While some prefer farm life, only 27% of evicted farm workers living in towns want to return to it, and amongst the now urbanized youth, there is little interest in farming (Wegerif et al., 2005).

Land reform so far has not provided much of an alternative to urban migration. Wegerif et al. (2005) comment that the scale of land reform has not matched the extent of evictions from farms, and that farm workers have hardly benefited through the programme. By July 2005, land reform had provided land or improved tenure rights to some 164 185 households, only 7543 of which were farm worker households. Although the scale of delivery has increased since 2002 (Aliber, 2007), delivery rates have been modest, and fall well below intentions. By the end of 2004, only 4.3% of land had been redistributed, against a target of 30% by 2014 (CDE, 2005).

Aliber (2007) argues that there is general agreement that land reform is not creating the livelihoods that were expected. In many cases, production has declined so that profits for

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4 In 1986, there were 816 660 regular employees and 534 781 casual employees, although the latter figure dropped in later years. (Wegerif et al, 2005)
5 Of these, 90 282 were cases of restitution, while 73 903 were cases of redistribution or tenure reform.
beneficiaries are well below the wage bill previously paid to workers prior to transfer, although there are non-monetary benefits. Although beneficiaries may begin by attempting to farm in the way that was done before, Andrew et al. (2003) find that households generally follow farming practices that are prevalent among resource-poor households in communal areas, and largely use agriculture to supplement off-farm incomes. Inadequate land, poor capacity and a lack of post-settlement support are often seen as major reasons for limited benefits of the programme (Hall, 2004). Although policy from 2000 shifted to a greater emphasis on commercial farming, CDE (2005) reports that some 80% of those settled in this way are still using land for subsistence.

Within the former homeland areas, some 4 million people in 2 million households practice some form of agriculture, but in most cases it is at a subsistence level. Only 1.1% of these households depend on farming as a main source of income, while 2.8% use it as an additional source of income. Most households depend heavily on grants and remittances, and thus on linkages to urban areas (see the following section). Even agricultural production has depended to a degree on remittances, and has been affected by their relative decline. Agriculture nevertheless functions as a part of food security for households involved in production, but for a rising proportion of households (88.3% in 2004) it is an additional rather than a main source of food (6.3%). Agriculture as a main source of food has declined quite sharply from 32.9% in 2000 (Aliber et al, 2005). Andrew et al (2003, p.3) summarize the main constraints to land based livelihoods in these areas as:

...a combination of population pressures and land shortages, resource constraints (labour, tools, skills, finances and livestock), input and output market problems (a combination of price, institutional and infrastructural problems), institutional problems linked to land tenure and administration that exacerbate degradation processes and increase the risks of losses and natural disasters...

There have been some initiatives to promote agricultural production in these areas, although they have been relatively limited in scale. Small scale sugar out-grower production has been most successful, while schemes to link small-scale producers to markets has had some success (Aliber, 2007), but there are many schemes that do not go beyond a survivalist level in practice, despite intentions. At the same time, the availability of social grants provides a level of security, allowing households to remain in these areas, surviving through multiple income sources. The availability of grants however does not inhibit entry into labour markets, but rather seems to facilitate patterns of circular migration (Posel et al., 2006).

In some areas, economic restructuring and its consequences in terms of job losses in mining and manufacturing (for example, in the clothing industry) have led to a decline of income sources for rural households (through remittances or commuting incomes), and out-migration to both cities and small towns is occurring (Bank and Minkley, 2005). Large scale movement to more accessible small towns in the Eastern Cape is occurring even in the absence of employment in these areas.

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6 As work for unskilled workers has declined.
In the late 1990s, several studies examined what had happened to ‘displaced urban settlements’, i.e. the often dense settlements created in rural areas largely through government resettlement programmes (Meth, 1998; CDE, 1998; Krige, 1997). Many of these were at a distance from areas of work, and households depended on commuting or migrant remittance for survival. Although industrial decentralization policy had provided a level of employment in a few of these places, in many of these instances employment declines had occurred. Despite expectations that people would rapidly move out of these areas after the ending of influx control and apartheid, studies found that while there was a level of out-migration from some such places, people remained in others. Better housing than in the cities, lower service costs, the existence of transport subsidies, and social links and networks explained some of these patterns. It is not clear however how patterns have changed since then.

**Circular Migration**

The migrant labour system was a key feature in the economic development of South Africa and was associated with legislation that inhibited and controlled the urbanization of African people. Many commentators assumed that it would disappear post-apartheid, as people would be able to settle permanently near the places where they work. However, Posel (2003) argues that there is no evidence to support the assumption that circular labour migration ended or even declined during the 1990s (see also Cox et al., 2004, MXA, 2005).

While the formal system of migrant labour has long collapsed, and employment for mineworkers, once the major employers of migrants, has declined significantly since the late 1980s (Davies and Head, 1995), forms of circular migration continue to exist, and new forms seemed to have emerged. Cox et al (2004) suggest that circular migrants are taking up a range of poorly paid and insecure work in the informal sector, and in areas such as domestic work, security and transport. Increasingly, women are migrating in search of income (Posel, 2003; Hunter, 2006), although many women pushed out of rural areas are unable to find work and can be pushed into dependent relationships on men to survive (Hunter, 2006).

The existence of circular and forms of fragmented migration is common in contexts where insecure labour market conditions exist (Roberts, 1989) since it allows families to diversify sources of household income and risks. Indeed, Potts (2008) argues that it is the predominant form of migration in many parts of Africa. In the South African context, land in rural areas continues to represent a ‘sense of security, identity and history and a preferred place for retirement.’ (Posel 2003:1). The high cost of living in urban settlements may also be an important factor, while the care of young children provided by the rural household makes it possible for working-age women to move in search of work (Posel, 2005).
Although circular migration provides vital income support, the majority of African migrant households in rural areas are poor (Posel, 2005), and labour migrants are more likely to come from poor provinces (Gelderblom 2006). Nevertheless, the poorest of the poor are unable to migrate, since they do not have the necessary finances or the kind of social networks that migration requires (Collinson, et al 2006: 32). A study by MXA (2005) in KwaZulu-Natal similarly showed that the very poor are least mobile, and become trapped in places that offer limited opportunities for survival, whilst the better off use diverse assets to commute frequently. Bank and Minkley’s (2005) work on the Eastern Cape shows how the decline of both older forms of migrant income and incomes from commuters have undermined the possibility of mobility as a livelihood strategy, or of maintaining both urban and rural bases, and many are finding themselves trapped in slums in either rural or urban areas.

**International Migration**

The shape, scope, and scale of migration have changed significantly since the democratization of South Africa in the early 1990s. The opening up of the country has enabled many potential migrants from the rest of the continent, Asia and the Indian sub-continent to migrate to South Africa. The new democracy is also attractive to people who would previously never have considered (or been able to) to move to South Africa and those who seek refuge from persecution and war (Crush and Williams nd).

There are multiple reasons for international migration to South Africa. Deteriorating economic conditions in home countries, e.g. high unemployment rates, low wages, and growing urban and rural poverty, have compelled many migrants to leave their countries of origin in search of better lives. Political tension, marginalization of minority ethnic groups, civil war and ecological deterioration in some sending countries have also contributed to migration. South Africa’s dominant economic position in the region has made the country a preferred destination not only for regional migrants, but also for migrants from the rest of Africa. Furthermore, economic prosperity and attempts to embed South Africa into the global economy and high rates of emigration have led to increasing opportunities for skilled migrant workers. The impact of HIV/AIDS on rural livelihoods, already threatened by poverty, food insecurity and insecure access to social services, has increased cross-border movements in the SADC region. The existence of social networks in both South Africa and the sending countries is an important factor facilitating migration to South Africa. The recent xenophobic attacks, however, may well begin to change the attractiveness of South Africa to migrants.

One of the most contentious issues in the migration debate in South Africa is the number of foreign nationals currently living in the country. Various estimates have been made e.g., Human Rights Watch estimated that between 1,2 million and 3 million Zimbabweans live illegally in South Africa (Sunday Independent 24. 12. 2006) while the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe estimated that there are 1,2 million Zimbabweans living in this country (Daily Mirror 10.1.2007). More recent estimates suggest that figures are even higher. Recent estimates have been even higher. Chinese researchers have put the total illegal Chinese population in South Africa at between 100 000 and 200 000
(Pretoria News 6.12.2006). Although official figures of legal border crossings are readily available, it is not clear how many people are illegally in the country at this point in time. There is, however, no reliable research methodology for determining the actual total number of immigrants in South Africa.

In 2004 the Department of Home Affairs deported slightly more than 167 000 undocumented migrants of whom 49% were Mozambican and 43% Zimbabwean. In 2005 a total of nearly 210 000 undocumented migrants were deported (DHA 2006). The 2001 Census showed the total foreign-born population in South Africa as 1 025 072, including 687 678 from the SADC region, 228 318 from Europe and 41 817 from the rest of Africa (Crush et al., 2005). The 2007 Community Survey found that 2.7% of South Africa’s population was born outside the country, about half (46.8%) of which are located in Gauteng. On this data, some 1 309 500 people were foreign born, not very much higher than in 2001. These figures however are likely to represent an undercount since undocumented migrants often choose to be invisible and would not readily participate in official censuses and surveys.

In the last decade the numbers of legal border crossings has exploded. In SA, the annual number of visitors from other SADC countries has increased from around one million in the early 1990s to over five million in 2005 (Crush, et al.2005). The bulk of this cross-border traffic consisted of people moving temporarily to South Africa for various non-work related reasons, for example tourism, visiting relatives, medical services, shopping and education (Wentzel and Tlabela 2006).

From a historical perspective there are wide fluctuations in the trends of documented immigration to SA. Since the 1990s, and especially after 1994, there has been a significant decline in the number of people being granted permanent residence. For example, in 1990 14 499 immigrants were granted permanent residence, while only 2138 permits were issued in 2005 (DHA, 2006). Crush and Williams (nd: 4) attribute this trend to ‘a shift in policy and implementation of legislation towards a more restrictive fortress stance’.

Although some groups of cross-border migrants who are working in South Africa are moving to farms and mines, the bulk of migration appears to be directed to the cities. There is also localized evidence that migrants to farms later move on to the cities (Wentzel and Tlabela, 2006), thus cross-border migration is likely to be a contributing factor to metropolitan and large city growth in South Africa.

**Urban Contexts and Dynamics**

Movement to urban areas is less about ‘bright lights’ than an assessment of economic opportunities and survival chances in a context where the economy is overwhelmingly urbanization, with some 63% of Gross Value Added (GVA) concentrated in the nine

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7 Obviously these figures would be inflated by people making multiple visits, such as informal traders, shoppers, and even commuters crossing on a regular basis.
major cities, and 30% of GVA in another 17 centres. As the State of Cities Report (SACN, 2006, p.2-7/8) notes:

*Cities, and more specifically large cities, are the mainstays of most countries’ economies...They offer the largest concentration of customers and provide the biggest markets in the country. They provide the key distribution functions in most national and regional economies and the global economy. The highest concentrations of education facilities are found in the cities...Cities are the engines of the national economy...*

Research conducted for the National Spatial Development Perspective found that the dominance of the major cities within the national spatial economy has been evident for decades. Although a level of deconcentration occurred between the 1970s and the 1990s, as low waged industries, supported by industrial decentralization incentives, moved to the periphery in response to competition, reconcentration appears to have occurred since then. Over the 1996-2003 period, Gauteng grew at 3.7% pa. in economic terms compared to national growth of 2.5% over the same period, and far faster than other provinces. These patterns have been underpinned by sharp job losses in low waged industries such as clothing – the effect of a strong rand and of South Africa’s openness to international competition (Robbins et al., 2004) – and by rapid growth in the tertiary sector, particularly in the financial and commercial sectors.

Figure 4, from the State of Cities Report (SACN, 2006) shows the rapid economic growth which occurred in the major cities, and particularly the Gauteng metros, over the 2001-2004 period. Although the nine cities on average grew at rates which were only slightly higher than the national figures, the Gauteng metros grew much faster at rates of between 4.7% pa. and 5.5% pa. Very rapid growth is also occurring in some of the secondary cities (SACN, 2004).

**Figure 4. Annual Average GVA Growth in the Nine Major Cities and Nationally.**
Source: SACN (2006), based on figures from Global Insight.

Around half of employment is concentrated in the nine major cities, and about 25% in Gauteng metros. Rising rates of economic growth are being accompanied by increases in employment in the cities, although employment increases are still less than economic growth rates. Over the 2001-4 period, employment growth rates were only slightly faster in the nine cities than nationally, but they were much faster in the Gauteng metros and in eThekwini (SACN, 2006, Table 2). Unemployment levels are slightly lower in most of the major cities than nationally, and also lower than in the main migrant sending regions (Kok and Aliber, 2005).

Table 2: Employment and Unemployment in the Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Employment growth 2001-4</th>
<th>Unemployment 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>23.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eThekwini Municipality</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>28.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Cape Town</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>23.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>29.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>22.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Mandela</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>36.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo City</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>39.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangaung</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>26.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Msunduzi</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>33.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment though is increasingly for skilled, rather than unskilled workers (SACN, 2006), and migration is driven by expectations of employment, not necessarily actual employment (Kok and Aliber, 2005). Still, poverty levels are on average lower in urban than in rural areas, although there are pockets of deep poverty in urban areas (SACN, 2006; Cross et al., 2005), while service levels are far higher.

### Declining Household Size and City Growth

The trend towards declining household size, and the splitting of households is perhaps more important than migration to the expansion of cities and the pressures they experience. The average size of a South African household fell from about 4.5 in 1996 to 3.9 in 2001, increasing the number of households by 30% (PCAS, 2003). While the 2007 Community Survey argues that average household size has remained constant since 2007, a recent Unisa study reports that household size has declined further to 3.69 in 2005.

Youth migration is an unrecognised causal factor in the decline of household size. Until very recently, migration activity by South African youth – unmarried people moving from place to place on their own – was seen as unusual. The social and political controls under colonialism and apartheid worked against youth moving independently from their homes, and youth migration was generally concealed within married household migration or, alternatively, within labour migration. This situation has changed: indications from several recent HSRC studies (Cross, Kok, Van Zyl and O’Donovan 2005; Cross 2001; Cross, Kok, Van Zyl, O’Donovan, Mafukidze and Wentzel 2005, Cross et al 1997, 1999, Cross et al 2005) are that youth are now migrating on their own in significant numbers, that much of this migration is intra-urban, and that youth and unmarried adults move on different circuits from married people and established couples. This new mobility among youth and unmarried people bears directly on the question of shrinking households in South Africa.

When young people leave home to migrate to another place, the new households that result are both smaller and more insecure than the parent households. This phenomenon drives down the average size of the South African household, and also raises the risk of spreading poverty. What distinguishes youth migration is its temporary and unstable character. Youth who migrate are on a different circuit from adult families. They move through temporary accommodation or lodge temporarily with established families, using mainly rental arrangements without formal leases.

While there is a tendency to assume that the housing subsidy accounts for household splits, as different members of the household attempt to access government housing units individually, recent studies suggest that this explanation may be too simple. Rather shrinking households need to be understood in the context of household dynamics, wide-scale social trends, and urban poverty. Youth migration as described above is one part of
the equation. There is also evidence (Cross, 2005) that it is the child support grant in particular which has been most instrumental in allowing households to split, triggering off poverty-related migration inside the cities as households lose members.

Much of this apparent migration appears to be into shack accommodation, from where the new smaller families that result are likely to find no feasible way out again. The families that result from household splits and intra-city migration by younger people are often workerless because single mothers need to provide constant child care, and therefore are unable to draw income from the job market. Their separate existence depends on social grants, and they have no wage base to fund a move to better housing.

Further, Cross et al. (2005), suggest that households splitting up among the middle and lower poor contributes to intra-urban migration and residential instability. In addition to contributing to the formation of metro poverty pockets, this kind of migration potential may put in question the sustainability of subsidy housing among the categories of the urban poor who are surviving on government grants. Due to affordability issues, it would appear that people with formal housing may be leaking back into poverty pockets in the shack settlements, raising the demand for shack housing. The extent and significance of this trend however remains to be established.

Thus in contrast to assumptions that poverty in cities is driven solely by rural to urban migration, Cross et al. (2005) suggests that a significant amount of actual poverty emerges inside the metro cities, and is dispersed by the kinds of migration streams that are triggered by poverty processes at household level.

5. Conclusion

This paper has shown that the major metropolitan areas and some of the rapidly growing secondary cities have been the main focus of migration in the post-apartheid era. These trends have been underpinned by both economic growth within these areas and conditions in rural areas: extensive displacement from farms; the failure of land reform policies; and by further decline in the agrarian base of the rural areas of former homelands. Circular migration is a common form of movement in this context, allowing households to forge multiple livelihoods across space, but not all households have been able to circulate or move to survive. Some remain trapped in rural areas and small towns with limited economic opportunities. Within the cities, international migration is an increasingly important source of growth, but the pressure on cities is not predominantly the result of migration. Natural increase remains the most importance source of growth, and declining household size and fragmenting households account for a growing proportion of the lateral spread of cities.

Can the cities cope? While cities presently have less capacity than needed to respond to these challenges, they have greater capacity than smaller, and particularly rural, municipalities. In contrast to these latter municipalities, they have been more successful in providing infrastructure and services, and have largely managed to keep up with a growing population (Hemson et al, 2007). Nevertheless, South African cities are
confronting the limits of the emphasis on delivering new housing and services. While bulk infrastructure in cities was not problematic for many years, bulk infrastructure is now reaching capacity in many places (SACN, 2006) and key infrastructure for energy generation is no longer sufficient. In addition, existing infrastructure has been insufficiently maintained. Cities also confront the demands of a growing middle class in a context where public transport and other elements of the public realm have been poorly developed. Thus the challenges that cities face are not simply related to rising urbanization and migration, but are also the consequence of internal dynamics.

Acknowledgements

Michael Aliber is thanked for his assistance with suggestions and comments on the rural section of the paper.

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