

Sustainable transformation key to promoting cities as engines of growth

 By [Cacisa Mgudiwa](#)

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More than half of the world's population lives in cities, and it is predicted that by 2050, more than 70% of the world's population will be living in urban areas. South Africa is not exempt. More than 60% of South Africans live in urban areas, and this figure is expected to increase in 2022 and beyond.



Property practitioner Cacisa Mgudiwa

It is, therefore, important that we plan and design spaces that are sustainable in order to respond to urbanisation trends. Furthermore, rapid population growth requires quick and sustainable infrastructure solutions that improve living environments to meet both social and ecological needs.

Local context

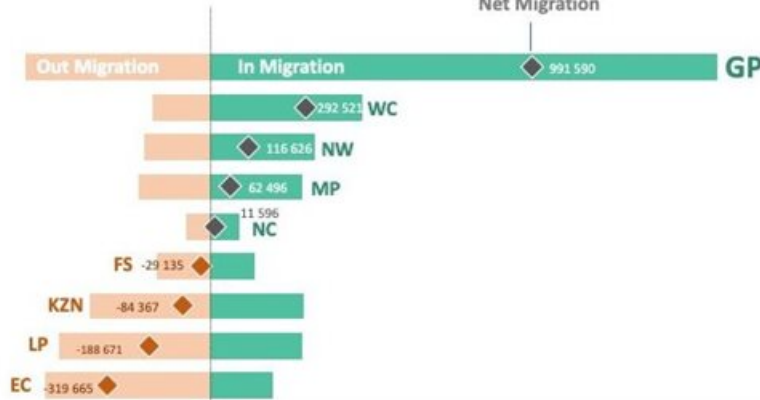
Statistics South Africa has published its mid-year population estimates for 2021, with more than half of the population living in just three provinces; Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape.

Over the period 2016 to 2021 five provinces had net inflows of people. GP attracted the most migrants.

COVID-19 IMPACT Movement made during lockdown often constitutes a temporary one, whilst interprovincial migration in the MYPE constitutes movements that are consistent with a more formal definition of migration

Net migration 2016-2021 by province

Net Migration



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Gauteng and the Western Cape have seen the greatest influx of people from other provinces and international migrants moving to these provinces because of their economic strength and the prospect of job opportunities.

Semigration has become a prevalent trend since the Covid-19 pandemic sent South Africans into disarray. The majority of South Africans are moving to coastal areas of the country, i.e., the Garden Route, False Bay, Noordhoek, and Gansbaai - just a few of the regions experiencing a significant influx. The biggest contributing factor to this trend is the work-from-home lifestyle that has allowed more flexibility and reshaped the current structure of work, making it possible to work in one part of the country and live in another.

How semigration trends have impacted planning of cities

As there is an increase in the number of people semigrating from one city or province to others for better quality of life, there is a need to develop urban development policies that will cater for these increasing numbers, ensuring proper planning and necessary infrastructure to support this growth. Due to our history of racial segregation and separate development, our country needs to address the fragmented settlement patterns by promoting urban settlements that are inclusive, resilient and liveable. Housing is just one of the interventions required to create urban environments that are liveable, integrated, environment-friendly and multi-functional.

While SA had been a struggling economy with low growth and high unemployment even prior to the pandemic, the pressures of Covid-19 have exacerbated the need for South Africa to shift and respond to urbanisation trends by creating compact cities with decent public transport systems, industrial development and services. Compact cities and connected towns reduce the costs of providing services and infrastructure, and increase the viability of connecting public transport and other forms of urban infrastructure.



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Key instruments for creating compact cities

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a key instrument for creating compact cities and ensuring better alignment of transport planning, housing and provision of urban infrastructure. For cities and towns with existing urban sprawl, it is important to guide development and manage growth through the spatial development framework (SDF). This is a long-term

plan that identifies nodes for stimulating growth, areas for housing and services, and protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

Other instruments used to promote compact, integrated and connected cities are land-use and planning schemes; this is a key instrument for encouraging mixed-use developments and land uses that are more intense, in favour of high-density developments and high-rise buildings.

It is important that we put in place mechanisms to respond to the urbanisation trend in a way that will improve the urban form and ensure proper planning and allow our cities to transform into engines of growth on a far more consistent basis.

ABOUT CACISA MGUDLWA

Cacisa Mgudlwa is the founder of PropertyTalk_Cacisa. A property practitioner, Mgudlwa has a Master's in Property Development and Management and is a registered professional town and regional planner. She is also a member of the South African Institute of Property Valuers.

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