

***Human settlements:  
Unlocking or blocking potential  
regional and national growth paths***

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# Background

Spatial dimensions and policy responses

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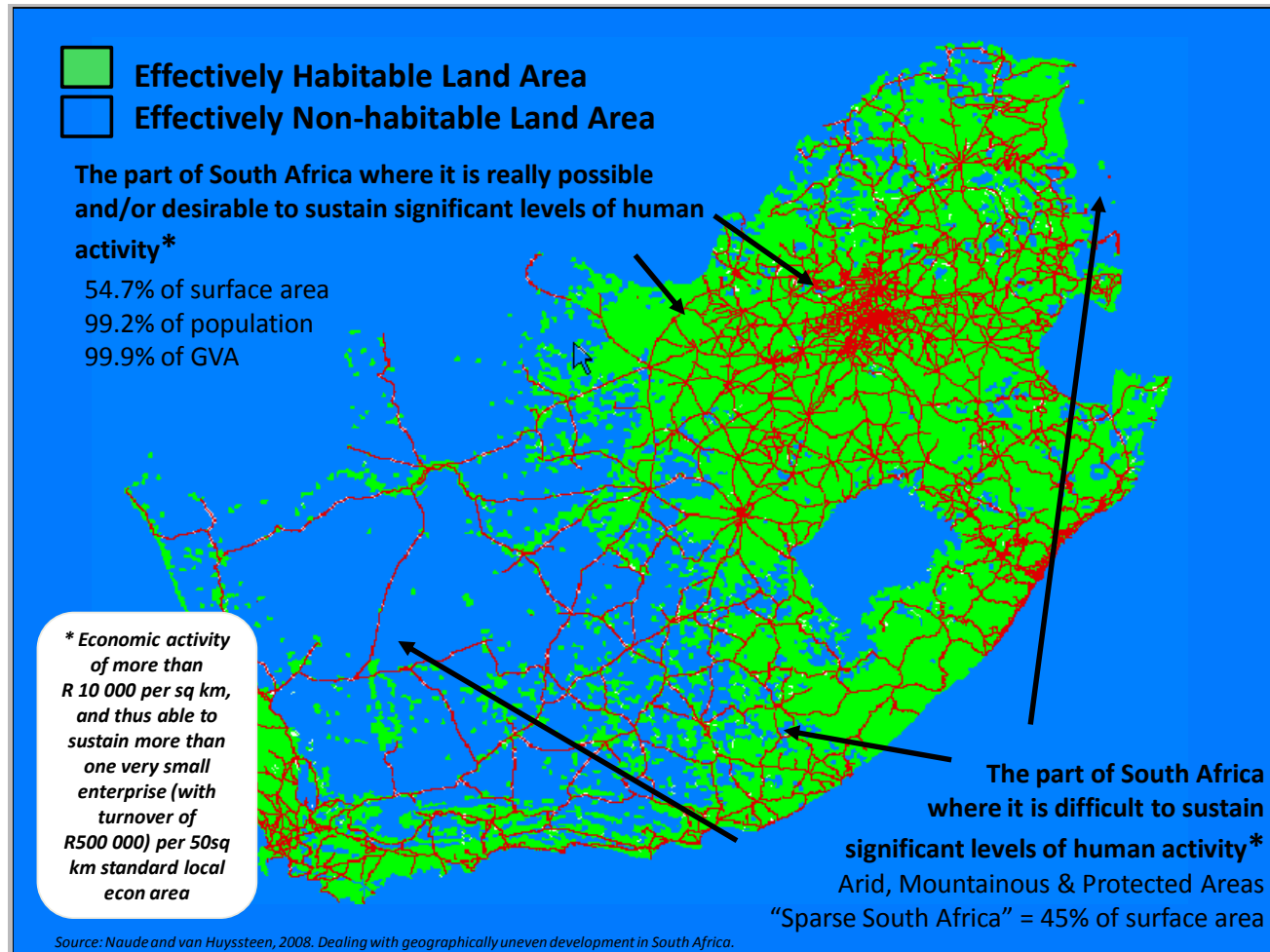
Over the last decade SA has seen the re-awakening of the importance of space...



- ❑ The recognition of the importance of space, i.e. in:
  - ❑ Addressing *Apartheid* spatial legacies
  - ❑ Sustainable development
  - ❑ Regional development
  - ❑ Intergovernmental alignment
  - ❑ Rural development
- ❑ A planning system with municipal and provincial integrated plans & spatial frameworks
  - ❑ Much of this was brought about and spearheaded by the often controversial National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP)
- ❑ The belief that better and more data would lead to better plans

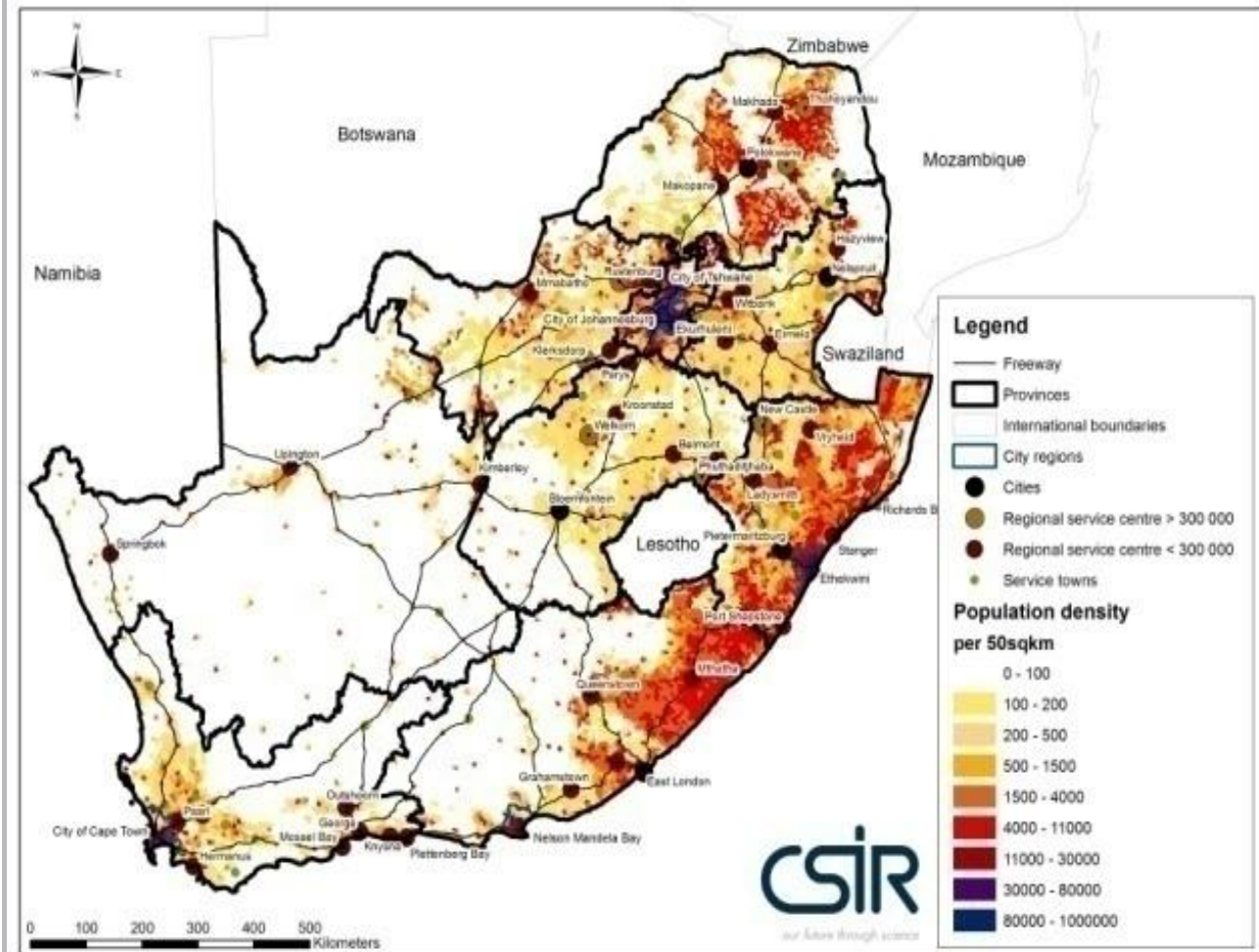
These analyses highlighted the realities of the space economy, e.g.

1. Large parts of the country are marred by an arid and un-habitable landscape



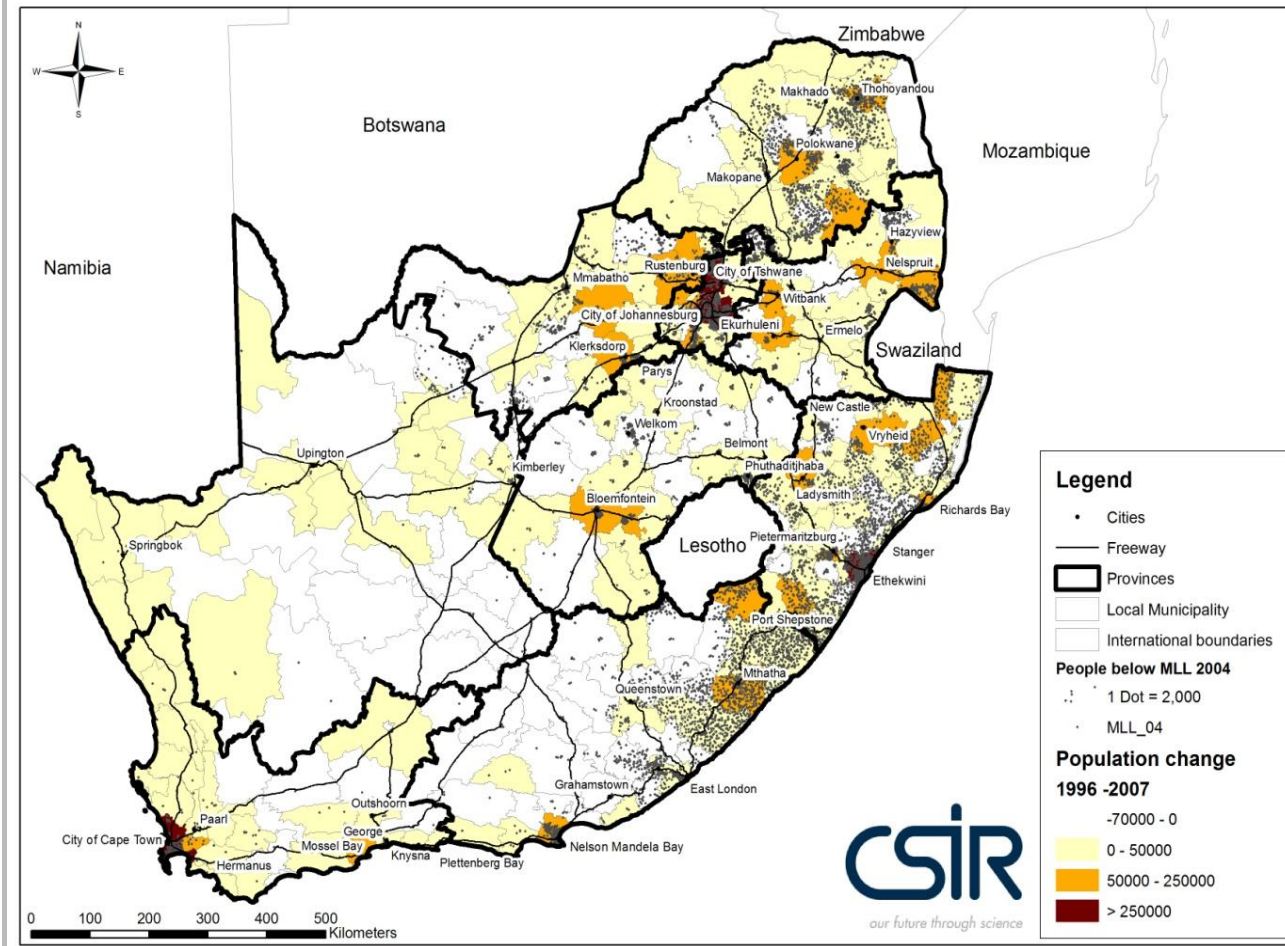
These analyses highlighted the realities of the space economy, e.g.

2. Concentrated development patterns, largely the by result of natural resource profiles and colonial and apartheid economic policies



These analyses highlighted the realities of the space economy, e.g.

3. Huge concentrations of micro-poverty in settlements (the townships) and macro-poverty (the Bantustans)
4. Concentrated population growth patterns and a variety of micro and macro-migration patterns to and between areas of poverty and wealth

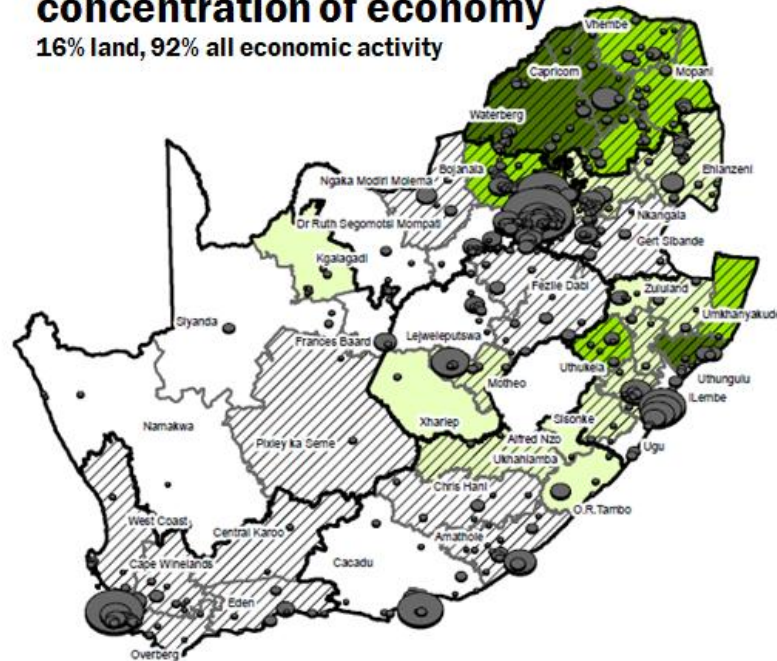


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5. Concentrated patterns of regional economic activity and growth

### Continued spatial concentration of economy

16% land, 92% all economic activity



● Spatial distribution of GDP (2007)

▨ GDP Compound annual growth rates/DM (1995-2007)

■ DMs with Employment increase 1995-2007

**Spatial concentration of national economy (2007 GDP)**

Metro area's: >65%

Cities: >20%

Metro's, cities, towns: > 90%

**Widening gap in performance between places**

More recently, SA also witnessed ...

- ❑ A move away from only 'improving access to basic services such as housing, water & electricity' towards the development of sustainable human settlements
- ❑ The second great global recession with accompanying job losses, misery, anxiety, despair and growing youth unemployment
- ❑ The Local Turnaround Strategy to improve the profile, role and importance of local government within the context of the developmental state
- ❑ The appointment of the National Planning Commission and a re-emphasis on national spatial visioning and planning
- ❑ A recognition of the importance of a range of national priorities and the setting of a series of tangible deliverables to achieve these
- ❑ A growing realisation of the need to not treat 'rural South Africa' as an amorphous mass, but to recognise rural diversity and the uniqueness of different rural lives, livelihoods, challenges and possibilities



# Some key points of departure...

Places and people...and connections

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# Places (settlements) are important...

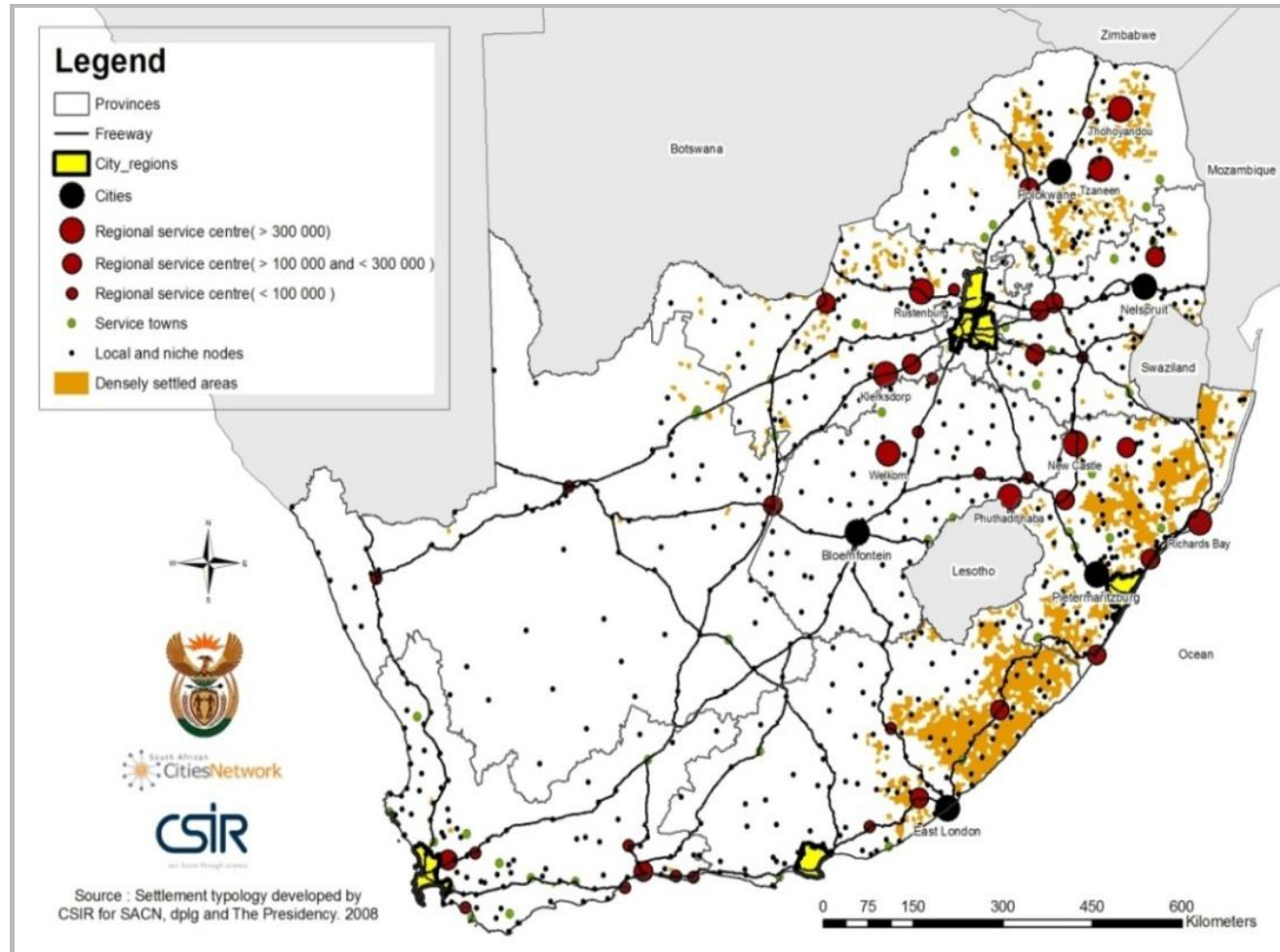
## 1. Where the people stay

70%+ of SA's population lives in metro's, cities, towns & local towns (2007)

Six metro areas alone are home to almost:

- \_ 34% of SA's population in the low income category
- \_ 68% of SA's population in the high income category

These places, *in fact the people in these places*, contribute more than 65% of the national economy

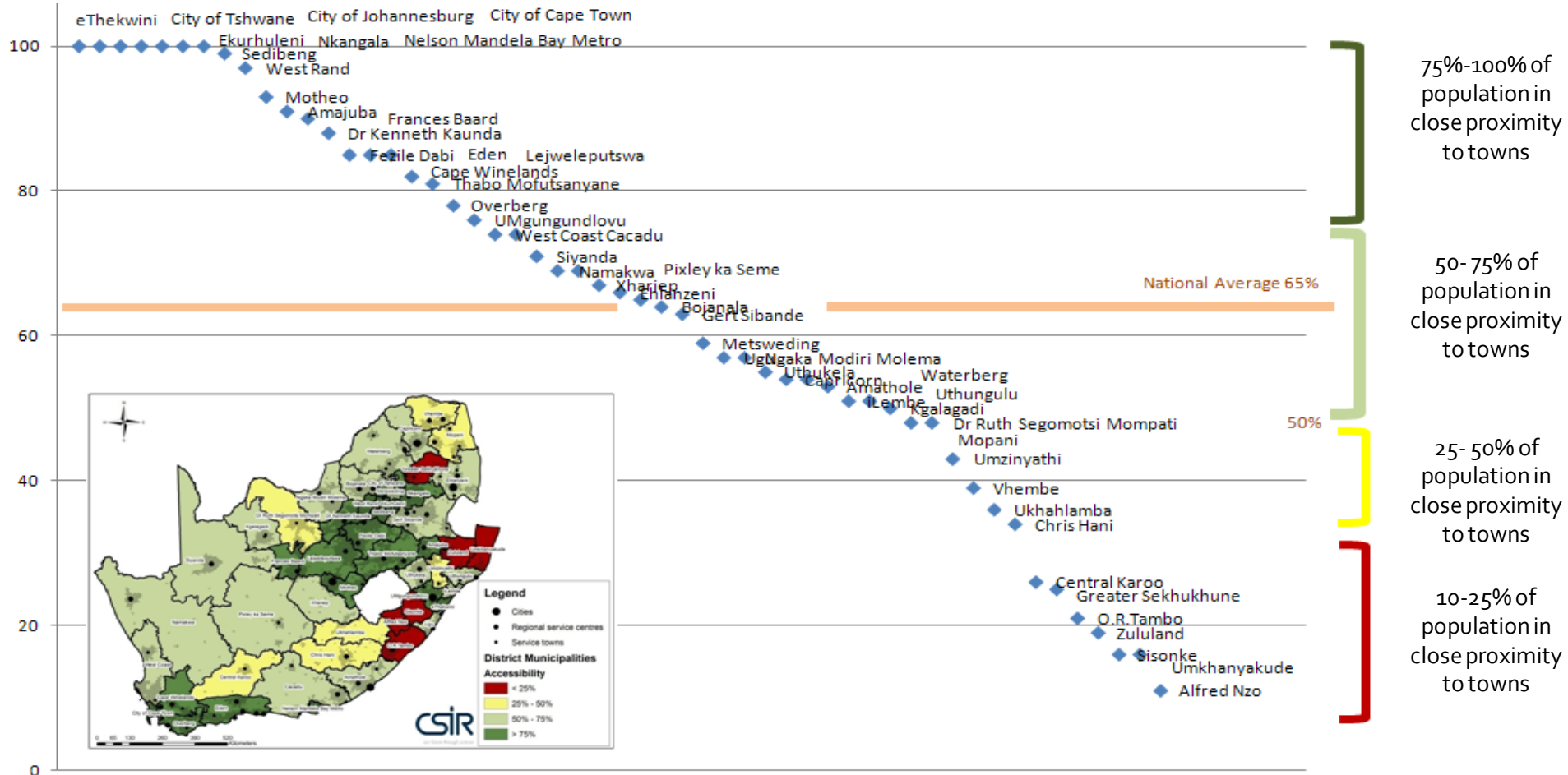


*But, people, and what happens in these places are more important...*

- ❑ As the NSDP argued, ***it is actually about people, not places*** (*everywhere, and not only in places without so-called potential, as often misinterpreted*)
- ❑ It is about what happens in and between the people in these places, about socio-economic connections and social cohesion
- ❑ People create networks and interactions and transactions that vary in intensity, depth and the richness of the connection

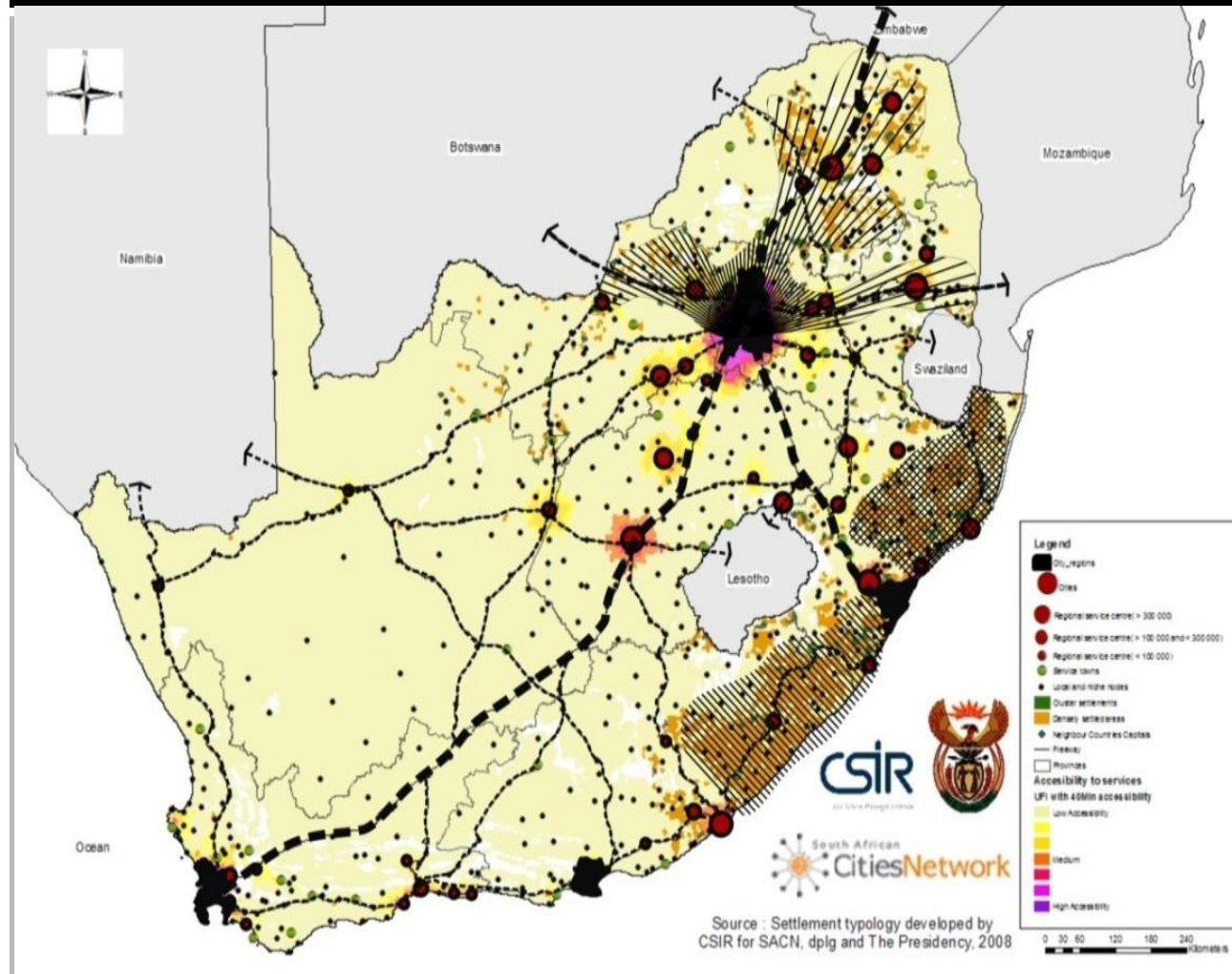
Nearly 70% of SA's population is urban

## % of People in DM resident in, or in close proximity of, urban functional areas that provide access to high order government and economic urban functions



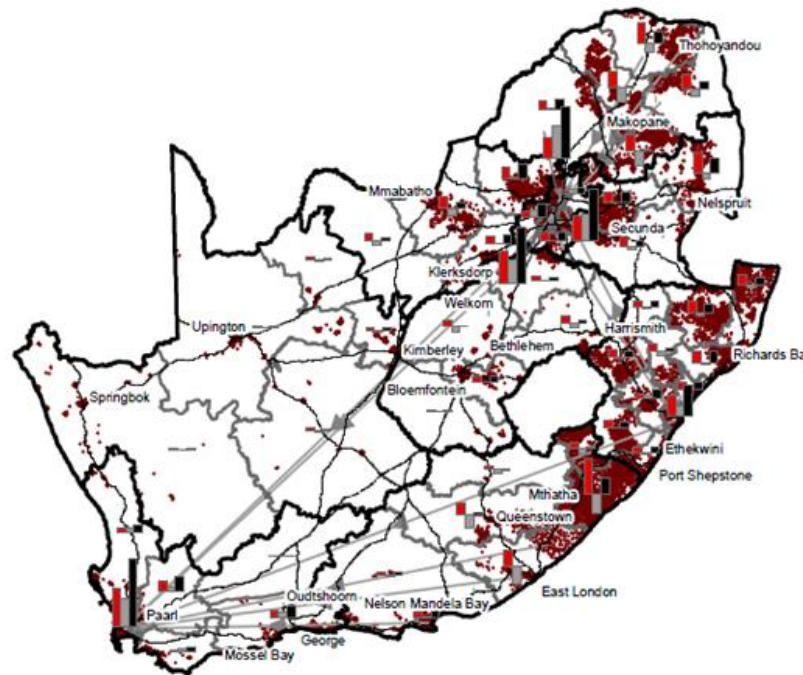
Places are not stand-alone entities – *we live in a network*

1. Where people connect



Places are not stand-alone entities – *we live in a network*

2. The focus of human movement patterns



**Population growth & migration/DM (2001-2007)**

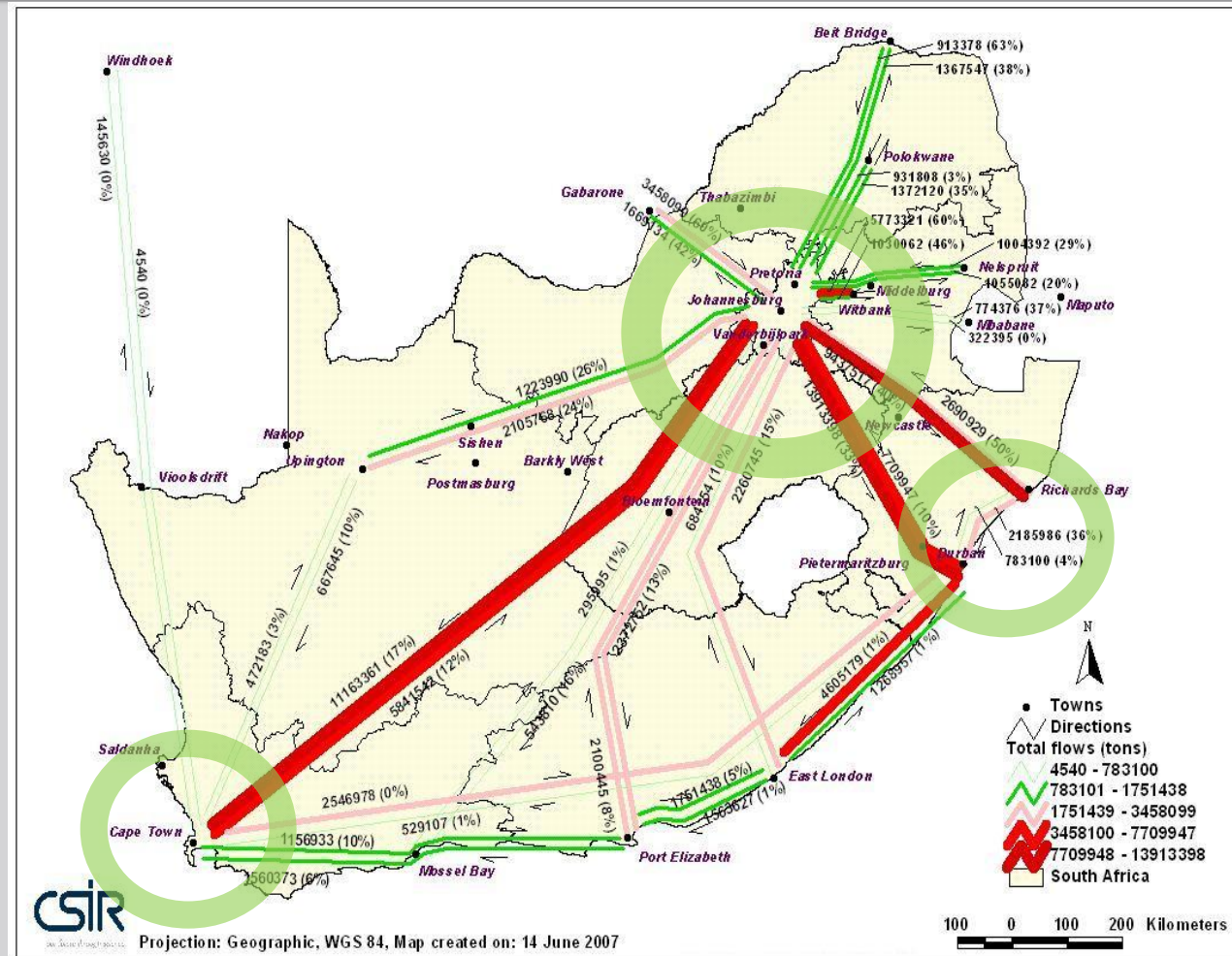
**■ Natural growth**  
**■ Migration**  
**■ Total growth**

**■ Population growth /100 people (2001-2007)**

**Prominence of Cape Town & Gauteng Metro Regions**

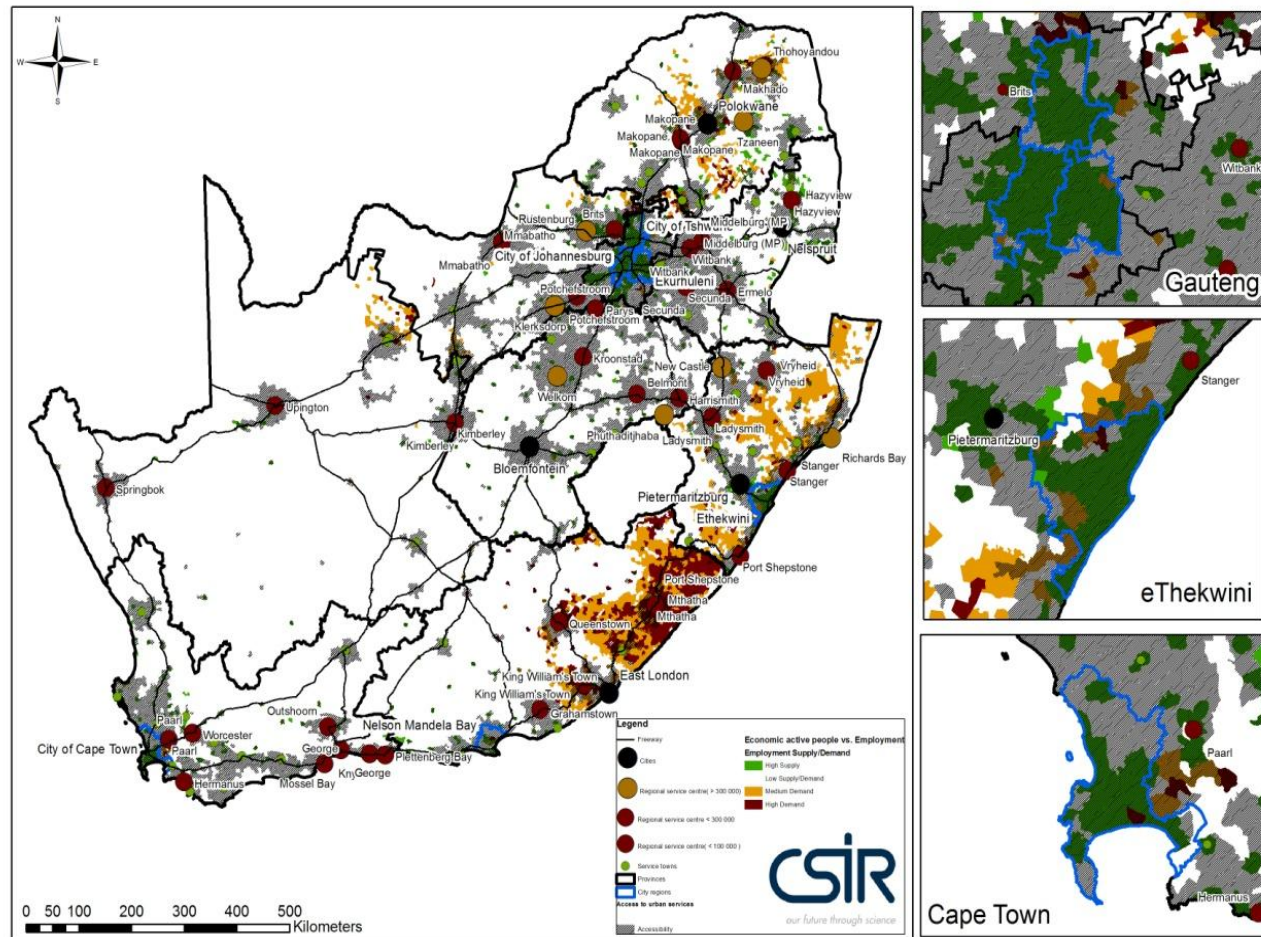
Places are not stand-alone entities – *we live in a network*

3. The focus of human interactions and transactions – goods & services, which are often very costly due to human-made patterns and natural, geographical distance



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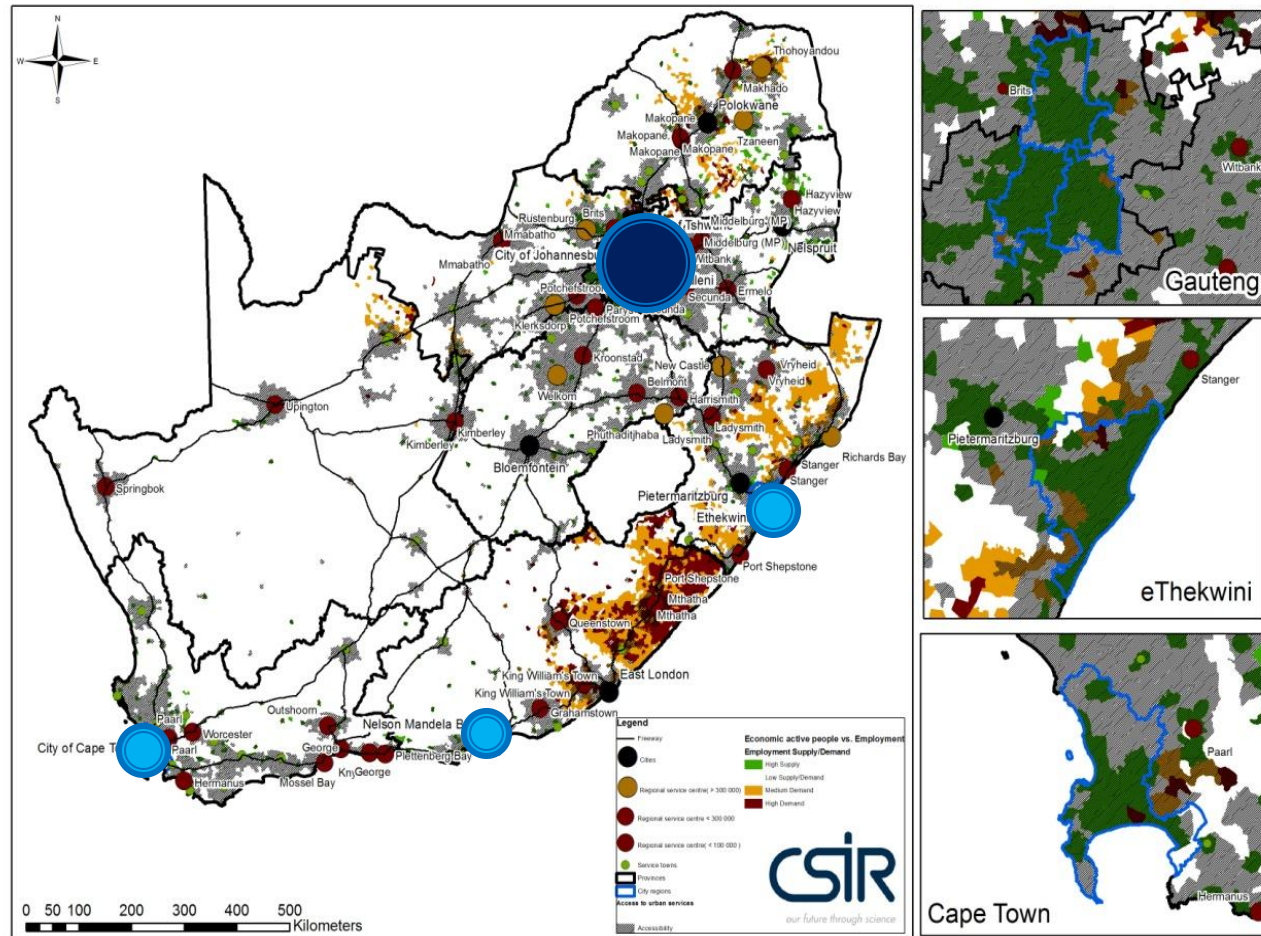
4. Places and the people in them play different roles – socio economically, culturally and relationally and have different degrees and qualities of access to economy and government services





# Places are not stand-alone entities – *we live in a network*

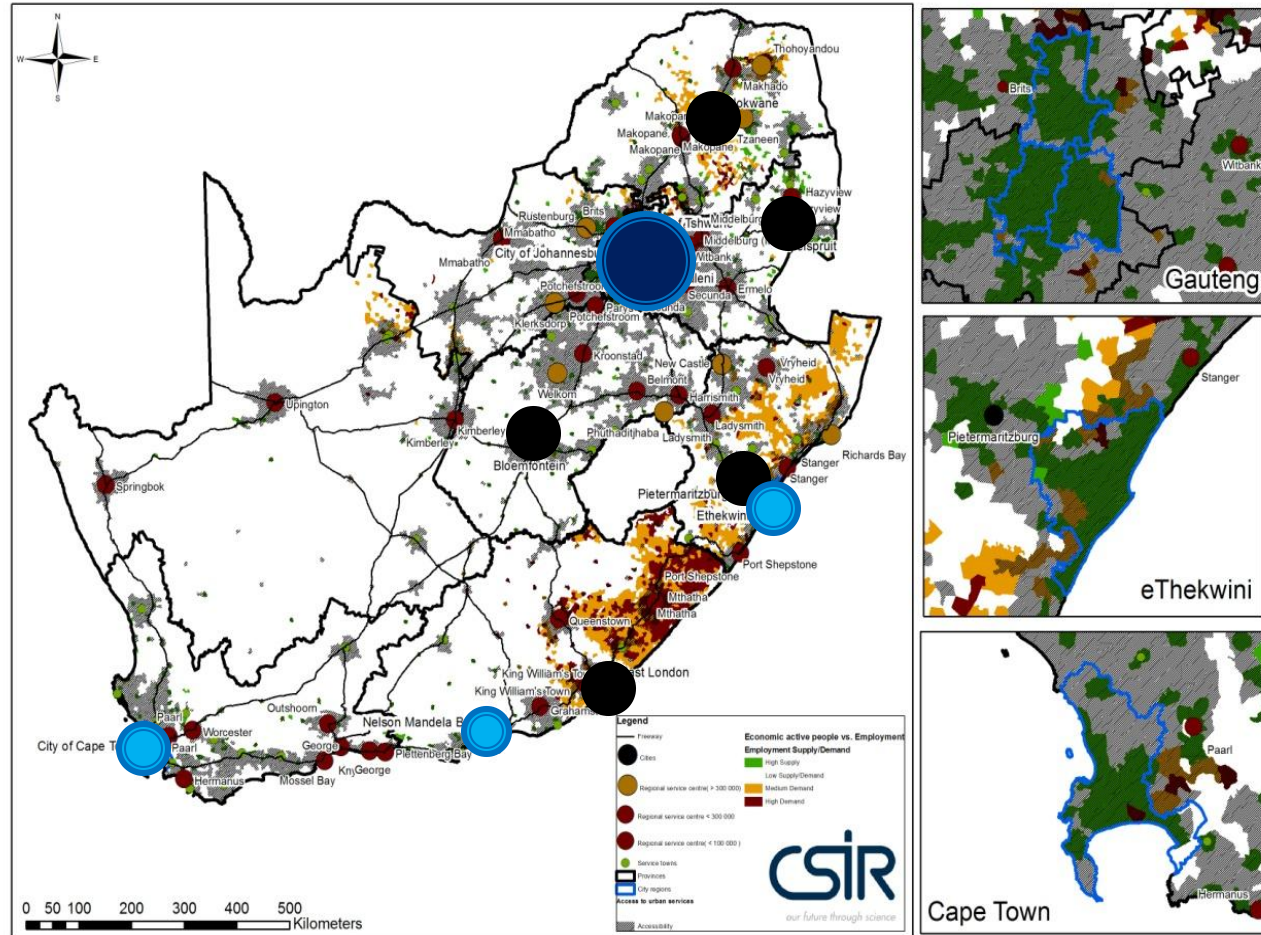
4. Different places play different roles – socio economically, culturally and politically
- Metropolitan areas with multiple nodes & strong regional & national connections, international/global connections



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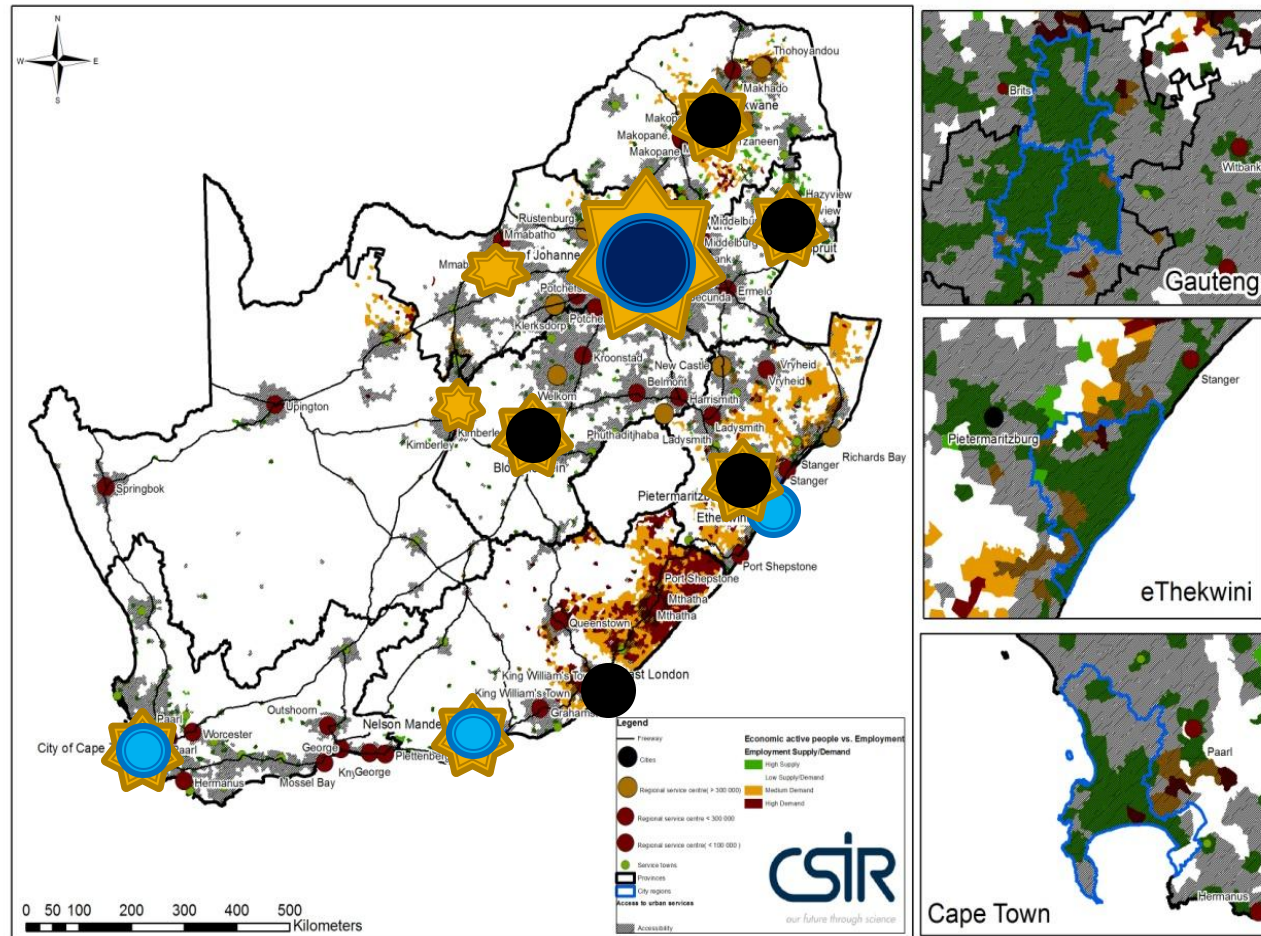
● Secondary cities with key national and regional functions



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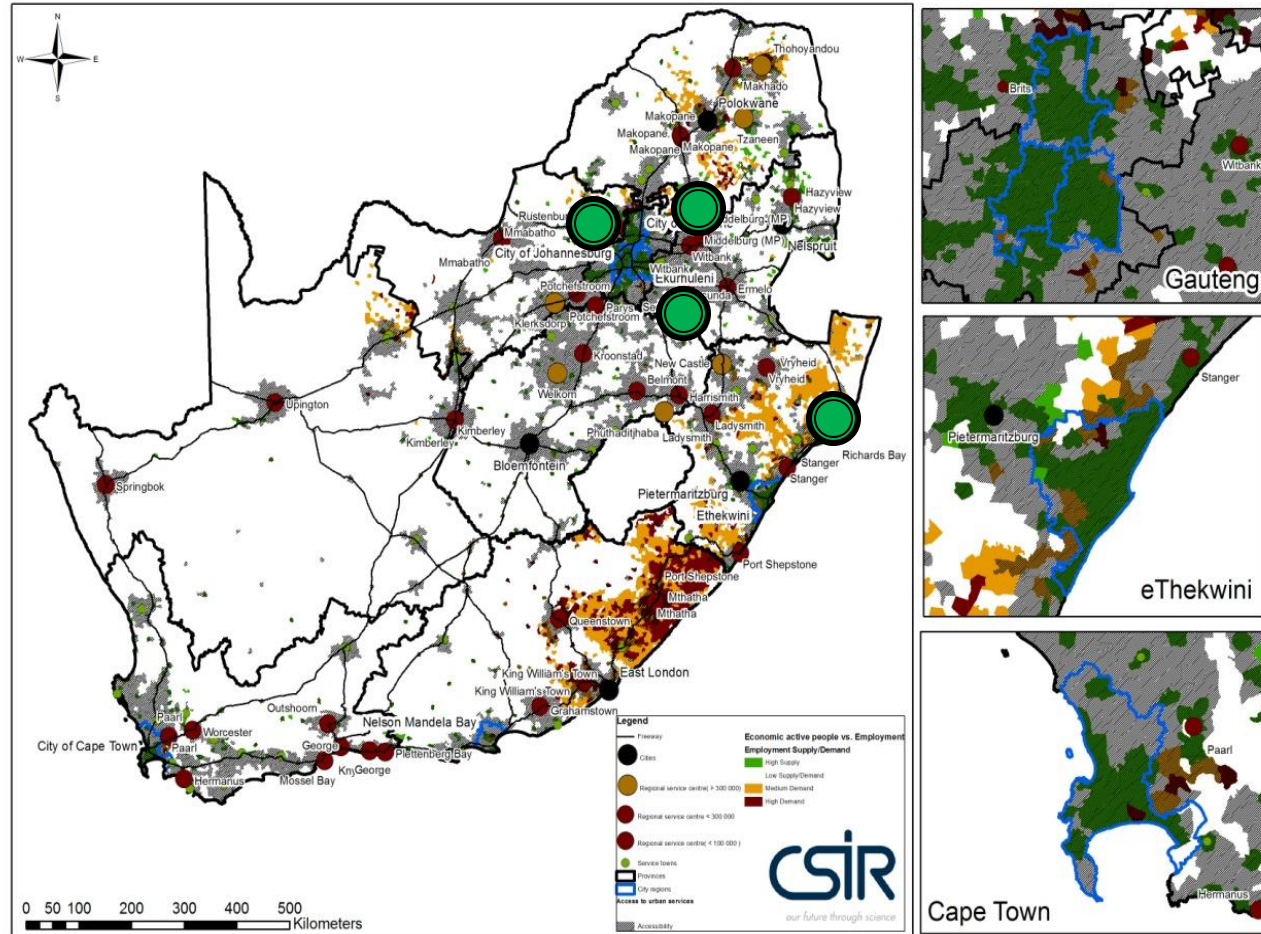
 Capital cities/towns



# Places are not stand-alone entities – *we live in a network*

4. Different places play different roles – socio economically, culturally and politically

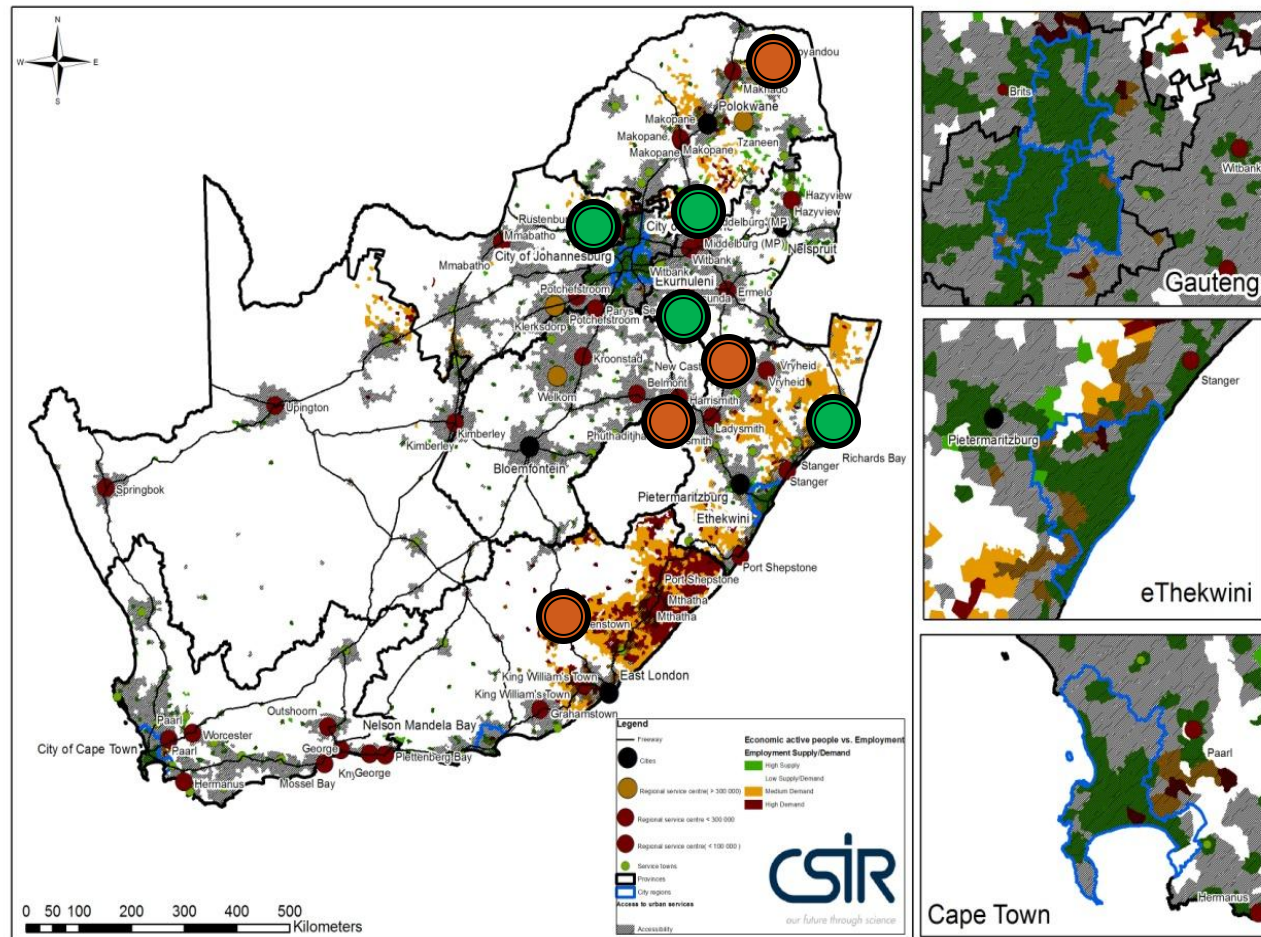
● Major regional service centers within areas of economic growth and/or high accessibility areas, often linked to international precious metal markets



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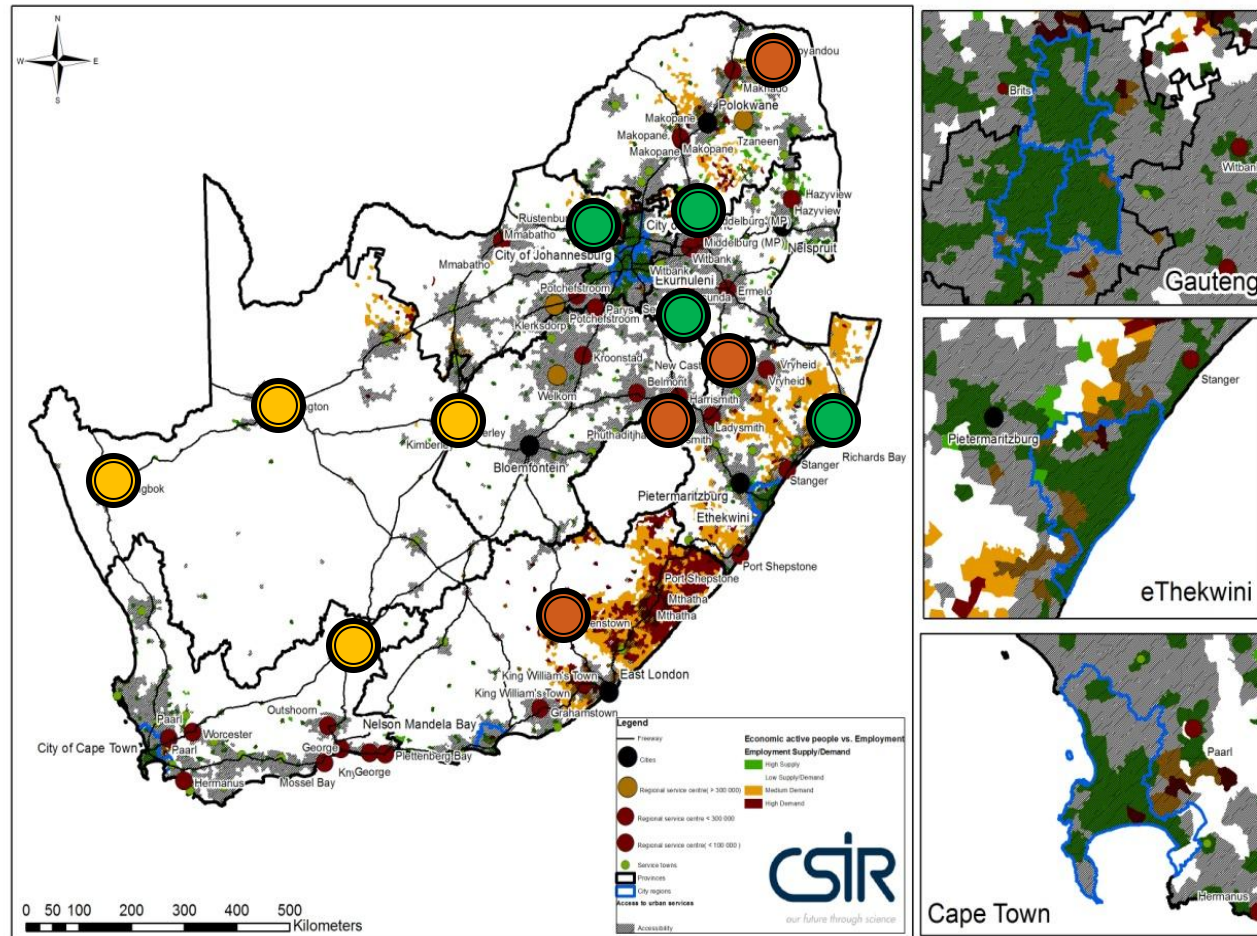
4. Different places play different roles – socio economically, culturally and politically

● Major regional service centers within highly populated but less accessible areas, declining economies.



Places are not stand-alone entities – *we live in a network*

4. Different places play different roles – socio economically, culturally and politically
- Regional service centers in sparsely populated areas, often with strong regional connections

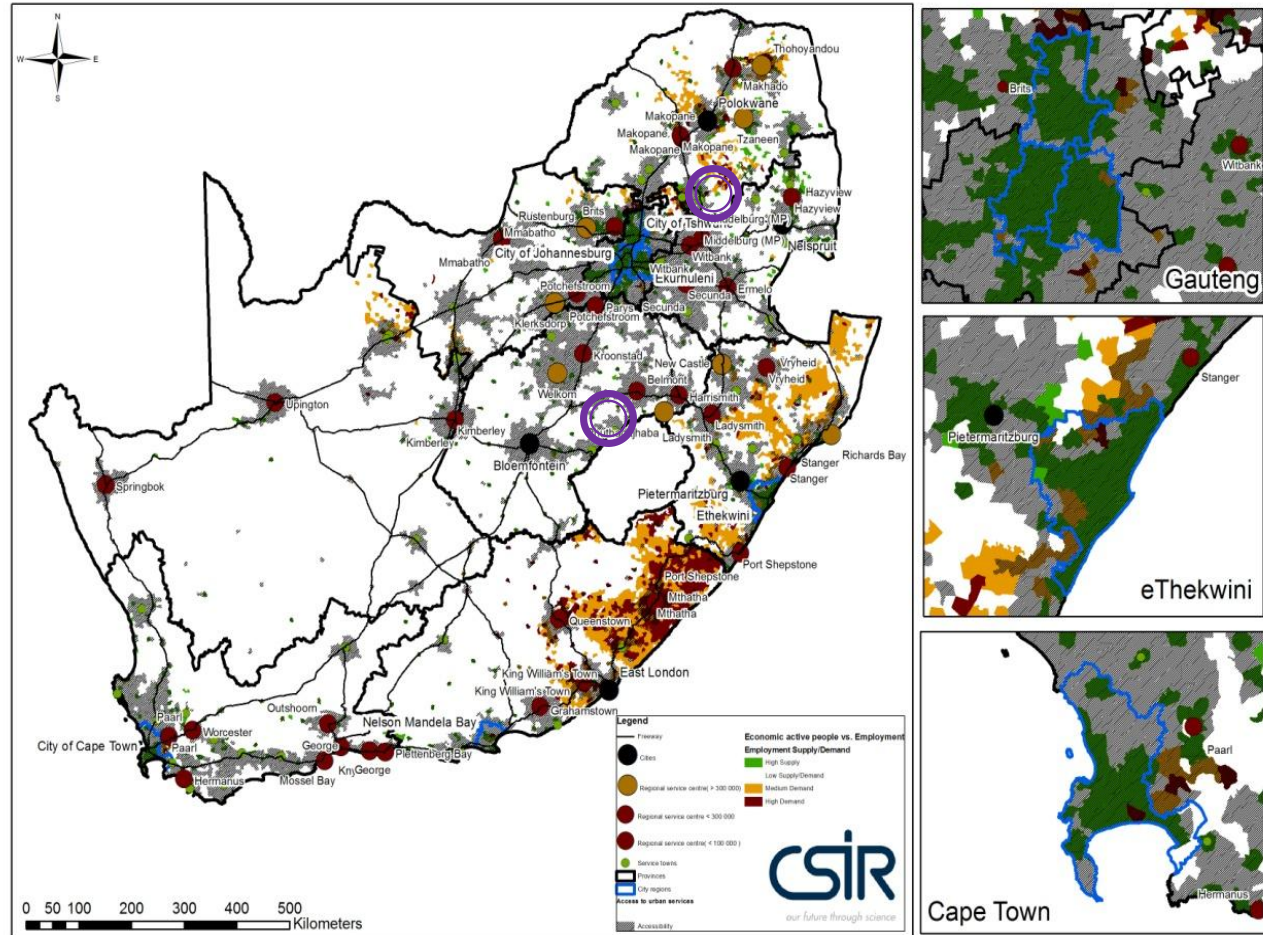


# Places are not stand-alone entities – *we live in a network*

## 4. Different places play different roles – socio economically, culturally and politically

⊙ Niche towns  
 Often huge % of people with high disposable income with linkages to specific places i.e. Clarens or Dullstroom and high income earners Gauteng

⊙ Local service centres



# Implications & challenges

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## Implications for contemplating long term growth paths

- ❑ **The existing polycentric grid is not only the cornerstone of the economy, but also of national government's tax income (budget)**
  - ❑ Even though strong, these networks are sophisticated and fragile and need to be sustained
  - ❑ These are the places attracting most local and regional migrants, especially young South Africans with high expectations, energy and mobilising force
  - ❑ Due to their depth in institutional densities in the knowledge economy sectors, they are the places where bold new steps i.e. in the green economy, must be taken
  - ❑ Even though the grid is the major contributor to SA's carbon footprint & pressure on the ecosystem – this is where the challenges can most likely be addressed
  - ❑ These are also places where Apartheid schisms are most clearly pronounced and where far more work is required than has been done to date

## Implications for contemplating long term growth paths

- ❑ **The creation of new local economies in off-the-grid spaces will require far more attention, energy and funding than most municipalities can muster, and thus... national & provincial involvement**
  - ❑ Decentralised planning (IDPs/SDFs/LED) alone cannot create, sustain & deepen a national polycentric grid of settlements
  - ❑ People make an economy, infrastructure enhances it – this implies an emphasis on investment in people, a more targeted approach to building capacity and far more care for ‘the human dimension’
    - ❑ But people provide services – these people live in places and hence, for successful regional and rural development linkages to nodes on the grid is required
    - ❑ Implying again, much better cross border regional functional based planning

## Implications for contemplating long term growth paths

- ❑ The focus on service delivery needs to be seen and pursued *within a framework of transformation and transition towards a national sustainable long term growth pattern*
  - ❑ Planning for places need to address current needs, *while at the same time* enabling future generations to move around on, and use, this network (and onto other continental and global networks)
- ❑ Spatial planning and visioning is a continuous process, not a singular activity of only the State (or a municipality) or a single profession , nor a 'deliverable/outcome' in itself

# Conclusion

- ❑ Settlements ,meaning the people, the institutions and the networks and interactions in them, are the lifeblood of South Africa's economy
- ❑ A polycentric grid of South African settlements provides the framework for this life-giving, live-enhancing and livelihood sustaining function
- ❑ Over and above their more generic human settlement responsibilities, the Department of Human Settlements and the National Planning Commission are ideally positioned to champion – i.e. coordinate, integrate and ensure – the creation and maintenance of this polycentric grid (*i.e. the places, the people and the connections between them*)