

Planning for economic development in a secondary city? Trends, pitfalls and alternatives for Mangaung, South Africa

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Abstract. This paper examines Mangaung's economic development initiatives against the background of the latest literature on secondary cities, with a specific emphasis on the 20-year period that has elapsed since the dawn of the post-apartheid era. Although some of the plans aim to reverse apartheid planning it is argued that these plans are being hampered by the fact that they tend to focus on a local "buzz" option, and run counter to historical pathways for the city. Moreover, they do not take the value of an increasing knowledge economy into account, and they fail to contextualise the city's development and future prospects in terms of its regional role. The paper identifies a number of pathways that build on history and include options for ensuring active participation in an increasing knowledge economy. Our contention is that the regional role of the city remains one of the key assets with a view to building future economic development pathways. Finally, a number of research themes are identified.

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Contents:

1. Introduction	204
2. Understanding secondary cities: key issues from the international context	205
3. The South African context: policy and research	206
4. Mangaung	207
4.1. Historical background	208
4.2. Post-apartheid strategic responses	210
4.3. Economic structure and change	211
4.4. Reflections from a business survey	212
4.5. Planning the economy of Mangaung: why is there silence on key aspects?	213
5. Conclusion: towards a research agenda for secondary cities	215

Acknowledgements.....	215
Notes.....	215
References.....	216

1. Introduction

Global economic activity and population are increasingly concentrated in big cities (World Bank, 2009; Rodríguez-Pose, Fitjar, 2013). As a result, urban research has tended to focus on large metropolitan areas, at the expense of secondary (1) cities. This lack of research on secondary cities is pointed out by De Boeck, Cassiman and Van Wolputte (2009: 44), who note that existing research “... *pays little attention to the relations and networks which develop between diverse cities and towns, or between the city and its various peripheries*”. Bolay and Rabinovich (2004: 407), in turn, argue that this also leads to poor development strategies, since “... *urban players still lack an understanding of intermediate cities, and are thus incapable of effectively integrating the concept in their development strategies*”. Yet the observation made by Rondinelli (1983: 85) nearly three decades ago that “[d]espite their relative weakness in economies of developing countries, intermediate cities seem to perform important economic and social functions that can contribute to national development”, still seems to be valid today.

South Africa is no exception in respect of economic and population concentration. Economic development and population are increasingly concentrated in the country’s six largest metropolitan areas, namely Johannesburg, Tshwane (Pretoria), eThekweni (Durban), Ekurhuleni (East Rand), Cape Town and Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth). In 1996, 54% of the South African economy was concentrated in these six areas. By 2011, the percentage had increased to 65%. The respective figures for the metropolitan areas’ share of the national population amounted to 35.9% in 1996 and 40.5% in 2011 (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2014a). Unsurprisingly, local economic development research has also focused on the main cities in South Africa (Nel, Rogerson, 2005). Despite the increasing concentration of econom-

ic activity and more specifically the manufacturing economy, the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (2), with Bloemfontein as its main urban settlement, has consistently attempted to create an industrial base over the past four to five decades. Although the fundamental rationale for such strategies differed under the apartheid and post-apartheid dispensations, the intended outcomes have seemingly not been much different. These strategic imperatives that have been put in place by the Mangaung Municipality in respect of industrialisation carry the implication of increased competition with the large metropolitan areas and global cities. In the process, this approach underplays the intermediate nature of Mangaung (mediating between primary economies and rural economies) and the historical pathways of the city. Methodologically, this paper is based on a long-term involvement in reflecting on the future of the city (including various workshops), an audit of enterprises located on industrial erven that was conducted for the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (2013) and a long-term involvement in the updating of the municipal economic database (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2014a). The paper examines the post-apartheid attempts to create an industrial base in Mangaung against the existing literature on secondary or intermediate cities. In the process, historical policy and more contemporary strategies are assessed. It is argued that the city’s economic development strategies underplay the importance of the knowledge economy (Cooke, Leydesdorf, 2006), do not consider the historical pathways, are based on what Rodríguez-Pose and Fitjar (2013) label “buzz options” (as opposed to pipeline options) via the principle of diversification, and largely fail to contextualise the city’s important regional function. The analysis contributes to understanding economic development in one of South Africa’s less well-researched urban areas (see Visser, 2013; Visser, Rogerson, 2014).

2. Understanding secondary cities: key issues from the international context

The late 1970s to mid-1980s saw the publication of the two most prominent books on secondary cities in the developing world (Rondinelli, 1983; Hardy, Satterthwaite, 1986). This golden period of secondary city research was a “response to the failure of economic-growth policies during the 1950s and 1960s that sought to transplant modern, large-scale, export-oriented, capital-intensive industries in a few regional centres” (Rondinelli, 1983: 379). Despite significant changes in the global economy and government responses, much of the value of this original work remains. The research assisted in arriving at an improved understanding of secondary cities, emphasised the dual role of these cities in national and regional development and suggested that an integrated settlement system should facilitate appropriate regional planning. In this respect, Rondinelli (1983: 380) contends that the “argument for developing small urban centers is based on the theory that widespread economic growth is facilitated by the emergence of an articulated and integrated settlement system of towns and cities of different sizes and functions that are large enough and diversified enough to serve not only their own residents but also those in surrounding rural areas.” The diffusion of social and technical knowledge from metropolitan areas to rural areas is also commonly mentioned in the available literature (Rondinelli, 1983). Bolay and Rabinovich (2004) further accentuate the regional role as follows: “As medium-sized cities that are well integrated within a rural region, they are – unlike the great metropolitan centres – seen as playing a crucial role in rural-urban interactions given the usually strong link and complementary relationship with their rural hinterland. They offer rural populations better living conditions, jobs, a less polluted environment, and act as local markets for their products”. Furthermore, intermediate cities play an important role in ensuring regional markets, as well as trade and commerce spaces, for diversified and higher-order goods that are often not found in small urban or rural areas (Rondinelli, 1983). More recently, there has been an increasing emphasis on the creation of effective link-

ages between urban settlements, as well as a focus on how different urban settlements (including intermediate cities) complement one another – along with an effort to understand the differentiated roles of various urban settlement categories (of which intermediate cities comprise but one example) (World Bank, 2009). Secondary city research has also been the linking factor in respect of governance and administration, education centres, mineral dependency and centres for military protection (Satterthwaite, 2006).

At the same time, cognisance should be taken of changes in the global economy and how these changes have impacted on secondary cities; while the role of intermediate cities in the “national growth debate” has been highlighted by the World Bank (2009). Globally, the role of government as the central planning and implementation agency has declined over the past 30 years (Bolay, Rabinovich, 2004). Many manufacturing and service industries have become centralised, and have been transformed in order to transcend local, regional and national boundaries. The increasing role of knowledge and innovation has also had significant implications for peripheral areas and cities outside the core (Rodríguez-Pose, Fitjar, 2013). In addition to their national and regional functional roles, as emphasised by research in the 1980s, these cities have also developed increasing connections to the global economy – a factor that is attended by a number of risks (Bolay, Rabinovich, 2004), as well as opportunities (Rodríguez-Pose, Fitjar, 2013). As planning shifted from top-down planning to an emphasis on local responses in a period of increased globalisation, the paramount importance of secondary cities was once again accentuated (Bolay, Rabinovich, 2004). Exposure to international markets also carries risks; and the institutional responses in this respect are important. Bolay and Rabinovich (2004: 411) articulate these hazards by pointing out that “... unstable markets are not without their dangers. Competition is fierce; one must adapt rapidly to changes in the international markets, and supply high quality ‘products’ to a very volatile market. These products include both manufactured goods and raw materials, but also the men and women who sell their labour under extremely precarious conditions”. The literature suggests that intermediate city responses to increasing globalisation are

different from such responses in larger urban agglomerations (Bolay, Rabinovich, 2004: 419). First, the institutional capacity is significantly smaller in comparison to that of the larger metropolitan areas. Secondly, many intermediate cities are newcomers to the international context. Thirdly, in many cases intermediate city economies are only linked to the international economy by a single industry. This dependence on a single sector exposes these cities to the volatility of international markets – a factor which is often a new phenomenon for which provision has not been made, with the result that the existing capacity to deal with such an eventuality is minimal.

Yet, despite the above problems, these cities cannot afford to ignore their increasing dependence on international economic and market forces. In this regard, Rodríguez-Pose and Fitjar (2013: 355) point out that: “*Doing nothing is, according to the dominating theories, likely to result in a steady decline which may jeopardize their very economic viability.*” Rodríguez-Pose and Fitjar (2013) go on to suggest that there are, in the main, two options for secondary cities. The first option is that of interactive learning through the promotion of local agglomeration through mechanisms such as industrial districts, clusters, learning regions or regional innovation systems (the buzz option). In their view, this option is only likely to have limited results, as it would stifle the circulation of new knowledge and most probably lead to lock-ins. Although there are ample examples of success in this regard, multiple examples of failure can also be cited. Rodríguez-Pose and Fitjar (2013) then refer to a second option which, according to them, is the one viable course of action – the pipeline option. It entails “promoting interaction outside the comfort zone of geographical, cognitive, social and institutional proximity”. They add that this option “is more likely to succeed in generating interactive learning and in facilitating the generation, diffusion and absorption of innovation” (Rodríguez-Pose, Fitjar, 2013: 359). In essence, the principal idea is to generate linkages (building bridges and pipelines) to economies outside the area. However, such an approach is not simple to implement. It is usually more costly and beset with uncertainty; and there is also the possibility that it might create local conflict (Rodríguez-Pose, Fitjar, 2013).

In addition to the changing importance of secondary cities, a number of long-standing policy considerations remain relevant. The literature indicates that intermediate city strategies are rarely integrated with macro-development and sectoral policies (UNCHS, 1984). Three questions are relevant in this respect. First, Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1986) ask whether governments use intermediate cities (or, for that matter, the overall settlement hierarchy) to guide their investment in economic and non-economic infrastructure, and if so, how? Second, do governments have an understanding of how non-spatial policy directions (Jamal, Ashraf, 2003) impact differently on different settlement categories (such as intermediate cities)? Thirdly, to what degree is the envisioned spatial economy articulated in macro-development policies?

3. The South African context: policy and research

Apartheid policies were instrumental in creating a significant number of secondary cities, or supporting existing growth. In many cases, the “underlying motive of these strategies was to keep blacks out of white cities” (Van der Merwe, 1992). New towns were developed and the economic profiles of some existing towns were enhanced by means of an extensive decentralisation subsidy programme for industrial development. Yet these policies were doomed to fail. Referring to de-concentration and growth points, Dewar, Todes and Watson (1986: 371) state that “... *after thirty years of operation in South Africa ... there are very few points which are showing significant success*”. Subsequently, the majority of these growth points have collapsed, with only a few exceptions (Marais et al., 2005). After the failure of decentralisation policies under apartheid rule, research was commissioned to examine the possibility of addressing urbanisation by promoting secondary cities (Van der Merwe, 1992). The research focused, in the main, on the identification of secondary cities; and Bloemfontein, East London-Mdantsane, Pietermaritzburg, Pietersburg-Seshego and Witbank-Middelburg (regarded at that point as a single urban complex) were identified in the process (Van der Merwe, 1992).

The next reflection on secondary cities was released in the form of a publication by the Urban Foundation (1994). The important national economic contributions and regional development roles of secondary cities were highlighted. Almost two decades later, two more reports discussing South Africa's intermediate cities were published by the South African Cities Network (SACN): "Secondary Cities in South Africa: a start of a conversation" (SACN, 2012) and "Outside the core: towards an understanding of intermediate cities in South Africa" (SACN, 2014). In the first publication, the authors used a quantitative and comparative approach to map intermediate cities in South Africa that had been identified by the National Treasury (SACN, 2012). The second report used six case studies to develop a more detailed understanding of the selected secondary cities. Although a range of messages emerged from the research, the report emphasises the dependence of many of the secondary cities on one or two main economic sectors, and the inability of these cities to find alternative pathways (SACN, 2014). This dependence on one or two sectors makes the concerned cities more vulnerable to global financial risks, policy changes and poor municipal management than metropolitan areas. At the same time, these cities have significant international links in most cases, and are increasingly being drawn into a global knowledge economy. Yet the strategic responses made by these cities were inadequate to deal with the risks and opportunities associated with globalisation (SACN, 2014). These strategic responses typically ignored historical pathways at the expense of global dreams. The SACN (2014) document argues in favour of a more differentiated approach (in policy and finance) to settlements across South Africa. The concern that national policies sometimes impact negatively on these settlements and that a differentiated approach is required, is also central to this research (SACN, 2014). In considering the inability of these cities to contextualise global risks and opportunities, attention should also be paid to the devising of more appropriate strategic responses.

Finally, some comments are warranted at this point in respect of existing municipal legislation in relation to municipal categorisation. Local government legislation in South Africa distinguishes between Category A municipalities (metropolitan

municipalities), Category B municipalities (local municipalities) and Category C municipalities (district municipalities). The recent declaration of Mangaung and Buffalo City as metropolitan areas has paved the way for more applications in this respect. The SACN (2014) seems to be critical of this approach, and suggests that there should also be other ways of according recognition to secondary cities, apart from declaring them as metropolitan areas. Our case study of Mangaung comprises an example of a metropolitan area that has been proclaimed by law, but whose economy, in the main, stands in a secondary position to that of the six large metropolitan municipalities. The main "advantage" of becoming a metropolitan area, in addition to the extension of municipal functions, relates to the fact that such municipalities can negotiate the inter-governmental financial arrangement directly with the National Treasury (whereas other municipalities have to negotiate this arrangement with their respective provincial governments) (SACN, 2014). In the process, the planning link with provincial government might become attenuated. Using Mangaung as an example, we shall argue that one of the key attributes related to secondary cities is that of their regional role – a factor which runs the risk of being forgotten during planning, once a place has been declared to be a metropolitan area according to law.

4. Mangaung

A substantial body of literature exists on Mangaung (and its three main urban agglomerations of Bloemfontein, Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu), although it is probably negligible in comparison to the larger body of research conducted in respect of the five big metropolitan areas. The historical work of Krige (1988; 1991) on the planning and development of what was then known as the Bloemfontein-Botshabelo-Thaba Nchu Region is probably the most noteworthy example, along with some historical work on Thaba Nchu by Murray (1992), and the subsequent research conducted by Krige (1996) on contemporary planning issues in Botshabelo. More recent work has featured in an edited collection by Marais and Visser (2008), including a specific chapter by Marais (2008) focusing on post-apartheid

spatial tensions and trends. A number of general papers on the spatial transformation of the region have also appeared (Marais, 1997; Krige, 1998; Tomlinson, Krige, 1997; Marais, Krige, 1999). This section starts off with a broad historical discussion, followed by a brief assessment of post-apartheid development strategies.

4.1. Historical background

Bloemfontein was established as the capital of the Free State Republic in 1854. Krige (1991: 104) points out that “since the establishment of the Free State Boer Republic in 1854, Bloemfontein has been not only the administrative headquarters of the province, but also a stronghold of Afrikaner tradition”. Subsequently, its long historical pathway has been closely linked to the administrative function, with the city hosting the headquarters of the original Free State Republic (Schoeman, 1980), the Free State province (1911–1993) and the Free State Provincial Government (since 1994). Bloemfontein’s administrative function was also instrumental in the creation of the first school in South Africa north of the Orange River, when Grey College was established in 1855. Grey College developed into the Grey University College in 1904, and subsequently the University College of the Orange Free State – and later on, the University of the Free State. A number of other schools also developed, while the Free State Technikon (today the Central University of Technology) was established in the early 1980s. The existence of the University of the Free State led to the establishment of a Faculty of Medicine in the late 1960s. This, in turn, culminated in the creation of significant public and private medical facilities. Subsequently, a number of health research companies have recently been established in the city (OECD, 2012). The administrative pathway also resulted in an extensive development of military bases during the apartheid years; but the prominence of these bases has decreased since the advent of the democratic period.

Apartheid planning also had a profound impact on Mangaung. In addition to micro- and meso-apartheid, the Thaba Nchu Municipal District, along with the town of Thaba Nchu, became part of grand apartheid (a term commonly used to de-

scribe macro-apartheid planning that aimed to divide South Africa into ethnic states or homelands). When it was incorporated into the then homeland of Bophuthatswana (effectively a homeland for the Setswana-speaking population, but never recognised as such by the international community). The historical context in relation to displaced urbanisation away from Bloemfontein to Thaba Nchu and Botshabelo has been adequately documented (Krige, 1988; 1991; Murray, 1987; Kwaw, 1995). As from 1968, black urbanisation to Bloemfontein was redirected to Thaba Nchu and, from 1979, to Botshabelo, while, at the same time, no new expansions were allowed for black people in Bloemfontein (Krige, 1991) (see Fig. 1).

Botshabelo was created in 1979 in order to resettle the SeSesotho-speaking population of Thaba Nchu (a SeTswana enclave) and to redirect the urbanisation of Sesotho-speaking people away from Bloemfontein. Under apartheid rule, it was envisaged that Botshabelo should become part of the QwaQwa homeland for SeSotho speakers. The motivation in this regard was similar to the rationale that lay behind the incorporation of Thaba Nchu into Bophuthatswana (Twala, Barnard, 2006). The intention was that no growth should occur in Bloemfontein, and that all expansion should take place in Botshabelo. In order to sustain Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu, the apartheid government designed three main economic strategies. Firstly, a highly subsidised bus system (with the subsidy amounting to up to 60% of the real cost) was introduced, whereby the cost of commuting between Botshabelo and Bloemfontein was reduced. When this system reached its peak in the late 1980s, more than 14,500 people were commuting on a daily basis between Bloemfontein and Botshabelo (Krige, 1991). The current figures have dropped to around 10,000 (Van Wyk, 2014). The second strategy, which is of greater importance for the arguments presented in this paper, was the declaration of Botshabelo as an industrial development point in 1982 (Krige, 1991). An industrial park was constructed, with a significant number of Taiwanese entrepreneurs focusing mainly on the textile industry. Estimates made in the late 1980s indicated that 57 factories were in production, with approximately 10,000 job opportunities being created in this way (Krige, 1991). The relative exploitation of female workers in particular,

and the misuse of the available subsidies, did not go unnoticed (Cobbet, 1987). Research conducted approximately ten years later revealed that by far the majority of the stands were occupied, although the manufacturing component had decreased (Marais, Nel, Rogerson, 2005). Thirdly, Bloemindustria

(with about 140 industrial stands, and comprising an example of a typical border-industry setup according to apartheid planning), was proclaimed as an industrial deconcentration point in 1998 – halfway between Botshabelo and Bloemfontein (Krige, 1991).

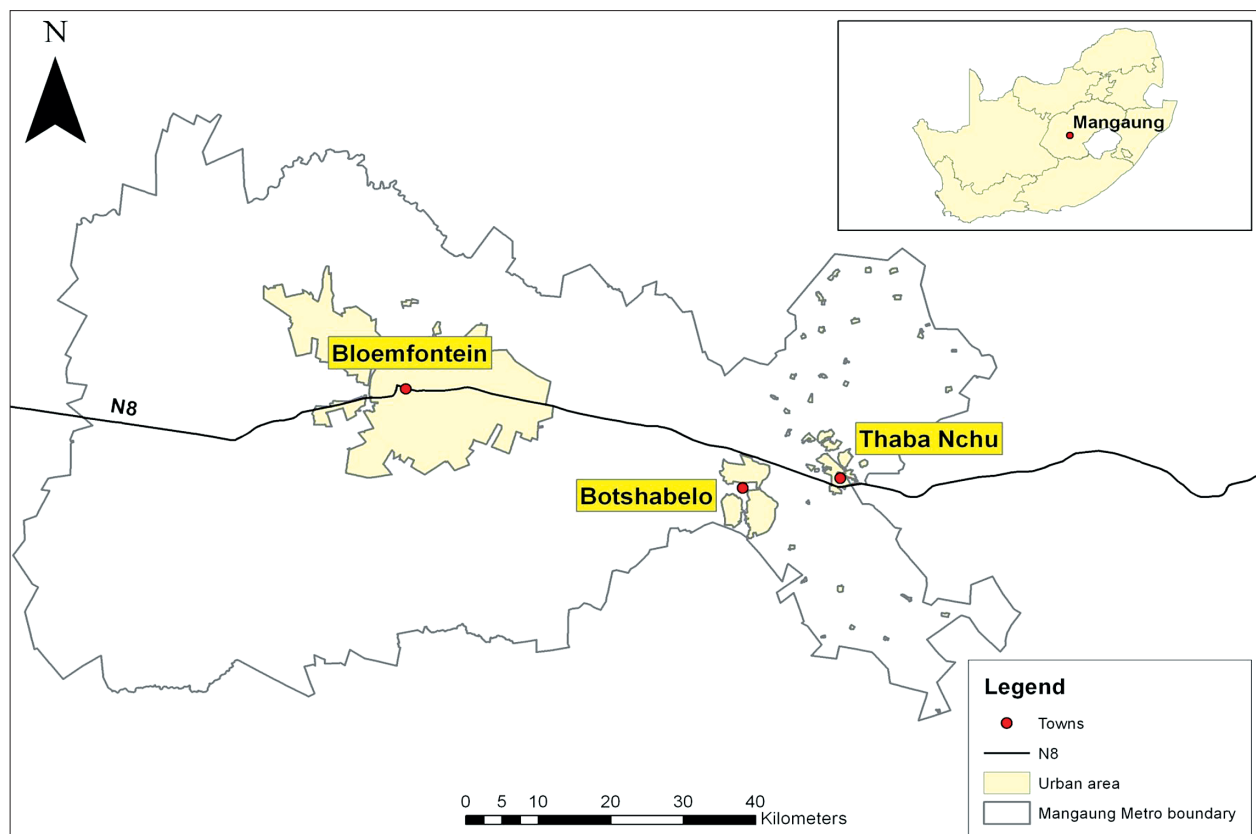


Fig. 1. Location of Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality

Source: Authors

Until the 1990s, much of the planning was related to the ideology of apartheid, which involved keeping black urbanisation at a distance. The city's public administrative system was of conservative and mainly white and Afrikaner in character. The main school and universities were, largely available exclusively to white South Africans (as required by apartheid legislation). However, maintaining apartheid came at a social and economic cost. The abolishment of influx control and, more specifically, of the policy of orderly urbanisation resulted in an increasing number of informal settlements in Bloemfontein, as a significant percentage of people from

Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu tried to resettle in Bloemfontein in order to be closer to places of employment (Marais, Ntema, 2013). The post-apartheid government also phased out decentralisation subsidies. The non-availability of further incentives for the industrial deconcentration points in Botshabelo and Bloemindustria meant that local jobs became increasingly harder to find. At the same time, South Africa's economy re-entered the global economy, and battled to become competitive. As the Botshabelo economy was mainly linked to the textile industry, it was extremely difficult to compete against the relatively cheap imports that were avail-

able from the east (as was the case in the rest of South Africa). By 2012, the manufacturing employment figures in Botshabelo had dropped from more than 10,000 (at the beginning of the 1990s) to approximately 6,100 (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2014a).

4.2. Post-apartheid strategic responses

It is in this context, and also against the background of an increasing expectation that local government should play an active role in local economic development (Rogerson, 2014), that the post-apartheid local government has had to operate. The industrialisation of Mangaung has been high on the agenda for the past 40 years and has gained renewed prominence during the past 20 years. Initial reflection suggested that, ideally speaking, small, environmentally friendly industries should be attracted to the area (Mangaung Local Municipality, 2001). The municipality's first Economic Development Strategy also emphasised the need to diversify the city's economy as the city was becoming increasingly dependent on services (Mangaung Local Municipality, 2003). More specifically, the economic vision of the city was articulated in the following words: "*We envisage Mangaung as a powerful regional economic centre, a world class African city that is built on the foundation of a dynamic, vibrant, sustainable and investor friendly economy*" (Mangaung Local Municipality, 2003: iii). In addition, the strategy suggested four thrusts: (1) diversifying the economy; (2) creating an environment conducive to economic growth; (3) developing the city into a regional/international economic centre; and (4) creating employment. The strategy largely acknowledged both the notion of a knowledge economy and the notion of a regional centre. Yet, closer scrutiny of the strategy document reveals that the notion of economic diversification overshadows both the knowledge economy and key issues in respect of being a regional centre. Key programmes of diversification include an agricultural development programme, an industrial cluster development programme, a business trade and expansion programme, a transport sector development programme and a tourism development programme (all inward looking strategies). The prominent role of manufacturing in diversifica-

tion is acknowledged in that one of the programmes on developing Mangaung as a regional/international economic centre suggests the development of an export development programme.

In line with the original thinking on diversification of the Mangaung economy in the latest Integrated Development Plan, prominence is accorded to the creation of an industrial base for the Municipality (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2012a). The plan also made provision for the advertisement of a tender for the development of an industrial development strategy for Mangaung. Against this background, a number of comments should be made about the current Integrated Development Plan (IDP), the historical economic development strategies and about attempts to bring about local economic development in Mangaung.

The municipality considers its centrality as a given advantage. The notion of centrality goes back to a period during which travelling by road or railway made Bloemfontein (Mangaung) a central location for conferences and gatherings. It is therefore also not surprising that both the African National Congress (1912) (the current ruling party) and the National Party (1914) (responsible for apartheid) were established in Bloemfontein. Yet, in an economy that requires effective logistical planning, Mangaung is rather peripherally located for many enterprises (especially in relation to Johannesburg).

The notion of a world economy that has become increasingly dependent on knowledge (Cooke, Leydesdorff, 2006) barely features in the latest Integrated Development Plan – this despite some attempts to understand the human capacity of the city, some reference to the need to collaborate with the universities and the importance of creating skills and capacity (OECD, 2012; Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2012a). Some reference was made to the importance of the knowledge economy in the 2003 Mangaung Economic Development Strategy (Mangaung Local Municipality, 2003). However, the documents do not focus, in any specific way, on the opportunities related to the generation of new knowledge by the universities, nor does it identify the substantial growth in student numbers over the past 20 years as an asset. More can also be done to understand and support the skills base. While some reference was made to this in the initial Economic Development Strategy, it seems to have disappeared in more recent documents.

The intention of creating an industrial base, with a strong emphasis on the prominence of this endeavour, is captured in the current development objectives. According to the most recent IDP (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2012a: 12): “*The municipality will be placing specific emphasis on the following: (1) Attracting both local and international investors (2) Building partnerships for improving skills and capacity building (3) Broadening partnership in economic development (4) Promoting competitiveness in the local market (5) Facilitating Industrial Development and Integrated Human Settlement Development towards the east of the City, especially along the vicinities of [the] N8 Development zone.*” The furtherance of these intentions, aimed at increasing Mangaung’s industrial base, has materialised by means of the development of the Mangaung Airport Development Node Master Plan. This followed the initial idea of the N8 corridor development envisaged in the 2003 Economic Development Strategy (Mangaung Local Municipality, 2003), in earlier versions of the Free State Development Plan (Free State Provincial Government, 2006) and in the latest Spatial Development Strategy (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2012b). The 700 ha of land made available for this purpose is in the process of being developed into an international conference centre, along with an urban square, a mall, light industrial erven, mixed residential erven and a railway station. Servicing the areas would result in the establishment of 72 km of new tarred roads and 32 km of water pipes, with an estimated 11,000 jobs to be created during construction. It is envisaged that the area will attract a total investment of

R100 bn. At the same time, the municipality has made a request for funding to the National Treasury for a new industrial park that will be located between Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu (Mangaung Local Municipality, 2013). By and large, both the Botshabelo/Thaba Nchu and the Airport industrial development efforts target light and green industries with some focus on the processing of agricultural goods (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2013) – an aspect already alluded to in the earlier Economic Development Strategy (Mangaung Local Municipality, 2003).

Although the focus of the current planning is broad, there seems to be an over-emphasis on the industrialisation of the city. This comes at a time when the city’s economic output from manufacturing has declined (see Section 4.3), while international competition has increased. Moreover, increased centralisation has impacted on manufacturing in South Africa – as has the increased acceptance of a global knowledge economy. Although economic diversification is not without merit, we shall argue in the remainder of the paper that it most often blinds economic planners to the possibility of building on existing pathways and to the regional role of secondary cities.

4.3. Economic structure and change

Considering the strategic responses outlined above, the focus now shifts towards an understanding of the trends in the Mangaung economy during the past 15–20 years (see Table 1).

Table 1. Changing structure of the Mangaung economy: the economic structure in comparison with that of five largest metropolitan areas, 1996, 2001, 2011

Economic sector	Mangaung			Five big metropolitan areas	
	1996	2001	2011	1996	2011
Agriculture	2.3	1.8	1.5	0.8	0.5
Mining	0.2	0.2	0.1	1.2	0.7
Manufacturing	5.7	5.2	1.9	23.5	18.9
Utilities	2.2	1.8	1.1	2.8	1.8
Construction	2.5	2.3	2.3	3.0	4.0
Trade	16.7	16.4	15.3	15.1	15.3
Transport	11.7	13.7	13.5	5.2	11.1
Finance	18.5	21.2	25.1	22.1	27.9
Services	40.2	37.4	39.3	26.4	19.6
Total	100.0	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.0

Source: Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2014a

Mangaung's existing economic development strategies (the various integrated development plans and the 2003 Economic Development Strategy) interpret the above data as suggesting a need for diversification. Such interpretations are probably not without merit. However, our interpretation of the above table suggests that the data support historical pathways closely related to government administration and education. The data also suggest that there is very little evidence that diversification attempts to increase manufacturing in Mangaung have been successful over the past two decades. And, as we have argued throughout the paper, renewed attempts to change the pathways are unlikely to be successful. In the main, past attempts to change pathways, as well as renewed attempts to do so, have increased the degree of competition with the five big metropolitan areas – competition of a type in which Mangaung is unable to contend successfully. The following evidence should be considered. In the first place, services have maintained their occupancy of approximately 40% of the Mangaung economy over the fifteen years under consideration. This reflects the city's position as the seat of provincial government, as well as a long history of education facilities (including two universities) and significant private health facilities (three private hospitals, a number of private day clinics and an increasing number of medical research institutions), as well as several public health facilities. In turn, the availability of the health facilities is a direct consequence of the institution of a Faculty of Medicine at the University of the Free State in the late 1960s.

Not only has manufacturing's share of the total Mangaung economy diminished – the number of people employed in this sector also dropped from 16,500 in 1996 to about 10 000 in 2011. The decline of 40% in employment in Mangaung is substantially higher than the national decline of 8% for the same period. The declining share of manufacturing, and thus also of employment in manufacturing, can be attributed to a number of reasons. In the first place, the initial success in retaining a significant percentage of enterprises in Botshabelo (Marais, Nel, Rogerson, 2005) was not maintained in the longer term. The initial success was based primarily on the fact that available floor space was rented out at rates that were significantly lower than market value, as

the capital costs of the original buildings were written off in the post-apartheid period. A more recent study by the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality suggests that, although occupancy levels still remain at about 80%, the downward occupancy levels are a matter of concern; while a significant percentage of occupancy can be accounted for in terms of warehousing (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2013). Although logistics and warehousing could potentially create an alternative, there is very little evidence of Mangaung being transformed into a logistics city. At the same time, manufacturing has increasingly been centralised in the post-apartheid period, with negative implications for peripheral areas (Nel et al., 2006). Any attempt to increase manufacturing has the effect of placing Mangaung in direct competition with the five big metropolitan areas. The data suggest that Mangaung is losing the battle.

4.4. Reflections from a business survey

In 2013, the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality conducted an audit of activities on their industrial erven (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2013). The municipality had about 1,800 planned and serviced industrial stands, of which 1,067 were occupied. Of these latter stands, 202 were occupied by manufacturing enterprises. Most of the unoccupied stands were located in Bloemindustria (the former industrial deconcentration point – 127 stands empty), Thaba Nchu (101 stands empty, and with basic infrastructure in a run-down state in many places), Hamilton (71) and New East End (56). The important point to be made here is that new industrial stands are being developed while existing stands are available. Although one should probably accept that some of the services related to these stands are currently inappropriate, as the stands were developed more than 20 years ago, the question remains regarding the degree to which new industrial erven will attract new business. An internal movement of existing enterprises seems to be a far more likely scenario.

A further point to be made on the basis of the report is that 76 of the 202 manufacturing enterprises are still located in Botshabelo. The industrial spac-

es and buildings in the Botshabelo Industrial Park are managed by the Free State Development Corporation (a development corporation mainly funded by the Free State Provincial Government). Yet, the Botshabelo industrial area is under pressure for a number of reasons, as evidenced by the fact that nearly 30% of the enterprises indicated that they were considering closing down, or that they would definitely be closing down. This is 2.5 times higher than the average percentage for all enterprises in Mangaung. These reasons include a rapidly declining occupancy rate since the global financial crisis (standing at 80% at the moment) and significant cuts in rentals in order to keep occupancy levels up. However, these cuts have had a detrimental impact on the ability of the Free State Development Corporation to maintain the industrial properties – an objective which holds significant risks in the long run. The survey also indicated a greater risk of enterprises in Botshabelo closing down or relocating, than in the case of enterprises located in Bloemfontein. Despite this reality, the Municipality wishes to plan a new industrial park between Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2014b).

A third important point to be made on the basis of the business survey relates to the very low international connectedness of these enterprises. Although there are a few export industries in Mangaung, the survey commissioned by Mangaung did not include any (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2013). In the main, the business markets serviced by these businesses included the Free State; the northern parts of the Eastern Cape; and the Northern Cape. Not surprisingly, these enterprises noted the importance of good-quality regional roads, as these provide the infrastructure for distribution towards the hinterland. The important point regarding this aspect is that it emphasises Mangaung's role in respect of its rural hinterland, as opposed to international connectedness. In fact, the international connectedness of the city probably pertains to sectors other than manufacturing (for example, sports and the universities). Finally, there are very few "new economy businesses" (technology, call centres, green economy). The lack of enterprises of this type poses the threat that Mangaung might fail to benefit from global changes in respect of business.

4.5. Planning the economy of Mangaung: why is there silence on key aspects?

Our literature survey has emphasised the importance of secondary cities in regional development, the dependence on national policy, the difficulties encountered in competing in the international village, the value of looking beyond local buzz options, the problems relating to the dependence of these secondary cities on one or two dominant economic sectors and the difficulties encountered in generating new pathways. The examination of these aspects was followed by a discussion of the historical attempts to promote economic growth, recent strategic directions and economic trends, and some results from a business survey commissioned by the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. In this section, we will reflect on all of these aspects and ask the question as to whether the current attempts in this regard and the declaration of the municipality as a metropolitan area are likely to produce the desired results.

The current approach towards finding an industrial base for the city is an inward-looking approach, which has been followed for the past 40 years – with very few positive results to show for it. The basic principle of this approach is to generate a cluster of industries. In order to bring this dream to fruition, large-scale investments have been made in new industrial land (despite the fact that a significant amount of open industrial land is already available). The approach also makes no provision for addressing the current trends of manufacturing decline in Mangaung, nor does it take account of the historical inability to create a significant industrial base outside government subsidies. This development, to a large extent, is a result of a secondary city tapping into the Industrial Policy Action Plan – maybe without considering the city's ability to absorb an investment of this kind.

However, the most important points to be made in respect of the economic development of the city are possibly related to those issues on which the Mangaung integrated development plan (strategic plan) is silent. There is no consideration of the historic pathways in respect of providing health and education. The notion of a university city with nearly 50,000 students (about 35,000 more than in 1990)

– at least two thirds of whom originate from outside Mangaung (and are thus effectively tourists) – along with the question as to what this would require from a planning point of view, does not feature. The integrated development plan extensively lists a range of tourist attractions – yet these students and the value of the two universities in attracting them from outside the city are not mentioned at all. There are two obvious implications. (1) What does this mean for planning? Does it entail making the place attractive for young people – or possibly ensuring extensive IT infrastructure? (2) In what ways could those coming from outside be induced to remain in Mangaung for longer periods of time? It could be pointed out that, although the implications are less profound in the context of schools, a significant number of children from outside Mangaung, and even as far as the neighbouring country of Lesotho, attend school in Bloemfontein (Free State Provincial Treasury, 2011).

In addition to the value of attracting thousands of students to the city, little consideration is given to possible ways in which Mangaung could benefit economically from new local knowledge generation at the two universities. Arguably, the increasing dependence of the world economy on knowledge makes this a vital strategic option – which also potentially incorporates an indirect “pipeline” option (through international networks linked to the two universities), as opposed to buzz options. Although some effort has been made to establish a regional innovation network, the role of the metropolitan municipality in this respect is limited; and it seems as if the provincial government plays a more direct role.

The aspect of supporting the existing health industry also receives no attention. The potential of this aspect is twofold, pertaining to both the provision of these services and the potential of industry links. The health services extend well across the boundaries of the province (Free State Provincial Treasury, 2011), thereby reflecting the importance of the city’s regional role. This regional and sub-regional role, in turn, emphasises the paramount importance of good access to Mangaung.

Yet, the medical pathway goes beyond medical services. The availability of a Faculty of Medicine has led to the development of an extensive health research industry in Mangaung. The first attempt

in this regard started with the Department of Pharmacology at the University of the Free State in the late 1970s and the development of a medical trial plant for a multi-national pharmacology company – first known as Farmovs but more recently called Paraxel. Paraxel led to the establishment of Quintiles – a company that analyses biodata for other research companies across the globe. These two companies jointly employ nearly 1,000 people. Numerous smaller research companies have also emerged – all internationally linked. This industry has significant potential development options through pipeline initiatives – supporting the creation of even further networks. The medical industry’s technologically-based link with the Central University of Technology also warrants mention. Recent technological advancements at the Central University of Technology are also geared towards supporting this industry (Volksblad, 2013) by generating human bone parts used in operations. Yet, in terms of economic planning, these aspects are not even on the agenda. The value of sports and festival tourism also receives but scant attention. The importance of having sports teams competing in the national and international arena should not be overlooked from an economic point of view. These teams require extensive support in terms of sports infrastructure, while an attractive city could go a long way towards ensuring a satisfactory living environment. Past research has shown the value of both international sports events and city cultural festivals (Centre for Development Support, 2002, 2008; Visser, 2008). Given recent findings of the relatively poor performance of Mangaung as an urban tourism destination (Rogerson, Rogerson, 2014), it is argued that more could be done to promote understanding and support for the value of sports and sports tourism to the city, and to actively build international networks through pipeline options.

Finally, a city which understands its regional role (which is closely associated with most secondary or intermediate cities) would proactively engage with the provincial government to ensure that roads outside the national network are maintained well. The quality of regional roads was identified as a key problem by the industries (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2013). Current estimates are that 40% (nearly 3,000 km) of Free State roads (those not under the jurisdiction of the South African National

Roads Agency) are in very poor condition (Mosia-
nedi, 2014) and therefore the concern expressed
by business people is not unfounded. The fact that
Mangaung became a metropolitan municipality in
2011 has actually had the effect of minimising the
linkages between the municipality and the provin-
cial government, since metropolitan areas negotiate
their intergovernmental transfers directly with the
National Treasury. The upkeep of the road network
is important in order to sustain the current region-
al role played by the city in respect of education
and health. In addition, such maintenance would
also ensure that the current small manufacturing in-
dustries with a regional footprint would retain their
competitive advantages.

5. Conclusion: towards a research agenda for secondary cities

Many of the key problems relating to strategic plan-
ning in secondary cities (SACN, 2014) are also ap-
plicable in the case of Mangaung. These include,
inter alia, the high dependence on a single econom-
ic sector (services in Mangaung's case); strategic
responses aimed at attempting to change histor-
ical pathways (economic diversification) rather than
building on them; and strategies that are, in the
main, inappropriately competitive in relation to the
big urban agglomerations. The strategic direction
largely ignores the regional development role and
the inherent requirements with a view to further-
ing such a development path. In fact, we suggest
that one of the reasons why this regional role does
not feature in the planning relates to the fact that
the city was declared a metropolitan area in 2011.
The current attempts to create an industrial base for
the city largely represent a buzz option, which en-
tails greater competition with the metropolitan mu-
nicipalities, but which also blinds the planners to
the necessity of thinking about the existing region-
al roles and building on these.

In view of the above concluding remarks and the
fact that this paper has attempted to provide an ar-
gument for a different way of planning for econom-
ic development in a secondary city, a number of
future research themes should also be considered.
In this respect, a more detailed understanding of

the medical research industry would provide the
municipality with important insights regarding po-
tential roles to be played in this regard. In addition,
the city is also in urgent need of a detailed cost-ben-
efit analysis of the economic value that the schools
and university bring to the area. Finally, a more de-
tailed assessment of existing knowledge creation at
the two universities, and also of stumbling blocks
to business creation, might contribute towards en-
suring that the city will potentially be able to play
a role in a global knowledge economy.

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Notes

- (1) The terms "secondary" and "intermediate" are
used interchangeably in this paper. The term
"secondary" emphasises the position of these set-
tlements in the settlement hierarchy, while the
term "intermediate" refers to the functional role
of these cities.
- (2) Although Mangaung was legally declared a met-
ropolitan area in 2011, we argue that, in the
main, the city stands in a secondary position in
relation to the big metropolitan areas of South
Africa, and that a future development pathway
for the city should be deeply entrenched in the
acceptance of this regional role. The Mangaung
Metropolitan Municipality consists of three main
urban areas, namely Bloemfontein, Botshabe-
lo and Thaba Nchu. Of these three, Bloemfon-
tein is the main – and also the oldest – urban
centre, although human settlement has occurred
in the areas around Thaba Nchu for much
longer.

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