Socio-demographic transformation in the Bloemfontein inner-city area

This article examines residential desegregation in the Bloemfontein Central Business District (CBD) within a theoretical framework and in comparison with other desegregation patterns in the CBDs of other major cities. Although desegregation in the Bloemfontein CBD started later, is less extensive and on a smaller scale than that in other urban areas in South Africa, it has increased rapidly since 1991 and had reached levels of just above 50% by 2001. The low level of desegregation can be attributed to the historically conservative character of Bloemfontein, but also to the compactness of the city of Bloemfontein/Mangaung, where desegregation is not necessarily required as a mechanism for saving on transport costs. It is also argued that the repeal of the Group Areas Act and the consequent desegregation of the inner city have not necessarily resulted in an integrated area with a new South African culture. In fact, this article points out that the opposite has occurred: in the CBD a new level of segregation has emerged, as the degree of desegregation in the northern parts is limited, while a relatively high level of segregation, concomitant with the outflow of white people, is found in the southern parts.

Sosio-demografiese transformasie in die stadskern van Bloemfontein

Dié artikel ondersoek residensiële desegregasie in die sentrale besigheidskern van Bloemfontein teen die agtergrond van 'n teoretiese raamwerk sowel as in vergelyking met desegregasiepatrone in ander stede se sentrale besigheidskerne. Ten spyte daarvan dat desegregasie in Bloemfontein later begin het, minder omvangryk is en op 'n kleiner skaal plaasgevind het as in ander stede, het dit sedert 1991 vinnig na vlakke van meer as 50% in 2001 toegeneem. Die lae vlakke van desegregasie kan aan die histories-konserwatiewe karakter van Bloemfontein sowel as die kompaktheid van die Bloemfonten/Mangaung stadskern waar mense nie hoef te desegregeer om vervoerkoste te spaar nie, toegeskryf word. Daar word verder geargumenteer dat die afskaffing van die Groepsgebiedewet en die gevolglike desegregasie nie noodwendig mense in 'n nuwe Suid-Afrikaanse kultuur verenig het nie. Die artikel toon juis die teenoorgestelde deurdat desegregasie in die noordelike gebied van die sentrale besigheidskern beperk is terwyl die suidelike gebied in 'n nuwe segregasiegebied ontwikkel soos wat blankes toenemend die gebied verlaat.

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★he process of transformation from apartheid towards a democratic system, which began in the early 1990s, has had farreaching effects on socio-spatial structures in South African metropolitan cities. The apartheid doctrine was not merely a normative, rather abstract factor in defining the social coexistence of citizens of different colours, but served simultaneously as a concrete element of spatial planning. This resulted in an all-encompassing spatial segregation of the races, which one-sidedly favoured the white population in its choice of residential areas and workplaces (cf Bähr & Jürgens 1993; Christopher 1999; Donaldson & Van der Merwe 1999). South Africa's democratisation and the governmental measures for affirmative action, designed to promote the social advance of nonwhites, have substantially altered the spatial structures created by apartheid. The erstwhile doctrine of racial segregation has now been replaced by the ideal of a multi-ethnic society. However, as opposed to apartheid, this ideal cannot be enforced by repressive means, but can only be achieved on a voluntary basis.

This study of social and demographic changes in Bloemfontein is designed to explain how the pattern of racial segregation has changed, what kind of dynamism propels these fundamental changes, and what consequences can be predicted for the future of urban development. In order to achieve this, the paper is structured as follows:

- The state of the research will be indicated by an overview of research literature on desegregation in South Africa and in Bloemfontein.
- This will be followed by an outline of the methodology to be employed.
- Thirdly, the trends in respect of desegregation in Bloemfontein
 will be analysed by investigating the city's ethnic structure and
 demographic development, its socio-demographic structure and
 residents' degree of contentment with their residential status.
- Finally, a number of conclusions will be drawn.

1. The state of the research

Ethnic changes and the reactions of various population groups (such as hostility towards newcomers, moving away, or amalgamation) re-

ceive scholarly attention all around the world. In order to explain demographic dynamics in North American cities, the Chicago School of Sociology engaged in work concerning this issue as early as ninety years ago. Analogous developments were confirmed for other cultures. More recent inquiries into the social, cultural, and ethnic fragmentation of societies undertaken by Marcuse and by Bourdieu, for example, could not displace socio-ecological approaches, but have nonetheless occasionally promoted new terminology (cf Bourdieu 1991; Marcuse 1998). In the case of South Africa, various studies within a spatially confined focus (especially with regard to Johannesburg and Durban) have been conducted since the late 1980s (cf Jürgens 1991; Morris 1994 & 1999; Guillaume 1997; Gnad 2002; Horn 2002). These studies have focused mainly on the relevance of racial categories to the choice of residential areas even after the abolition of apartheid or, alternatively, on the replacement of racial barriers by socio-economic class barriers.

Further discussion of the procedure and the effects of the migration of blacks into formerly "whites-only" areas, or the persistence of mixed racial neighbourhoods has not yet been set in motion in terms of any specific theory. Hypotheses claiming that, after apartheid, South African cities will follow a development dominated — as in the US experience — by invasion, a "tipping point" and succession (cf Hart 1996) are opposed by opinions which reject the transfer of such socio-ecological elements to specifically South African circumstances (cf Dewar 1995; Saff 1995; Parnell 1997) and seek out new paradigms. This article poses the question of whether the experiences of American cities and the invasion-succession theory offer a sensible theoretical background for South African developments. In this regard, the present study proceeds from the point of departure of the advanced process of transformation in Johannesburg, and attempts to determine the direction in which the desegregation of housing has moved since 1991 in other cities too. On the basis of spatial, social and economic indicators, the question of whether the process of desegregation is developing towards stable multicultural and integrative structures, or whether a socio-ecological process can ultimately be discerned which will lead rather to resegregation and the establishment of new racially homogeneous neighbourhoods, is investigated.

The classical socio-ecological model of the invasion-succession process was developed on the basis of observations made in Chicago by the school of sociologists led by Park, Burgess and McKenzie in the 1920s (Park et al 1974). Originally, the theory was founded on the basis of a social Darwinian point of view according to which residential segregation is a natural process which must inevitably lead to fragmentation of the urban area ("cities within the cities"). The driving forces in this regard are competition and the social phenomenon of group cohesion. These mechanisms lead to ethnic, racially homogeneous "natural areas" in which socio-cultural factors, the inhabitants' ethnic norms, traditions and behavioural patterns are similar (cf Shevky & Bell 1955). According to empirical investigations in US-American cities, invasion-succession processes pass through three phases (cf Duncan & Duncan 1957; Deskins 1981). The first phase can be defined in terms of sporadic invasions, by single black households, of a "white" suburb. These develop into definite clusters of black households during the second phase. A third phase finally leads either to condensation of the new inhabitants ("piling up") (cf Taeuber & Taeuber 1965) or, as a result of spill-over effects, to a spatial expansion of the core. In the latter case, the process of diffusion does not spread evenly in all directions, but once again in clusters or "blocks". However, the process of succession (in respect of housing) culminates in "the replacement of one identifiable population subgroup by another within the boundaries of a given neighbourhood" (White 1984: 165).

Investigations based on segregation theory all prove, to a similar degree, that the pioneers (the people who move into a neighbourhood first) are "upwardly mobile" during the initial phase of succession (cf Taeuber & Taeuber 1965). In many cases, the invaders resemble the established white inhabitants in their socio-economic structure, and they are essentially above the average among their own population group (Duncan & Duncan 1957: 15). In this connection, research emphasises the necessity of similar socio-economic profiles as a requirement for long-term integration, although homogeneous or adjusting structures of income and employment cannot be regarded as sufficient conditions (cf Massey & Denton 1993). The ongoing and very prominent segregation of blacks in the USA relates to the poorer as

well as the more prosperous classes and can be traced back to prejudice and racism almost independently of socio-economic structure (cf Meyer 2000).

An investigation of preferences concerning an optimal racial mix in integrated neighbourhoods showed that the ideas of black and white respondents differ greatly (Massey & Denton 1993: 89, 93). Whereas 63% of blacks voted in favour of a neighbourhood comprising 50% whites and 50% blacks, a quarter of the white inhabitants would leave the area if it became 21% black, and 50% of white respondents would no longer be willing to move into a neighbourhood if it were racially mixed. By means of a model, Schelling (1971) demonstrated how different individual preferences on the aggregate level lead to segregated structures which are not planned or predicted by individuals. If a certain threshold value ("tipping point") of blacks is reached in a neighbourhood, the migration rate of whites from this area rises dramatically ("white flight"), since they are no longer content with the numeral distribution of the majority and the minority. There is no further influx of whites after this, and the area experiences "white avoidance". After a process of invasion has started, individual preferences and adaptation strategies mutually influential can develop dynamics which can cause the process of succession to become a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Wolf 1957). Because individual decisions are partly based on the behaviour of estate agents, banks, institutions of distribution and "significant others" in the neighbourhood, the process of transformation is highly dependent on the behaviour of such role-players (Dreier 1996: 107).

For a long time, these problems in Bloemfontein had not attracted much attention from scholarly researchers. With the exception of Kotze & Donaldson (1998), there are no studies available which can illustrate, on a micro-spatial level, the extent of ethnic dynamics in the previously "all-white" city after the abolition of apartheid. Available studies focus instead on the macro-level, revealing the network of relations between the "white" Bloemfontein and its "non-white" satellite towns (Botshabelo/Thaba Nchu) (cf Krige 1991). Others analyse problems related to the supply of housing space in the African townships (cf Lehare & Marais 1996; Krige 1998). In older works by Krige (1988, 1991), the author divides the spatial transformation

of Bloemfontein after 1846 into four phases, namely the colonial city (1846-1910), the segregated city (1911-1950), the apartheid city (1951-1985) and the neo-apartheid city (1986-1990). Long before the implementation of apartheid, Bloemfontein had been fairly well segregated along racial lines. Davenport (1971: 5-6) referred to the pre-1910 Free State, with specific reference to Bloemfontein, as "the most deliberately segregationist province of all". During the period of the segregated city, black people had already been displaced outwards, resulting in a city already highly segregated by the time the apartheid government came into power in 1948. Further segregationist mechanisms introduced in the apartheid era enforced a greater degree of racial segregation among the African ethnic groups as well as between Africans and coloureds. In contrast to some of the other major cities in South Africa, scaled residential desegregation in Bloemfontein is only a post-Group Areas Act phenomenon. The following study thus enters previously uncharted territory by showing for the first time the extent of the ethnic and social change that occurred in Bloemfontein after the abolition of the Group Areas Act in a previously conservative, "verkrampte", "white" city (as opposed to so-called liberal, or "verligte" cities such as Johannesburg and Durban).

2 Survey area and method of survey

Bloemfontein is located in the geographical centre of South Africa. It received city status as early as 1846. From the foundation of the Orange Free State Boer Republic in 1854, it has uninterruptedly held the status of a capital city, and today Bloemfontein serves as the headquarters of the government of the Free State province. Since the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 it has also served as one of South Africa's three capital cities by hosting the Appellate Division of the country's Supreme Court. Consequently, the local economy is dominated by administration and agriculture. After World War II, some industries were also established in the area. Before 1991, any crossing of formal or informal racial barriers in this rather conservative, Afrikaans-dominated heartland of South Africa was virtually impossible — except, perhaps, for domestic workers who resided in the white suburbs. Figure 1 depicts Bloemfontein's division into group areas under apartheid rule.



Figure 1: Group areas in Bloemfontein 1986

Source: Krige 1991: 106

The survey was conducted in the Bloemfontein CBD. 268 households (comprising 600 persons) were chosen by random sampling for interview by field researchers from the Free State University at the end of 2001. The sample represents approximately 9% of all households, or 8.8% of the population of the area at the time of the 1996 census. The interviews were conducted by means of standardised questionnaires. The CBD area's housing structures are dominated by

rental apartments and sectional title flats. Buildings usually comprise no more than five floors. Almost 90% of all households were living in residences of this type in 1996. Furthermore, the CBD displays typical patterns of office and other commercial usage. However, vacancies, sub-standard usage (car dealers, repair shops), informalisation and forms of urban blight have also become characteristic of the area since the emergence of a new "parallel" centre towards the west of the city. This new centre has emerged within a few years; it is dominated by hotels, restaurants, insurance companies, banks and shopping malls designed for a predominantly white clientele.

3. Ethnic structure and demographic development

The demographic development of Bloemfontein was characterised by a population increase among all ethnic groups until 1991 (cf Table 1). The white population grew quantitatively by almost 20% after the 1980s (although it diminished in relative terms), but decreased by almost 10% between 1991 and 1996. The non-white segment, on the other hand, grew by 80% between 1980 and 1996. In contrast to other South African cities, the percentage of the so-called Asian population component used to be near zero, as legislation passed by the Orange Free State prohibited any Indian/Asian influx until the mid-1980s.

Table 1: Demographic development of Bloemfontein (city core, absolute numbers)

Year	White	African	Coloured	Asian	Total
1980	90 900	115 420	14 760	-	221 080
1985	99 349	118 523	18 591	-	236 463
1991	108 293	146 006	23 605	440	278 344
1996*	98 249	204 067	29 439	839	334 753
2002					371 200

* Also includes 2 159 classified as unspecified

Source: Krige 1991; Central Statistical Service 1994

The survey area (CBD) shows distinct deviations from the overall development. Between 1991 and 1996 alone, the ethnic African population there grew by some 1100%; the number of so-called colour-

eds increased by 2600%, whereas the white population decreased by 22%. In any evaluation of these data, however, the very low absolute numbers that marked the starting point for the non-white population (cf Table 2) must be taken into account.

Table 2: Demographic development in the Bloemfontein CBD (absolute numbers)

Year	White	African	Coloured	Asian	Total
1970	5 884	94	10	1	5 989
1985	9 735	543	182	0	10 460
1991	6 152	141	16	80	6 389
1996*	4 752	1 610	415	70	6 997

* Also includes 150 classified as unspecified Source: Information Statistics South Africa

A different delineation of the districts in respect of which counting was carried out may serve to explain the dramatic deviation of the 1985 numbers from those of the other censuses. It is quite striking that the number of whites was still higher in 1991 than it was in 1970 — a factor indicative of the attractiveness of the inner city under apartheid. Other South African cities displayed a significant decrease in their white population during the 1980s. This reflects the trend towards suburbanisation; on the other hand, it is also the result of low fertility rates. The low non-white population component, which, before 1991, usually comprised only domestic servants, resulted from thorough prosecution in respect of breaches of apartheid laws and from a rather narrow housing market, with sufficient demand from the white clientele preventing residential-spatial "greying" of the type observable, for example, in Johannesburg or in Durban.

Since the abolition of the Group Areas Act, the ethnic composition has changed considerably. The share of the non-white population increased from 4% (1991) to 29.9% (1996), and then to 52.7% (according to the 2001 sample). This demographic transformation can be attributed to increased inter- and intra-urban mobility, opportunities for the social advance of non-whites after the abolition of discriminatory labour regulations, the introduction of affirmative action, and the abolition of the prohibition banning Asians from

Jürgens, Marais, Barker & Lombaard/Bloemfontein inner-city area moving into the Free State. On a micro-spatial level, a number of interesting observations can be made (cf Figure 2).

Figure 2 shows that the spatial distribution is very uneven. There is a discernible north-south differentiation between the white population, concentrated particularly in the northern areas (which have a higher socio-economic status), and the African population, primarily inhabiting the south. This uneven pattern of population distribution is caused, for the most part, by socio-economic aspects (the race-class dichotomy): whites are much more likely to live in rather expensive condominiums, while non-whites usually live in rented accommodation. Another reason is that the south-eastern part of the CBD is closer to Mangaung and Heidedal, the traditional townships for the African and coloured populations. Non-whites seem to use the CBD as an initial stepping-stone when leaving the traditional townships; they do not appear to settle immediately in the suburbs of Bloemfontein.

As in other South African inner-city areas, there is an age polarisation between elderly whites and younger non-whites (Figures 3.1-3.3). 54% of all Africans in the sample are between 20 and 30 years old (the figure for whites is 30%), whereas approximately 25% of all whites are between 40 and 70 (as against 6% in the case of Africans). The percentage of single households is higher than 30% among the white population. Single households in the case of whites may predominantly be ascribed to spatial immobility owing to the greater age of the resident single persons. Single non-whites, on the other hand, are usually in search of social advancement, for which the CBD serves as an important bridgehead.

5 Socio-demographic structures

The process of ageing among the white population is reflected both in the average duration of residence in the CBD (white households 10.6 years; non-white households 4.6 years), and in employment structure (Table 3). More than 13% of whites in the area are pensioners, while 30% of all non-whites are students. The low percentage of children (under 6 years) among the non-white population — less than 5% (white children 9%) — supports the conclusion that the CBD is chosen as a residential area for very pragmatic reasons, such

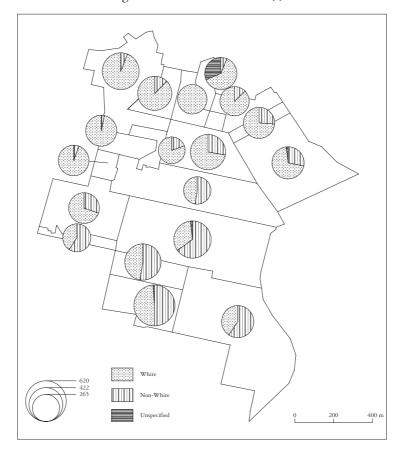


Figure 2: CBD Bloemfontein 1996

Source: Information Statistics South Africa

as its proximity to the university, technikon, technical college or workplace. Non-whites in the area generally have a matric certificate, a diploma or a university degree, which places them above the white CBD residents in respect of education.

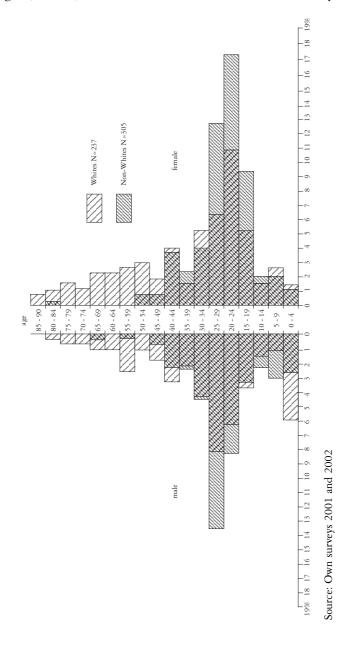
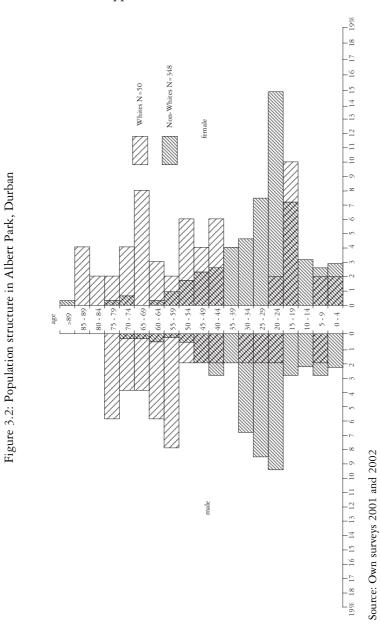


Figure 3.1: Population structure in Bloemfontein CBD



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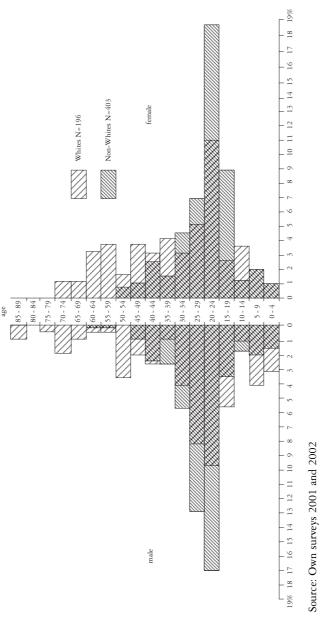


Figure 3.3: Population structure in Sunnyside, Pretoria

Table 3: Employment structure (selected categories) in %

	White	African	Coloured	Asian
Pensioners	13.4	0.9	-	-
Students	8.7	38.3	6.8	4.5
Unemployed	6.8	2.6	9.3	7.1
Employed	45.8	43.2	50.8	45.5
Total	277	227	59	22

Source: Own survey 2001

The quota of unemployed persons (as related to the number of employed persons) is therefore in some cases several times lower than the nationwide quota. This characterises the high level of social segregation between the non-white population in the inner cities on the one hand, and non-white people in the suburban townships, where mass unemployment prevails, on the other.

Only about 50% of non-whites included in the survey were originally from the Free State. Thus, Bloemfontein today attracts people nationwide, to an extent that would have been unthinkable in the days of influx control and pass laws, before 1991. The CBD is also an important entry point, offering a place where in-migrants can initially settle before a more permanent decision is made. However, a black African multiculturalism, as encountered in Johannesburg or Durban, has not yet emerged. Less than 4% of all people in the area are not citizens of the RSA. It may be assumed that the majority of them are from Lesotho, and therefore do not represent a different culture and language.

In socio-economic terms, there is near parity between white and non-white households, even though average income levels are very low in comparison to those of Johannesburg or Pretoria (cf Table 4). Although the various surveys were conducted over a four-year period, the table gives an overview of the basic trends.

Table 4: Average nett monthly income per household, 1998-2002 (in ZAR)

Survey area	White households	Non-white households	
Yeoville, Johannesburg	7 600	3 250	
Albert Park, Durban	3 160	3 200	
CBD, Bloemfontein	3 780	3 600	
Sunnyside, Pretoria	5 200	4 770	

Source: Own surveys 1998-2002

A closer analysis of nett income distribution per household, however, reveals that almost 40% of all African households in the CBD must be categorised as poor (Table 5). Households of so-called coloureds, as well as Indians, generate significantly higher incomes, thus raising the average for all non-white households, as shown in Table 4. The low purchasing power of a significant segment of the non-white population promotes commercial blight and the informalisation of the service sector in the CBD, in turn, causing "white flight".

Table 5: Average nett monthly income per household (in ZAR) in terms of population groups in %, 2001

Income	White	African	Coloured	Asian
= 1000	10.2	12.5	-	-
= 2000	17.8	29.5	13.6	-
= 3000	25.4	13.6	18.2	12.5
= 4000	16.9	17.0	18.2	12.5
= 5000	11.9	11.4	13.6	25
> 5000	17.8	15.9	36.4	50
Total	118	88	22	8

Source: Own survey 2001

6 Contentment with residential status

All population groups expressed a similarly low assessment of their quality of life in the area. The intention to move away in the near future is correspondingly high (51% of white households and 55% of non-white households). The main complaints of white residents include crime, noise and trash in the streets. Non-whites also complain about crime and trash in the streets, but mention experiences of

everyday racism as a main reason for not feeling comfortable in the formerly "white" CBD.

7 Conclusion

This paper has attempted to provide an overview of residential desegregation in the CBD of Bloemfontein against the background of the relevant literature and comparisons with other areas of South Africa. With this in mind, a number of concluding comments can be made:

- All across South Africa albeit from different starting points inner cities are undergoing extensive ethnic exchange. Bloemfontein's CBD witnessed a shift in racial composition from the whitesonly area of 1991 to a desegregation level of almost 50% in 2001. The white population avoids moving into these areas. The ideal of a "rainbow nation" is much harder to achieve than was initially believed, at least in the CBD. It should be borne in mind, however, that this ideal could probably be realised more easily in the formerly white suburbs, an area which needs to be researched more extensively.
- A downward-tending social filtering effect cannot be ruled out as long as non-white social climbers continue to leave such areas after a relatively brief stay, because of urban blight. This seems particularly possible, since a large percentage of the inhabitants are students and more than 50% came from outside Bloemfontein to settle in the CBD.
- There is ongoing informalisation of local economies, which serves to underscore the "Africanisation" of inner cities, including their cultural atmosphere. The municipality has engaged in various courses of action to address this problem, with varying degrees of success. The informalisation of the CBD economy has also been accelerated by the decentralisation of the retail business environment during the last 20 years. In reality, white people do not need to visit the business premises of the CBD any more, as decentralised outlets supply most of their needs.
- Cities as a whole are dividing up into zones or "islands" with very different social and supply conditions. For a large part of the white population, the most privileged and sought-after of these "islands"

are still to be found in the traditionally white "garden" suburbs. In fact, the spatial nature of desegregation in Bloemfontein suggests that the northern parts of the CBD will remain fairly "white", while desegregation will probably increase in the southern and eastern parts.

In conclusion, it could be argued that in the eastern and southern areas of the CBD, the level of desegregation has contributed to "white flight" from the region. However, in the northern parts there is no indication of this. Furthermore, in comparison with more "liberal" cities, inner-city desegregation is taking place at a slower rate and on a smaller scale. Although the traditionally conservative character of the city may be a contributing factor in this regard, the spatial compactness of Bloemfontein and its former black township, Mangaung, is such that people are not forced to desegregate in order to save on transport costs — in contrast to the situation in Johannesburg and Soweto, for example.

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