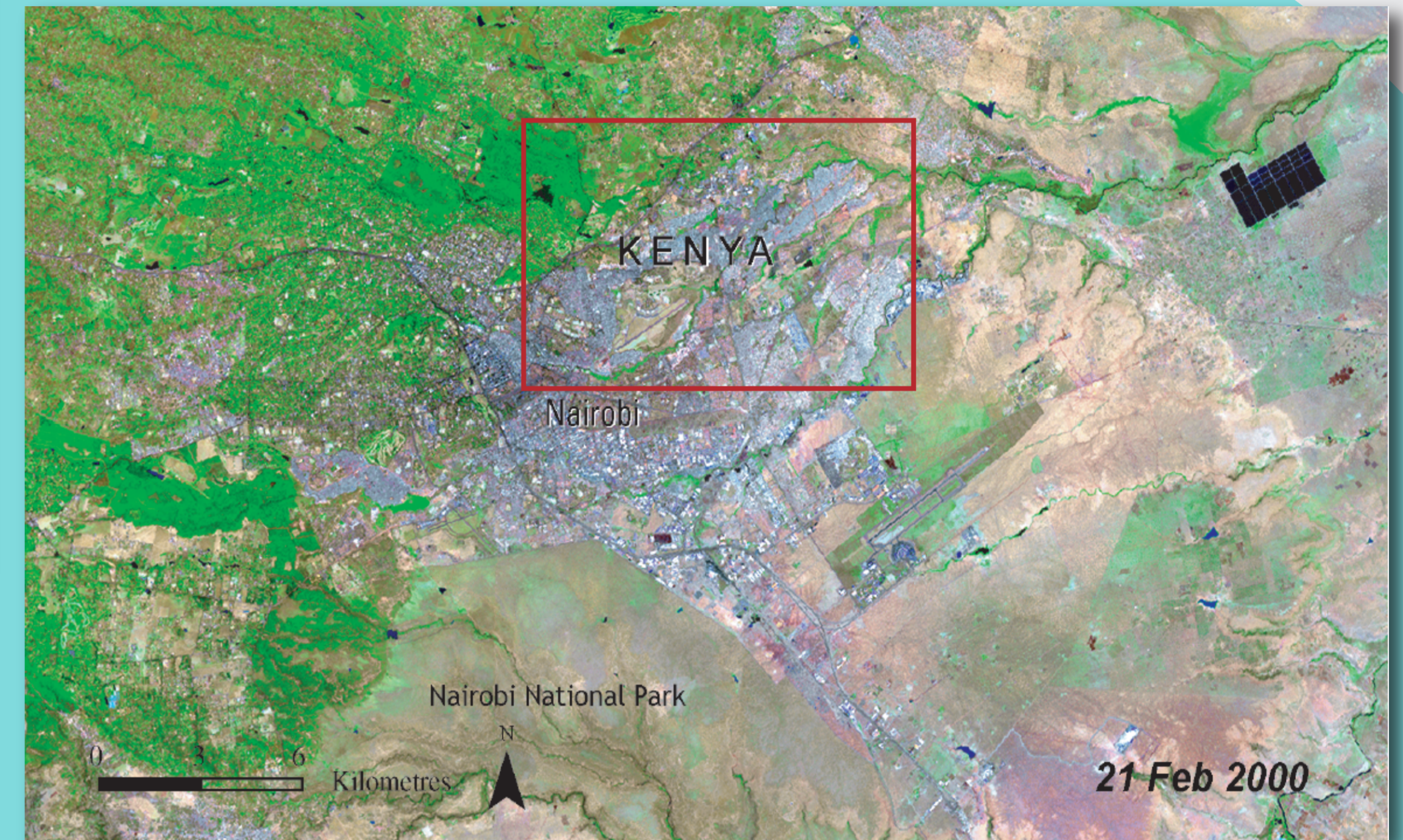
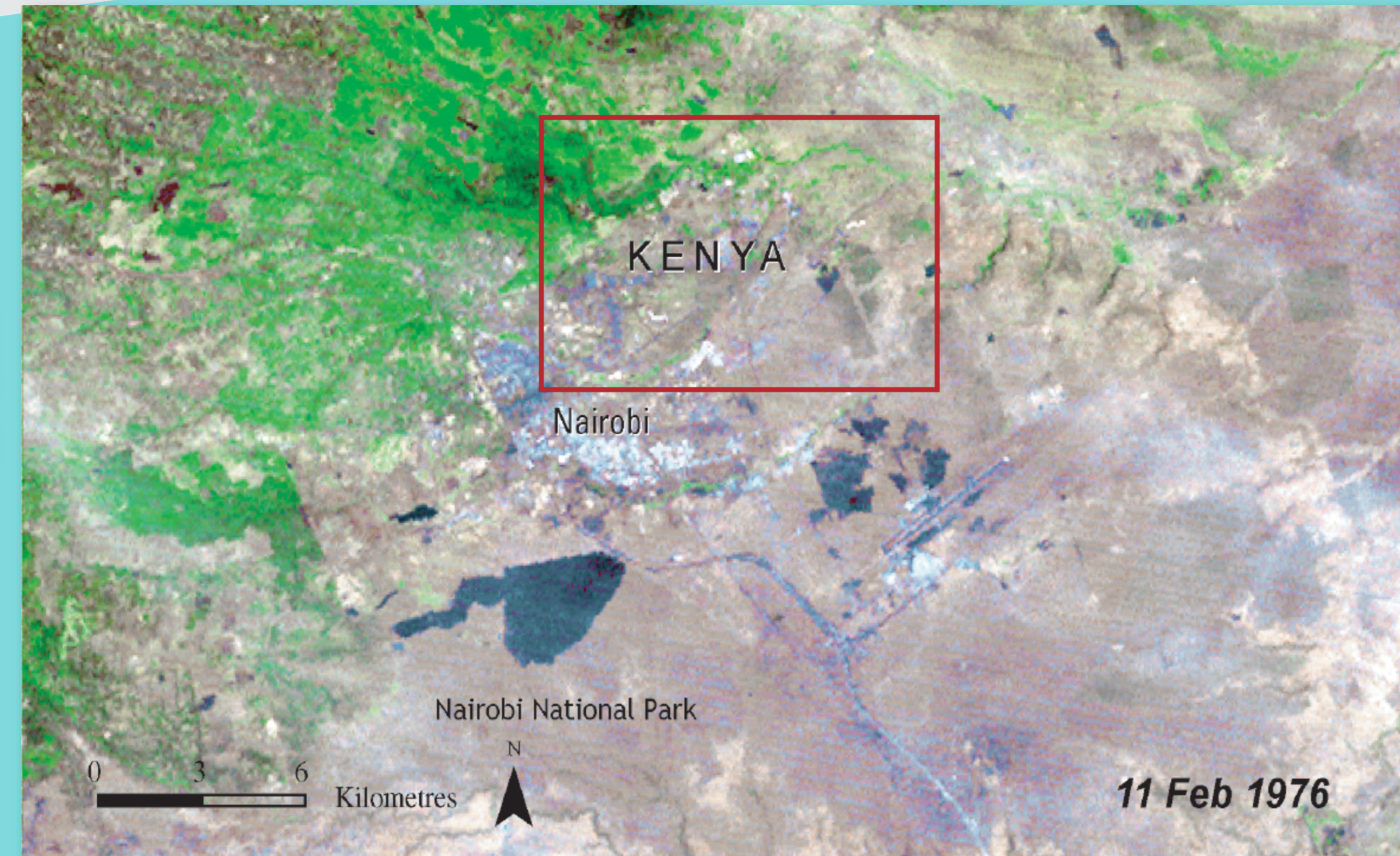


Nairobi: Impacts of Urban Growth



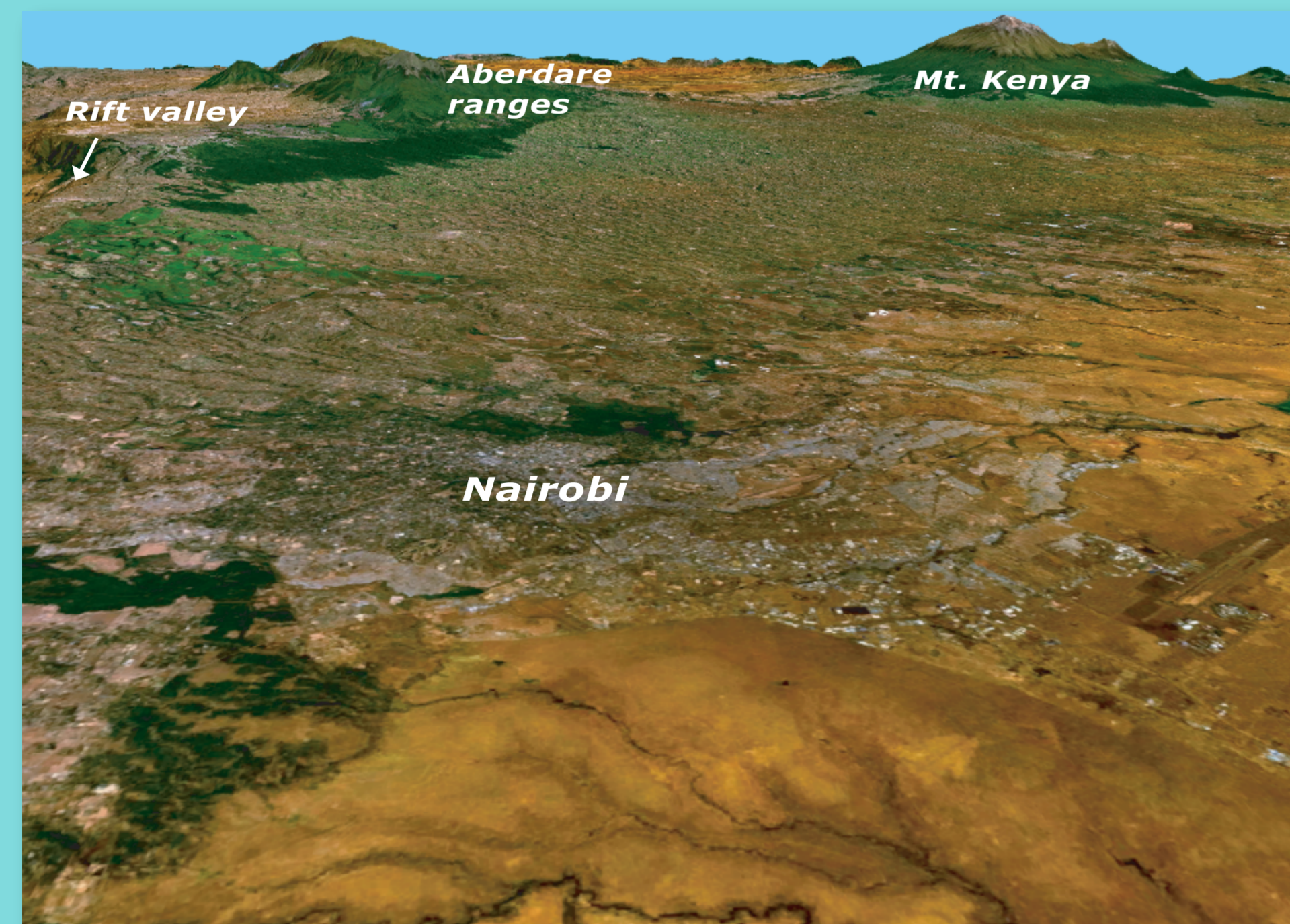
Red box shows area of expansion

Kenya's capital city, Nairobi, was established in 1899 as a railway supply depot, and by 1922, the number of settlers had rose to 9 000. About three decades later in the 1950s, the population was about 80 000 settlers. In just 100 years, this small supply depot had been transformed into a thriving capital of British East Africa. At independence in 1963, Nairobi had a population of 350 000 people. Its current population is estimated at more than 3.2 million people spread over 685 square kilometres. Today, Nairobi is a cultural and architectural melting pot, the largest city between Cairo and Johannesburg and the economic capital of much of Eastern and Central Africa.

The location of Nairobi and its relatively well-developed infrastructure, including a modern airport and commercial centres has led to a very rapid expansion of the city since 1979. The city's population growth has influenced environmental change over the past century as more land was opened up for human settlement, industry, roads and other infrastructural development.



Kenyatta Avenue, downtown Nairobi



Nairobi is now faced with serious urban planning and management problems, and thousands of its residents live in informal settlements. A growing number of urban residents are finding shelter in sub-standard housing in informal settlements with severe sanitation problems. In one of these settlements, there are only 10 toilets for a settlement of 332 households. The burgeoning slums of Kibera and Mathare may well be Africa's largest and are also probably the most dangerous. They have very little or no basic services. Deterioration of the conditions is also manifested in decaying infrastructure, poor management of both household and industrial solid waste, lack of proper sanitation facilities, poor drainage systems; and unreliable energy and water supplies for home consumption and industrial production. Individual families in the city, through their own savings, are however playing a significant role in financing their own housing improvement cost, contributing a large proportion to the domestic resources going into the housing sector.

The current government, elected in December 2002, is trying to resuscitate the economy and decentralize development planning and implementation to city authorities. It has already started to address the challenges of security, rehabilitation of roads and streets, upgrading of city slums and provision of services - public lighting, enactment of driving standards, market cleanups, restoration of public sanitation infrastructure, and solid waste management.

Population growth in Kenya's capital, Nairobi

