

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AREA: SOWETO

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to give effect to the first objective of this study, namely to furnish brief background details of the historical development, people, lifestyle, culture, religion and tourism potential of Soweto, thus lending a context to the stated aim of the study. The descriptions and profile of Soweto in particular the “Development of Soweto Society”, presented in this chapter could apply equally well to many other townships in South Africa in which cultural tourism, and township tourism specifically, is conducted. Discussion of key political events and services such as housing, education and health as well as important facts, figures and statistics provide the reader with an informed perspective of Soweto. The chapter further contains some details of the tourism sector emerging in Soweto.

#### 2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF SOWETO SOCIETY

Despite *its* pain-filled past, the very mention of the name Soweto elicits warm responses from many quarters. Soweto Tours (2003a) describes it thus: “Shrouded in myth and controversy, vibrant Soweto is a city of surprise and contrast, of startling enterprise and of vigorous cultural interaction”. On an intensely personal note, former President Nelson Mandela said of it: “Soweto — the only home I ever knew — and Alexandra Township — both will always have a treasured place in my heart. In a way, both were a heaven” (Gold Reef Guides, 2003).

The name Soweto is a derivation of the name South Western Township. The name was chosen following a competition instituted by the erstwhile Non-European Affairs Department of the Johannesburg City Council. As the name indicates, Soweto lies southwest of the city of Johannesburg, and it is the largest black residential area in South Africa. There are four entrances to Soweto, which extends for 120 km (Damer, 1997; Larry, 2001). Soweto consists of 34 suburbs and covers an area estimated at 9 640 ha (Farrow, 1999).



Figure 2.1 SOWETO MAP

With the coming to power of the Nationalist Party Government in 1948, the policy of apartheid was forcibly applied. The Group Areas Act, passed in 1950, in effect prohibited any racial integration (Langschmidt, 1968; Wilson & Hattingh, 1988). The Act further gave the government the power to expropriate property, establish special reserves for black people and carry out forced removals. Black people in South Africa were obliged to carry passes, which authorised their presence in ‘white’ areas (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002). In 1959, the residents of Sophiatown, on the outskirts of Johannesburg city, were forcibly removed to Soweto, in keeping with the government’s policy of separate development (Mabogane & Callaghan, 2002). Mass housing for black people mushroomed in the area that was to become the Soweto of today.

### **2.2.1 Soweto and the 1976 uprising**

During the 1960s and early 1970s the opposition of the youth of Soweto to the government’s education policies, which to a large extent enforced Afrikaans as medium of instruction, grew. Attempts were made by concerned civic bodies, church organisations and leading white businesses to secure a repeal of the Bantu Education Act promulgated in 1953 (Beavon, 1982; Briscoe, 2002). However, all these efforts ended in failure, and popular resentment reached an explosive level. The widespread discontent culminated in a march on 16 June 1976 in which participants protested against the government’s new stipulation that the medium of instruction should be Afrikaans (Creighton, 2003). The organisers of the protest had agreed earlier that all marchers were to converge in Vilakazi Street (near Phefeni Junior Secondary School) on that day for a grand march to the Orlando Stadium (Ian, 1999; Briscoe, 2002).

The protest elicited strong police action and after several unsuccessful attempts to break up the demonstrations the police opened fire on unarmed students in Vilakazi Street, killing several, the first of whom was Hector Peterson, and wounding others (Larry, 2001). Soweto soon resembled a war zone, and became a new flash point for the international media (Damer, 1997; Soweto March to Freedom, 2002).

### **2.2.2 The road to democracy**

The uprising of 16 June had far-reaching repercussions, as violence became an everyday occurrence in black townships throughout the country. Many black South African youth left the country to seek education overseas and join the liberation movements in exile. The world-wide flood of sympathy strengthened the anti-apartheid campaign. Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at schools was dropped (Dawie, 2001; Larry, 2001).

Many white people in South Africa became aware for the first time of African grievances and aspirations, and the attitude of employers changed. Various bodies were created to improve the standard of living of Africans in the cities and to shape a more just society.

Government attempts to stamp its authority over the next decade by way of further banning orders, declarations of states of emergency and detention without trial were met with increasing resistance from all sectors of society. Soweto Day, as 16 June came to be called, redefined the relationship between Africans and the state (Ian, 1999). Hopelessness was replaced by determination and increased political initiatives. Although it took more than a decade to reach fruition, a new democratic South Africa was built on the foundation laid in Soweto on 16 June 1976 (Damer, 1997; Ian, 1999). The end of the freedom struggle was heralded by the release of Nelson Mandela and other political detainees in 1990, South Africa's first democratic elections and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the country's first black president in 1994 (Briscoe, 2002).

### **2.2.3 Population profile and culture**

The people of Soweto are black South Africans belonging to virtually all the indigenous groups found in South Africa, although Zulus, Xhosas and Sothos predominate. The population is estimated at 3,5 million, although the precise figure is difficult to determine due to the ebb and flow of the population, with large numbers of illegal immigrants from neighbouring states and other parts of Africa easily finding access to Soweto's informal settlements (Briscoe, 2002; Creighton, 2003). Women are in the majority, and account for approximately 57% of the total population. More than 45% of the population of Soweto is below the age of 25 (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002).

Nine African languages are spoken in Soweto: isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, Tshivenda, Setswana, Sepedi, Sesotho, isiNdebele and Shangaan (Mabogane & Callaghan, 2002; Soweto SA, 2003). Of these, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho and Setswana predominate. Many Sowetans speak between three and five languages, with Soweto's city slickers speaking a brand of streetwise Afrikaans commonly referred to as *tsotsi taal* (South Africa Online Travel Guide, 2002). More than 80% of the population in Soweto speaks English. Indeed, the daily newspaper with the fastest growing readership in South Africa is *The Sowetan*, which is published in English (Briscoe, 2002). Established in 1982, it has an estimated readership of 1,8 million.

Black South Africans originally arriving in Johannesburg were regarded as temporary contract workers, seeking employment on the mines and in service industries; hence Soweto was always referred to as a 'dormitory city' (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002). It was not until much later that the authorities finally accepted that a large black population in and around Johannesburg was a permanent feature of the city.

The modern-day Sowetan is 'upwardly mobile', with a culture that is a mix of Western and ethnic influences (Mabogane & Callaghan, 2002). Family size tends to be smaller, with the younger urbanised class favouring smaller families of only one or two children. Nevertheless, there are many instances of families of up to six children. At present, there are no white families living in Soweto, although many mixed-marriage couples live in the suburbs of Johannesburg (Soweto SA, 2003; Creighton, 2003).

A large proportion of the population remains deeply rooted in African culture and tradition, and in consequence adolescents of both sexes are required to attend initiation ceremonies and circumcision schools, where they are taught the customs and traditions of their ethnic group of origin (Township Crawling, 2002). Initiation ceremonies are conducted 'in the wilds' and in recent times have attracted considerable criticism and sparked debate due to fatalities (Briscoe, 2002; Soweto March to Freedom, 2002); circumcision rites have shown a decline in Soweto during the past decade.

Urbanised Sowetans to a great extent uphold marriage traditions. Briscoe (2002) notes that various types of marriages are celebrated, approximately 90% being customary marriages involving a combination of civil and Christian traditions. In all types of marriages, *lobola* (dowry) is paid. Traditionally *lobola* was paid in the form of cattle; today it is paid in cash.

Soweto is a community of extremes. Shanty dwellers and squatter communities embody abject poverty, while extraordinary wealth is encountered in the upper class suburbs such as Diepkloof Extension, where homes have been valued in excess of R1 million (Gold Reef Guides, 2003). The suburb was built in three phases in the mid 1980s and is the suburb of choice for businesspeople, academics, musicians and other professionals (iafrica.com, 2002; CNN-Travel Guide, 2003). However, there is a broad middle class into which the majority of Soweto residents fall. Middle class areas include Protea, Protea Glen, Protea North and South, Dhlamini/Moroka, Chiawelo and Naledi Extension (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002; Soweto SA, 2003).

Informal settlements have increased dramatically in many parts of Soweto in recent years. Under the apartheid regime, influx control was strictly applied in order to minimise the number of black people living in industrialised white South Africa (Wilson & Hattingh, 1988). It was only in April 1986 that the despised pass laws, which had previously restricted the free movement of black people within South Africa, were repealed (Ian, 1999). This resulted in a wave of rural people streaming into Soweto in search of a better life. Any vacant piece of land was occupied, shacks were erected, and new communities of shack dwellers came into being. A well-known informal settlement is Mandela Village, established in 1990, and now home to an estimated 6 000 people living in some 1 200 shacks. Most of these residents are migrants from the rural areas (Farrow, 1999; Soweto March to Freedom, 2002).

By 2021, 70% of the South African population is likely to be urbanised; at present in South Africa more than 7 million people countrywide live in informal settlements (Dawie, 2001). Masland *et al.*, (2002) describe informal settlement areas as lacking

water-borne sewage, with sanitation taking the form of chemically-treated toilets. Water is obtained from centres within the informal settlements where fresh water taps are located. Electrification has been introduced, but coal and paraffin as sources of fuel are still used extensively. Illegal immigrants have moved into Mandela Village in large numbers, with exchange of dwelling ownership resting entirely on a verbal agreement and payment in cash (Briscoe, 2002; Creighton, 2003). Many Sowetans born and bred live in informal settlements, including Mandela Village.

Near the Jabulani business district, 871 high-density residential blocks can be found. These infamous hostels are a historical feature of Johannesburg's gold mining history (Damer, 1997; Soweto SA, 2003). The mines adopted the mine compound system to house their African workforce. However, male migrant workers sought accommodation near their work in Johannesburg and during the 1950s hostels were built in Soweto to house the migrant workers (Damer, 1997; Soweto March to Freedom, 2002). Eight hostels were built for men and one for women, housing a total of 45 000 people (Farrow, 1999). In 1991, the South African government initiated a hostel redevelopment programme and converted many of the hostels into family units (Farrow, 1999).

It is estimated that 40% of the population of Soweto is unemployed, giving rise to a high incidence of crime (Soweto SA, 2003). Many try to find work as hawkers, painters, fruit and vegetable sellers, sellers of second-hand clothes, builders, and motor mechanics. The average monthly income per household is R1 500, with middle-class Sowetans earning an estimated R3 000 per month (Briscoe, 2002). Registered vehicles number in excess of 60 000, with the number of minibus taxis exceeding 41 000. In addition, there are a large number of stolen vehicles.

There are three ultra-modern shopping complexes, located in Protea North, Dobsonville and Meadowlands. There is a major shopping centre in Dobsonville, with a cinema complex. In 1980 the Blackchain Shopping Centre, situated near the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, was built using share capital of R500 000 raised by Africans (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002). However, poor management saw its demise. Before

that, Soweto had several small shopping complexes near Baragwanath taxi rank, at Dube and Pimville Square, and in Jabavu.

Beer drinking is a favoured recreational pursuit and forms an important part of wedding celebrations and other functions such as funerals (Masland, 2002). Shebeens (previously illegal drinking halls) are extremely popular and differ greatly today from the dingy establishments of the apartheid era, when they were frequently raided by the police (Township Crawling, 2002). Taverns are somewhat superior to shebeens and some, such as Wandi's Place in Dube, have achieved international fame. There are an estimated 2 500 shebeens and 220 taverns in Soweto and up to R50 million is spent on beer each month (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002; Township Crawling, 2002; Creighton, 2003).

### **2.3 RELIGION**

Creighton (2003) reports that there are 260 Christian churches, 39 crèches and 12 community halls in Soweto. About 40% of Sowetans are Christians. According to Briscoe (2002), established Christian denominations include Methodism, Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism and the Dutch Reformed Church. Regina Mundi is Soweto's largest Roman Catholic church (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002; Creighton, 2003), and was frequently used as a venue for political gatherings during the days of apartheid and to commemorate political events.

According to Briscoe (2002), more than 20% of the population is affiliated to independent black churches or religious groups, of which the Zionist Church is the largest. Once a year, more than two million members come together for special services. There are up to 800 small religious groups commonly referred to as *Amazioni* or Zion sects. Most of the churches respect the traditional belief in ancestral worship, and roughly 46% of Sowetans follow ancestral beliefs (Farrow, 1999). Approximately 1% of the population of Soweto is Muslim, and there is one mosque in Soweto (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002). Church leaders are highly respected and their statements play an important part in the formation of political opinions amongst congregations (Creighton, 2003).



Impressive funeral services are a feature of Soweto; it is customary to hold funerals over the weekend period, and an average of 200 occur every weekend (Soweto SA, 2003), with cortèges often stretching for several kilometres. Causes of death among the population range from AIDS, crime, unsanitary living conditions and back-street abortions to old age.

Because of the traditional belief in the ancestors, cremation is not popular amongst Sowetans and African people in general, and it is very rare that a family will permit a deceased family member to be cremated. Soweto has three burial grounds: Avalon, Doornkop and Nancefield. A number of those who were prominent in the liberation struggle, such as Joe Slovo, Helen Joseph and Lillian Ngoyi, are buried in Avalon Cemetery (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002; Creighton, 2003; Soweto SA, 2003). Ian (1999) reports that many ethnic groups resident in Soweto believe that spirits and ghosts roam Soweto, and it is to their presence that the disappearance of so many children is attributed.

#### **2.4 SPAZA SHOPS**

A feature of Soweto is the proliferation of spaza shops (Masland *et al.*, 2002; Soweto SA, 2003). Spaza means “imitation” or “not real” in isiXhosa (Farrow, 1999). The spaza shop is a kind of convenience shop selling what the community residents require, from basics such as milk and bread, to items of clothing. These shops are established in garages, spare rooms or in makeshift shanties near a bus terminus or railway station. The spaza shop is no longer illegal, but a licence must be obtained.

#### **2.5 TRANSPORT**

The majority of the residents use minibus taxis, trains and buses as a means of transport to commute from their homes to their places of work. The minibus taxis are cheap, but fast and dangerous. The buses are slower and expensive, and trains are the cheapest but the slowest form of transport. According to Briscoe (2002) and Creighton (2003), the Putco Bus Company makes more than 7 800 trips per week through greater Soweto and carries approximately 18 million passengers each year over more than 17 million

kilometres. Buses operate from 04:30 through to 19:30 daily through the suburbs and around greater Soweto.

There are more than 41 000 registered minibus taxis operating within the municipal area of Johannesburg and serving the needs of Soweto residents (City of Johannesburg, 2003). The South African Black Taxi Association has over 55 000 members and is constantly endeavouring to exercise control over the industry (City of Johannesburg, 2003). Rivalry between taxi operators is a constant feature of the industry and violence is frequent.

The South African Rail and Commuter Corporation serves more than 2,5 million Gauteng commuters each day through 430 stations. More than 1 613 trains run each day and many serve the needs of Soweto residents (City of Johannesburg, 2003). Most of the 12 railway stations in Soweto have been upgraded. It is estimated that more than 1,5 million people commute to Johannesburg from Soweto daily (City of Johannesburg, 2003).

## **2.6 SPORT**

The most popular sport in Soweto is soccer. There are 120 soccer fields and four stadiums in greater Soweto. The First National Bank Stadium can accommodate up to 130 000 spectators and is claimed to be the biggest stadium in Africa (Damer, 1997). According to Briscoe (2002), in greater Soweto there are six swimming pools, twelve basketball fields, two bowling greens, a hundred and forty netball fields, two rugby fields, one cycling track, six tennis courts and three boxing gymnasiums. In 1995, members of the Soweto cricket club, with a membership of 140, constituted the first cricket side from the township to tour overseas (Creighton, 2003).



Figure 2.2 SOWETO PICTURES OF EVERYDAY LIFE AND HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

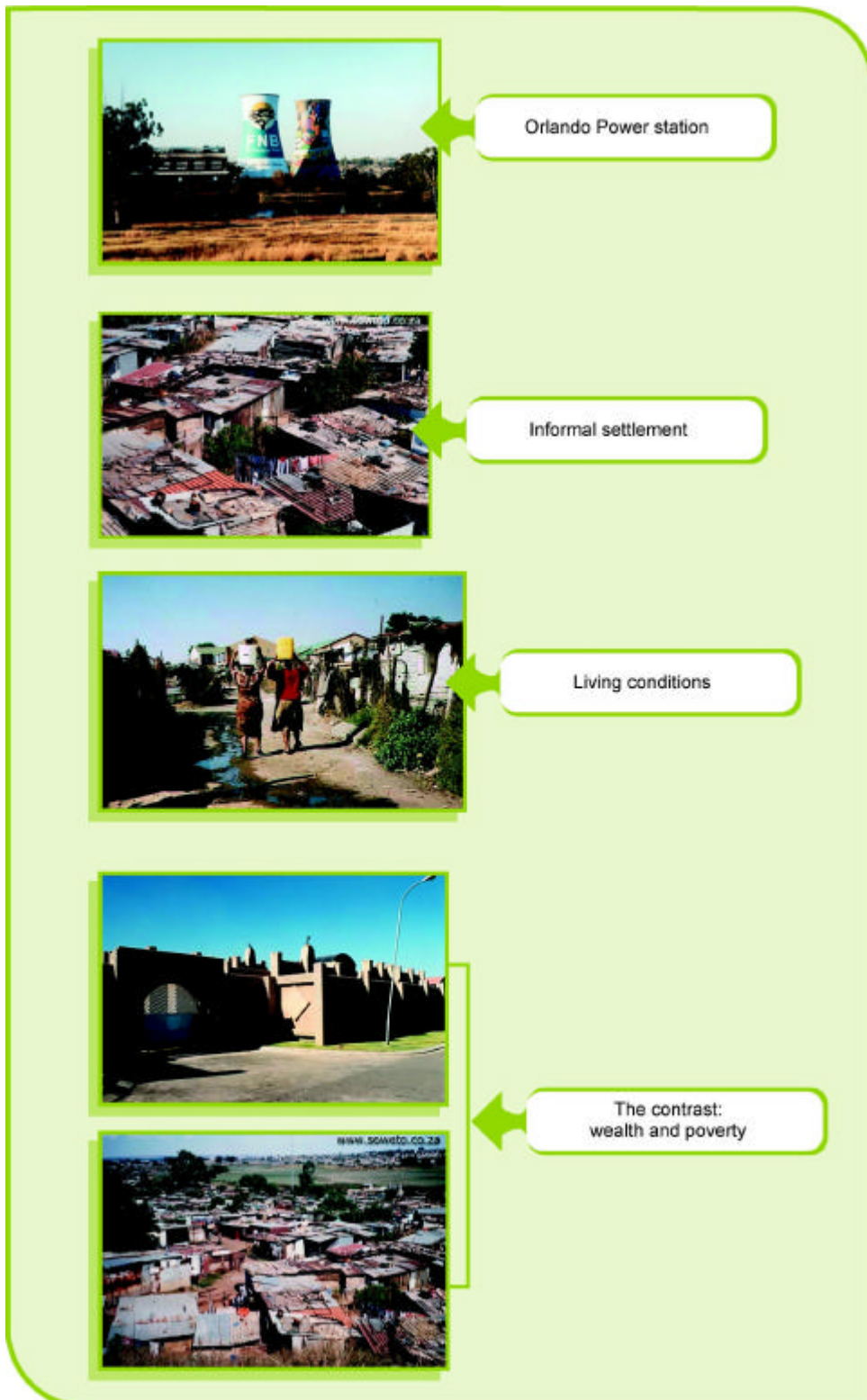


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## **2.7 POLITICAL PARTIES**

Soweto has always been characterised by political activity. In the days of apartheid underground liberation groups were formed and resistance to the policies of apartheid was exported to various black residential areas throughout South Africa (Masland *et al.*, 2002).

The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the African National Congress (ANC) are well represented in Soweto and there is considerable rivalry between these two political parties (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002). In Soweto the ethnically based IFP is supported predominantly by hostel dwellers. The most poorly supported political parties are the Pan Africanist Congress and the Azanian People's Organisation, the latter being more of a black consciousness movement than a political party (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002).

## **2.8 INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY**

Industrial activity in Soweto is wide ranging, with much emphasis on the informal sector. The Small Business Development Corporation has developed approximately 80 business sites for factories, ranging from tent manufacturers to upholsterers, from welders to panel beaters, and leather workers to candle makers (Creighton, 2003).

In recent years the government made a grant of R40 million to the Small Business Development Corporation to create jobs by promoting entrepreneurial ventures throughout Gauteng. Industrial sites have been established at Naledi and Orlando East. There are more than 1 200 licensed traders in greater Soweto (Briscoe, 2002; Soweto SA, 2003).

## **2.9 A BRIEF HISTORY OF BLACK EDUCATION**

Until 1948, when the Nationalist Party under Prime Minister Daniel Malan came to power, education for black South Africans fell under the jurisdiction of the various provincial administrations (Beavon, 1982). Many schools were affiliated to churches, notably the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches.



The Nationalist government established a commission to make a clear distinction between the education offered to white South Africans and that offered to black South Africans (Beavon, 1982). The commission concluded that church school education, for example, had achieved nothing, but had instead merely destroyed African culture (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002). A new system of education was therefore recommended that would, inter alia, seek to teach black South Africans to know and accept their 'proper place' in South African society (Ian, 1999).

Hendrik Verwoerd was appointed Minister of Native Affairs and implemented the new government's apartheid laws, including legislation ensuring racial segregation within education, with great zeal. In 1953, the Bantu Education Act was passed (Ian, 1999; Masland *et al.*, 2002). It provided for the separate provision of educational resources for each population group.

Resentment towards the government's black education policies grew, reaching a climax in 1975 when a government directive was issued to the effect that Afrikaans was to be used as a medium of instruction on an equal basis with English in Transvaal schools (Ian, 1999; Dawie, 2001; Masland *et al.*, 2002).

Soweto authorities began to defy the regulation when schools opened in 1976 (Ian, 1999; Dawie, 2001). As a result, teachers were sacked and others resigned in protest. Pupils began to rise up against school authorities and initiated school boycotts. Widespread riots resulted, police were stoned, and schools were burnt down.

In the 1980s the government began a reform process and today, with the establishment of a new democratic government in South Africa headed by the African National Congress, the entire education system in South Africa has been reviewed (Soweto SA, 2003). A single, equal education system is now in force in the Gauteng region and all schools are open to pupils of all races (Masland *et al.*, 2002; Soweto March to Freedom, 2002).

Soweto SA (2003) reports that there are approximately 40 authorised pre-school institutions in Soweto. There are in addition 178 primary schools and 70 secondary schools in Soweto, and education is offered up to matriculation standard (the present grade 12). There is one teacher training college. Of the schools in Soweto, 124 are government schools (Briscoe, 2002; Soweto SA, 2003). There are in addition special schools for pupils with disabilities, and 18 centres for adult education. The total student population including adult learners is in excess of 300 000, and the private and business sectors have become involved in the provision of in-service educational training.

Vista University, which is a multi-campus university serving 2 500 students and offering degrees in most major disciplines, has one campus in Soweto. The distance education arm of the university has recently merged with Unisa and Technikon SA in accordance with the new requirements for South African tertiary institutions (Creighton, 2003).

There are six libraries and sixteen public halls in Soweto. The newspaper serving the residents of Soweto, *The Sowetan*, has provided a university bursary for students wishing to study journalism. The *Star*, one of the major Gauteng newspapers, recently established a R25 million day care centre for 1 000 children (Soweto March to Freedom, 2002; iafrica.com, 2002). This is expected to become a centre of excellence influencing child care throughout Southern Africa.

## **2.10 HOUSING**

According to Chapman (2003), the nightmare is now over. Peace and at least the hope of prosperity have come to Soweto; proof may be seen to lie in the horde of camera-toting tourists who invade the townships almost daily; guidebooks in hand, they sip cappuccinos at sidewalk cafés and stroll around Soweto's new monuments and malls. Chapman quotes a Soweto resident on the subject of the housing situation: "Ngakane says she barely recognizes the place. 'In the old days we didn't have tar roads. We lived in a match box: six children, one room', the petite 63 year old says, standing in a front yard filled with bright flowers. 'The new government built houses and tarred the roads ... In 10 years, Soweto will be a little heaven'" (Chapman, 2003:5).

The overwhelming majority of houses are of a standard design consisting of three or four rooms; these houses are the so-called match boxes mass-produced by the public authorities (Dawie, 2001). Briscoe (2002) describes the houses as being built on a functional floor space of 43 m<sup>2</sup>, and consisting of two bedrooms, a dining room and a kitchen. The size of the yard is 330 m<sup>2</sup>. Each house has its own flush toilet and water tap. It is quite common for up to eight people to share a house. Because of congestion, many residents build extensions and backyard shacks; these dwellings are often rented out to 'new arrivals' for an average monthly rental of R120. The number of backyard structures in Soweto is estimated at 121 000. There are 160 000 formal units (houses), accommodating up to 10 occupants per house (Soweto SA, 2003). Of all the houses in Soweto, approximately 95 000 are owned by residents, and approximately 65 000 are rented. Briscoe (2002) and Creighton (2003) report that of the houses in Soweto, 71 000 are government houses, of which 60% are rented and approximately 40% have been sold under the freehold scheme.

In recent years, new townships have been developed by both the public and private sectors, through employer-involvement and self-help schemes, and these offer blocks of flats and a wide variety of houses ranging from very substantial double-storey buildings with luxury features and swimming pools to neat, compact suburban homes with a garage and a garden (Gold Reef Guides, 2003; Creighton, 2003).

By 1988 all houses in Soweto had been provided with electricity, a mammoth undertaking by world standards (Dawie, 2001). A city of more than 3,5 million people was provided with electricity in a project that took seven years (Soweto SA, 2003). The electrification of Soweto has been considered one of the greatest projects ever undertaken in Africa and probably in the world. In spite of access to electricity, however, many residents continue to use their coal stoves, and the resultant fumes and smoke cause a serious pollution problem during the winter months. Creighton (2003) notes that approximately 90% of dwellings have TV and virtually all households have radios.

There are eleven hostels, ten for single migrant men and one for women, containing an estimated 82 240 beds (Ian, 1999). The hostels have been the seat of unrest and serious crime as a result of their style of construction and overcrowding. An urgent programme of upgrading and re-development is under way, and some of the hostels have been converted into family units.

More than 40% of the roads in Soweto (some 716 km) have been tarred (Larry, 2001; Briscoe, 2002). Approximately 50% of the houses in Soweto have running water; the remaining households use outside taps and outside toilets. As people continue to stream from the rural areas seeking work, large numbers of people live in shacks and temporary accommodation. It is currently estimated that there are 112 000 shacks in Soweto, accommodating up to 10 occupants per shack (Creighton, 2003). With the co-operation of residents, special programmes have been introduced to move squatters to controlled camps where essential services can be supplied. However, owing to the lack of land and funds, informal settlements are likely to remain a permanent feature of Soweto.

### **2.11 HEALTH CARE AND CHRIS HANI BARAGWANATH HOSPITAL**

One of 69 provincial hospitals run by the Department of Hospital Services (Soweto SA, 2003), Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, which is the largest hospital in the southern hemisphere (Joburg Gateway to Africa, 2001), is located in Soweto. It is recognised world wide as a leading specialised hospital providing training and medical services of a high standard. The hospital grounds cover 173 acres. The hospital has 3 400 beds and a total staff complement in excess of 5 000. The hospital budget for 2002/2003 was R767 million. The hospital serves approximately 2 million outpatients and 130 000 ward patients annually. In 1997, Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital was chosen by the UN AIDS Organisation as one of nine AIDS cure research sites worldwide (Creighton, 2003; Soweto SA, 2003; Briscoe, 2002).

More than 200 overseas graduates are trained at the hospital each year (Larry, 2001). Graduates have gone on to make a valuable contribution to medicine throughout Africa and the world (Dawie, 2001). However, in spite of the outstanding facilities offered by

the hospital, many residents of Soweto continue to consult traditional healers (Soweto SA, 2003). Traditional healers are being incorporated into health services and are seen as valuable contributors to the AIDS educational programme.

## **2.12 THE SOWETO TOWNSHIP TOURISM TRAIL**

Township tours are currently gaining enormous popularity, as international tourists are eager to see how the country has progressed since its first democratic elections in 1994 (Masland *et al.*, 2002; Soweto Tours, 2003a). A small, but growing number of foreigners are overnighing in the homes of middle-class and working-class families in Soweto, seeing the rhythms and routines of the new era at first hand. Most tourists come from Europe, and some from the United States (South Africa Online Travel Guide, 2002). The most infrequent visitors, tour operators say, are white South Africans (Chapman, 2003).

Mabogane and Callaghan (2002) describe Soweto as containing lively hubs of humanity. It is not merely a place for squatters, criminals and the poverty-stricken — amidst the apparently grim living circumstances, there is hospitality and hope, and even beauty. Soweto has always had a small and thriving middle class. The professionals — the teachers, doctors, shopkeepers and civil servants — have taken pains to build comfortable double-storey houses with roses in the gardens, satellite dishes on the roofs, and, in some instances, luxury cars parked in the driveway (Ramchander, 2003).

Local tour operators are of the opinion that at present tourists are generally not interested in cultural villages, as they are beginning to realise that cultural villages offer no more than staged authenticity (Ramchander, 2003); these villages commercialise the culture(s) of the people who are on display and have no spiritual links with the real culture of the people whatsoever, as they have been established expressly for the purposes of tourism (Dondolo, 2001; Witz, 2001). By contrast, however, the number of tourists visiting the townships is increasing, as tourists want to see the ‘real’ people. They are more interested in townships as reflections of past and present human experience, and in people’s daily life as an amalgam of current developments and their cultural heritage (Witz, 2001; Ramchander, 2003).

Mrs J. Briscoe, CEO of Gold Reef Guides, in an interview conducted on 23 May 2003, cited the fact that a number of entrepreneurs from Soweto have established tour operations or shuttle services. The relatively high start-up costs, as well as the difficulties involved in obtaining tour operators' licences and competition from large players in the field have meant that only the most determined have endured. They are now well organised: tours are conducted in air-conditioned vehicles with cell-phone contact by trained guides and staff.

Popular stops during tours include the opportunity to view the huge mansion built by Winnie Mandela for her estranged husband, the tomb of Hector Peterson, the first victim of the 1976 riots, and the recently constructed Hector Peterson Museum, which offers visitors a detailed account of the events of 1976, including visuals and eyewitness accounts. Further stops are the Regina Mundi Catholic Parish Church, formerly the venue of protest meetings; the street on which stands the house that former President Nelson Mandela occupied prior to his imprisonment, and the home formerly occupied by Dr Desmond Tutu (Soweto Tours, 2003a). Tourists also have the opportunity to peek into old hostels, visit Freedom Square, which commemorates the struggle for liberty, pay a call on merchants selling traditional African medicines, and savour typical African dishes (Gold Reef Guides, 2003). The Credo Mutwa Cultural Village, built by Credo Mutwa, herbalist, author, diviner and sangoma (traditional healer), features a number of impressive mythical statues within its grounds, and provides the ideal setting to learn about the different dimensions of Soweto's cultural heritage (Farrow, 1999; Joburg Gateway to Africa, 2001; Soweto Tours 2003b).

Although reports of crime in the townships have caused many travellers to bypass them, more adventurous visitors are now embarking on tours. Many visitors take driving tours that let them see the world of the township from a van window, while others prefer the opportunity for direct interaction with the locals.

### **2.13 THE DEMAND FOR TOWNSHIP TOURISM**

Tourist attractions in urban areas draw a wide range of visitors, from local residents to overseas tourists. Tourists in the province of Gauteng fall within the following six market segments (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001; Gauteng Tourism Authority, 2002):

- ? Local day trippers
- ? Domestic tourists
- ? Business and MICE
- ? African visitors
- ? Overseas FIT
- ? Overseas groups

These segments have certain characteristics in common, which are useful for guiding the development of tourism products and services. However, it should be noted that they are not homogeneous.

#### ? **Local day trippers**

According to the Gauteng Tourism Authority (2002), Gauteng has a population of 7,9 million. Approximately 67% live above the poverty line, giving a potential base of day trip tourists of 5,3 million people. Although it is a geographically concentrated province, Gauteng is divided into separate urban zones whose inhabitants are more likely to spend their leisure time within their region of residence. The core target market for township tourism in Soweto is therefore residents of the northern suburbs of Johannesburg and, to a lesser extent, residents of the inner city and southern suburbs (Gauteng Tourism Authority, 2002). This greater Johannesburg area is home to 2,6 million people. Removing a proportional poverty percentage gives a more realistic base of 1,7 million potential day trip visitors.

Gauteng residents tend to seek leisure experiences that correspond with European and American aspirations. They do not show the same interest in township or historical tourism attractions as foreigners, and are easily put off by fears of crime, dirt and poverty.

? **Domestic tourists**

The greater Johannesburg area (central Gauteng) is South Africa's third most popular domestic holiday destination, attracting 6,84% of domestic tourists, or 347 645 tourists per annum (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001). A further 804 797 visit Gauteng to visit friends and family. This makes a total of almost 1,2 million domestic tourists visiting Gauteng for leisure purposes every year.

With the majority of this segment staying with friends and family, few need to pay for accommodation facilities. Those who pay for accommodation, however, are likely to choose a hotel or guesthouse with status in a sophisticated area. Township accommodation is therefore unlikely to appeal to this group who, like their day visitor counterparts, are not lured by historical and cultural attractions and are put off by crime (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001). Their profile indicates a demand for novel, exciting and trendy entertainment venues; a township environment is unlikely to satisfy this demand, as it is less glamorous.

? **Business and MICE**

This segment includes both foreign and domestic tourists staying in Gauteng for at least a night, primarily for business reasons, and/or to participate in meetings, incentives, conferences and events (MICE). 34% of foreign visitors to Gauteng are here for business; this translates into approximately 300 000 foreign business visitors annually (SA Tourism 2003b). Central Gauteng attracts 160 000 business visitors annually (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001), the highest of any province.

Business and MICE travellers tend to stay in large, branded hotels with services, located close to business hubs (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001). Township accommodation is unlikely to fall within this category. Business and MICE travellers favour organised after-hours entertainment, often seeking novel, cross-cultural and education-oriented experiences (Gauteng Tourism Authority, 2002). They expect high standards and are usually time-poor, with leisure time only in the evenings. Township



tourism has the potential to offer these experiences, but products will need to be very accessible and close to business hotels and conference venues.

? **Foreign FIT (fully independent travellers)**

Gauteng airports are the main gateway to South Africa, and so the province is visited by more foreign visitors than any other province, attracting between 55% and 63% of all foreign visitors, or 870 000 overseas visitors per annum (SA Tourism, 2003b). Visitors come from Europe (43%), North America (14%), the Far East (9%), Australasia (4%), South America (3%) and the Middle East (2%) (SA Tourism 2003a, 2003b).

Personal safety is the biggest concern of foreign tourists to South Africa, and most foreign tourists are likely to reject accommodation within townships as unsafe. However, there is a demand for experiences that bring visitors into contact with the people of South Africa, as they wish to experience African culture and to see South Africa after the political change (Gauteng Tourism Authority, 2002). This makes township tours a popular choice, but also implies that township tours must enable visitors to come into contact with current and traditional lifestyles, and to see historical sites that are symbols of political change. Most important, visitors expect to experience a culture very different from their own (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001).

? **Foreign groups**

10% to 13% of all foreign visitors to Gauteng, some 113 100 people per annum, favour a general tour package, and thus travel with a group (SA Tourism, 2003b). These, too, are highly seasonal visitors. The major difference between FIT and group activities is that decisions for groups are made by tour operators and tour guides. Visitors from the Far East, Germany, Holland, Belgium and France tend to favour group travel (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001; SA Tourism, 2003b). In terms of day and evening activities, groups (northern Continental European and North American groups in particular) demonstrate a high demand for township and other cultural experiences.

Soweto tours have become a popular feature on group itineraries (Gold Reef Guides, 2003). Activities are maximised on group itineraries, and Soweto competes with many other possible activities in Gauteng. In order to host groups adequately, visitor attractions need coach parking and facilities for at least 46 people (coaches carry 44 people, plus driver and guide) (Gold Reef Guides, 2003). Groups need a balance of 'drive-by' sites and attractions that offer guests first-hand experiences and interactions. This could be well served in a township environment by food/drink experiences, entertainment, and visits to community centres.

### ? **Africa**

Over 4,2 million visitors come to South Africa from the rest of the continent, with a high proportion here to shop for goods (Gauteng Tourism Authority, 2002; SA Tourism, 2003a). Given that Gauteng has the widest range of retail facilities, a high proportion of visitors from Africa are likely to visit the province. However, given that these visitors come from countries where townships are not a novelty, township visits would have little appeal, and visitors from elsewhere in Africa are therefore more likely to seek the 'bright lights' experiences of the sophisticated built-up districts (City of Johannesburg, 2003).

## **2.14 TOURIST EXPECTATIONS OF TOWNSHIP EXPERIENCES**

The main markets that seek township experiences are thus foreign FIT and foreign groups. Few of the other segments currently visit townships other than to visit friends and family (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001). Tourists who actively seek township experiences seek an experience that is very different from their own way of life. Most expect to see poverty and are prepared for this. However they want to engage with people from this different background, to learn about their way of life and see the influence of South Africa's history. As Ramchander (2003) reports, tourists visiting Soweto are in search of a genuine and complete experience. They want to see how families live, how the unemployed survive and what the conditions are like in the hospitals. They want to speak to those who have been in exile and those who lived through the apartheid years in South Africa. In fact, they often exchange addresses with those they meet in Soweto so they can keep in touch. Soweto is the best known of all

South African townships, and has become something of a brand name requested by tourists (Soweto SA, 2003a).

## **2.15 SUMMARY**

In giving effect to the objective of profiling current Soweto society, the researcher has highlighted the metamorphosis of what was once a shunned destination into an extremely popular destination for cultural tourists. In many respects, the evolution of Soweto is the story of South Africa and its many townships, all of which have undergone similar social development and social change; the key findings and conclusions from this investigation of the perceptions of the socio-cultural impacts of township tourism in Soweto will thus be equally applicable to townships elsewhere in the country.