A reading of power relations
in the transformation of urban planning
in the municipalities of the
Greater Pretoria region
(now Tshwane): 1992 - 2002

P J van V Coetzee

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A READING OF POWER RELATIONS
IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN PLANNING
IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF THE
GREATER PRETORIA REGION

by

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Approximately two million years ago the earliest known hominids (predecessors of modern human beings) lived in the Greater Pretoria/Tshwane area at the Sterkfontein and Swartkrans Caves - an area today known as ‘the cradle of humankind’ or the area where humankind began. Since the Early Stone Age times, some 200 000 years ago, *Homo sapiens* and their predecessors have inhabited the Pretoria/Tshwane area in the vicinity of Wonderboompoort in the Magaliesberg where there was an abundance of edible plants and game for hunting.

With the arrival of the Iron Age about 1 800 years ago, the population profile of the Tshwane area changed dramatically. These people were mainly cattle herders, cultivators and hunters. Their principle industries were iron smelting and the making of pottery. Pottery found in the Groenkloof Nature Reserve is associated with the so-called Moloko tradition of the early Setswana-speaking societies. The Iron Age inhabitants were later followed by the Setswana-speaking people who settled in the west of Pretoria and the Ndebele-speaking people who settled in the north-east of Pretoria. During the early decades of the 19th century these people were dislodged by the Ndebele of Mzilikazi who came from Natal to settle on the banks of the Apies River. In c.1833, Mzilikazi moved to the former Western Transvaal.

It was more or less during this time that the first white travellers entered this area. They were known as the *Voortrekkers* (pioneer settlers). Lucas Bronkhorst is generally accepted to have been the first white pioneer to settle in the vicinity of Pretoria during the 1840s. He settled on the farm Groenkloof. Pretoria was established on 16 November 1855. It was declared the capital of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republic on 1 May 1860. In 1864 the first attempts were made to establish a *dorpsraad* (town council) and the first permanent council was elected in 1903.

During the past 150 years Pretoria has developed from a small rural settlement into a significant metropolitan area with a population of 2.2 million inhabitants. This makes it one of the largest metropolitan areas in South Africa.
The City of Tshwane, is in many ways a city of contrasts. On the one hand, this city is well known for its abundance of state-of-the-art educational and research institutions; its strong economic base; its unique natural ‘bushveld’ environment; its diverse cultures; its excellent living conditions and the quality of its environment; as well as the illustrious Union Buildings, which designate Pretoria’s capital city status.

On the other hand, this city, was previously (prior to the government transformation in 1994), seen and branded as the apartheid capital, with its overly conservative bureaucracy, the so-called Afrikaner boere-state. It was also here that Nelson Mandela was tried some 40 years ago. In 1994, Mandela was inaugurated in Pretoria as the first President of the ‘new South Africa’. Since this transformation, the City of Pretoria/Tshwane’s function as the administrative capital of South Africa and home of the President has been reinstated.

Today the new City of Tshwane is transforming itself and is developing into one of the smarter cities in the country. Reference is often made to terms such as the renaissance of Pretoria, or the rebirth of Tshwane.
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