

# The Evolution of Township Tourism in South Africa

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## Abstract

This chapter takes a retrospective view on the emergence and development of township tourism. By focusing on the processes of change in this form of tourism and considering these against the background of social change in South Africa, four phases in the evolution of township tourism are delineated. First is township tourism under apartheid during which propaganda visits emerged along with visits by intrepid activists and journalists. The second phase concerns the (re)emergence of leisure tourism in the mode of township tours post democracy. The third phase involves the growth and commercialisation of township tourism and the fourth phase draws attention its recent diversification. This paper contributes to the township tourism literature by 1) reflecting on the development of tourism paths over time and 2) demonstrating that township tourism is changing through co-evolution resulting in the maturation of township destinations.

**Key Words:** Township tourism, political tourism; path dependency; tourism area development; evolution of tourism destinations

## Introduction

One of the most distinctive elements of tourism in South Africa relates to the phenomenon of what is known as township tourism. This chapter analyses the evolution of visitation to townships, hereby contributing to literature on the history of ‘slumming’ in the global South (see Frenzel, Koens, Steinbrink & Rogerson, 2015; Steinbrink, 2012). In this chapter, both township visitation and tourism are discussed. Reflection on early township visits enlightens how this has paved the way for contemporary forms of the phenomenon. The analysis draws on a review of secondary sources which includes academic literature, archival material (i.e. newspaper articles, reports and policy documents), contemporary news media and other online sources. This work is further informed by the author’s field observations in townships for over a decade.

The development of township tourism is discussed in the light of Butler’s tourism area lifecycle (see Bulter, 1980). The stages of the lifecycle involve the 1) ‘discovery’; 2) ‘local control’ (or local involvement); 3) ‘institutionalisation’ (also maturity or consolidation); and then 4)

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‘stagnation’ followed by either 5) ‘rejuvenation’ or ‘decline’ of tourism destinations. Drawing on evolutionary approaches, the development of tourist areas can be understood as a complex, path-dependent process characterized by co-evolution (Brouder, 2014; Brouder & Ioannides, 2014; Ma & Hassink, 2014). Path dependency refers to the cumulative effects of past developments which creates evolutionary patterns towards a critical mass for tourism area development (Ma and Hassink, 2014). Multiple paths typically emerge in a destination and can be complementary and/or contesting (Brouder, 2014). Paths are discernible within tourism contexts and also in relation to broader economic paths in an area (Brouder & Ioannides, 2014). This contribution maps evolutionary patterns or paths with respect to the dominant drivers which spurred the development and major processes of change in township tourism.

## Phases in Township Tourism Development

Phases in township tourism development are outlined in Table 1. Tourism under apartheid can be understood a political tourism (see Frenzel, 2016; 2020). The highly politicized gaze on racial segregation in South Africa led to the formation of two contradictory modes of political tourism, namely propaganda and solidarity tourism as discussed below (Phase 1).

**Table 1: Phases in the Development of Township Tourism**

Phase	Description	Period	Characteristics
1	Under Apartheid	1960s – early 1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Propaganda visits by leisure and official/political visitors</li> <li>▪ Political awareness and solidarity vis-à-vis of the plight of townships and their residents</li> <li>▪ Limited leisure tourism evident in the late 1980s</li> </ul>
2	(Re) Emergence (Early Post-Apartheid)	Post-1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Political solidarity pre-and post the 1994 democratic election</li> <li>▪ High-profile visits to township residents, places symbolic in the struggle and persons in need</li> <li>▪ Emergence of leisure tourism, mostly foreign visitors</li> <li>▪ Charity a characteristic driver</li> </ul>
3	Commercialisation	2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growth of township tours as a leisure activity</li> <li>▪ Growth of volunteer tourism</li> <li>▪ Government involvement in tourism development, focus on heritage and culture</li> </ul>
4	Diversification	2010s to present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diversification of the township tourism product and destinations</li> <li>▪ Growth of experience-based, incl. creative tourism</li> <li>▪ Emergence of educational and research tourism</li> <li>▪ Continued ‘politically correct’ visits by high-profile visitors</li> </ul>

Source: Author

## Phase 1. Township Visits under Apartheid

The formation of townships is the result of deliberate planning for racialized, spatial segregation by the colonial and apartheid regimes which designed townships as ‘Native’ group areas (Beavon & Rogerson, 1990). Townships under apartheid design were dormitory ‘labour reserves’, constructed an ‘appropriate’ distance away from economic activity in towns or suburbs occupied by White residents, and provided with minimal infrastructure and services such as electricity, water, sanitation, tarred roads, social services and public transport (Beavon & Rogerson, 1990; Phillip, 2014).

Evidence for the first guided township tours can be traced back to the mid-1960s (Dondolo, 2002; Johannesburg City Council, 1964). The tours showcased ‘Bantu life in the city’: viewing township areas and stopping at a ‘Bantu’ art gallery while also having a cup of coffee at one of the city’s landmarks, the Oppenheimer Tower (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). While these tours had aspects of leisure, they can be interpreted as propaganda tourism. That is, politically motivated tours to normalise townships, making them more acceptable in the eyes of privileged, mostly White onlookers.

The second manifestation of propaganda visits which emerged during the 1960s was official trips facilitated and ‘mediated’ by apartheid authorities for foreigners, usually politicians and reporters. During the 1960s, authorities went to great pains to showcase certain townships as ‘model’ settlements. One such ‘model’ township was Orlando established in 1923 and extended in 1954 to become the area known as Soweto. Another model township was Sharpeville, established in 1946 about a mile from Vereeniging and planned for 4,000 houses with its own schools, clinics, shops, sport grounds and other open spaces (*Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser*, 7 September 1946). One example of a visit where the propaganda motive was unmistakable occurred in Sharpeville in 1961. A British reporter from the *Daily Herald* was shown around Sharpeville by the Director of Non-European Affairs in Vereeniging, a certain Mr. Ferreira, who at the time boasted that Sharpeville was the ‘best township in South Africa’ (Baistow, 1961). Mr. Ferreira’s astonishingly callous remarks, as reported in the article, came one year after the Sharpeville massacre when police opened fire on Black residents who protested against pass laws, killing or wounding up to 250 persons.

Foreign tourism to South Africa dropped dramatically in the 1970s, under 300,000 in 1973 and remained low throughout the 1980s (Dondolo, 2002). During this time, leisure visits to townships all but ceased. By and large, townships became ‘no-go’ areas not only for foreigners, but also for non-Black South Africans. Overall, the mobilities of South Africans were severely

restricted during apartheid (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). While Africans had to carry pass books and had curfews, Whites on their part were restricted from entering townships (Kgagudi, 2019). Whites who worked in townships on a regular basis, like medical doctors and missionaries, needed permits. Foreigners usually needed permission to enter townships and were often accompanied by officials (see Baistow, 1961; Kgagudi, 2019). Those who did visit townships typically were activists and journalists who sought to raise political awareness of the plight of Black residents with respect to poor living conditions and human rights abuses, in addition to the ongoing violence in the townships. There was push-back from apartheid officials and police who did of course not endorse such visits at a time of strict media and literary censorship by the state. At times police check points were set up to monitor and restrict the mobility of people entering and exiting townships.

In the context of growing international criticism of the apartheid regime, townships became symbolic places of oppression and resistance. Soweto, the largest township in South Africa, emerged centre stage in the anti-apartheid struggle (the struggle for short) receiving much international media and political attention. Magubane and Lee (1979, p. 22) note that by the early 1970s people were increasingly ‘peering’ into Soweto:

“The naturally inquisitive ones such as the journalists had begun to dissect the place with their analytical investigations and exposés, and added to its aura with a hundred emotive labels”.

In 1972, *The Star* reported: “Soweto is one of the most disgraceful pieces of 20th century town planning to be found in any advanced nation today” (Magubane & Lee, 1979, p. 22).

Then came the events of June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1976, youth uprising which shook the country and the world. About 15,000 school children and students took part in the protest march against the imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in township schools (Ndlovu, 2006). The police intercepted the marching youth when they neared Vilakazi Street and after the protestors resisted to disperse, the police opened fire killing up to 500 students and school children. One of the first shot, 13-year old Hector Pieterse, became the iconic image of the uprising. A photograph taken by Sam Nzima of the dying Hector in the arms of a fellow student, with his sister Antoinette running alongside, was published around the world. In South Africa, the event became catalytic in the changing political landscape with the effects felt in several other townships during the months that followed. Thousands of young people joined the liberation movement via the ANC (African National Congress) and its military arm MK (Umkhonto weSizwe), and also the PAC (Pan-African Congress) (Ndlovu, 2006). Civil unrest and accompanied violence continued during international

sanctions in the 1980s, culminating in a State of Emergency in 1985 when strong police and army presence collided with insurgency in townships.

Dondolo (2002) notes that by the late 1980s, White South Africans along with international funders and thrill-seekers were visiting townships around Cape Town to see the ‘reality’ of township conditions and to experience ‘danger’. These tours seemingly occurred on a limited scale, arguably as a form of ‘dark’ or ‘atrocities’ tourism. However, these leisure motivated tours appear to be in stark contrast to the work of human rights activists, social scientists and journalists who continued to frequent townships and who acted in solidarity with the liberation movement.

The year 1990 ushered in an era of new hope with the ban on the ANC lifted and Nelson Mandela released from prison. However, township violence flared up again in the early 1990s and escalated before the first democratic election. Violence spread from locations in KwaZulu-Natal to the townships around Johannesburg and Pretoria. Urban townships were marred with bloodshed resulting primarily, but not exclusively, from apparent rivalry between ANC and IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party) factions.<sup>3</sup> The victims included ordinary township residents, senior members of political parties, human rights activists, religious leaders, peace negotiators and journalists (Human Rights Watch, 1993). During this time of extreme violence, photographers and journalists braved the townships to tell of the ‘township killings’. Among them was a group of four White South Africa photojournalists dubbed the Bang-Bang Club.<sup>4</sup>

## Phase 2: (Re) Emergence

This phase outlines the emergence townships as a destination on the post-1994 tourism landscape with townships becoming a ‘must-see’ for high-profile and leisure visitors alike when visiting South Africa.

The first democratic election was held on 27 April 1994, after which Nelson Mandela took the helm of the coalition government. Economic sanctions were dropped and South Africa re-entered the world stage in dramatic fashion. The ‘Mandela factor’ arguably played a pivotal role in popularising townships (McClarence, 1999). Kgagudi (2019, p. 39) suggests that the Mandela ‘syndrome’ or ‘factor’ was a powerful motivator for foreign visitors to look into the ‘lifestyles of people living in a country recently liberated from a racist colonial rule’.

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<sup>3</sup> Nelson Mandela among others suspected a ‘third force’ linked to the apartheid government of stirring up unrest in townships to undermine the negotiations and processes steering towards a democratic transition.

<sup>4</sup> Greg Marinovich, Kevin Carter, Ken Oosterbroek, João Silva. Among, media prizes won by members of the group, Greg Marinovich won a Pulitzer Prize for his depictions of a hostel war.

The early post-1994 years saw the rise of township visits, initially by world leaders, foreign diplomats and politicians, humanitarians and celebrities. These foreign visitors toured the townships accompanied by ANC representatives to meet township residents and struggle stalwarts, visit symbolic places associated with the struggle and also residents in need. Indeed, itineraries often included visits to upliftment projects, schools, orphanages, clinics and hospitals along with some cultural display: food, crafts, singing and dancing. Queen Elizabeth visited townships in 1995 and again in 1999; Tony Blair also visited in 1999. The first American president to visit South Africa was Bill Clinton who visited Soweto with Hillary Clinton in 1998 (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Township Visits by Foreign Dignitaries, Politicians and Celebrities (1990s to present)**

Person/s	Year	Township	Place/City
Douglas Hurd	1991	Several townships	KwaZulu-Natal province
John Major	1994	Alexandra	Johannesburg
Queen Elizabeth II	1995; 1999	Khayelitsha; Langa; Alexandra; Soweto	Cape Town; Johannesburg
Bill and Hillary Clinton	1998	Soweto	Johannesburg
Tony Blair	1999	Alexandra	Johannesburg
Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall	2001	Soweto	Johannesburg
Niall Mellon (philanthropist)	2001/2	Several townships	Cape Town
Beyoncé and Bono	2003	Soweto	Johannesburg
Oprah Winfrey	2005	Soweto	Johannesburg
Jamie Oliver	2005; 2009	Soweto; Gugulethu	Johannesburg; Cape Town
Kofi Annan	2006	Soweto	Johannesburg
Angela Merkel	2010	Khayelitsha	Cape Town
Michelle Obama	2011	Soweto	Johannesburg
Barack Obama	2013	Soweto	Johannesburg
Brian Chesky (Airbnb)	2017	Langa	Cape Town
Bill and Melinda Gates	2019	Khayelitsha	Cape Town
Duke and Duchess of Sussex	2019	Khayelitsha and Nyanga; Thembisa	Cape Town; Johannesburg

*Source: Author - compiled from media reports*

High-profile visits can be also understood as a form of political tourism. These visits are symbolic in nature, highly publicized and arguably the ‘politically correct’ and/ or ‘socially conscious’ thing to do when visiting South Africa. The drivers behind such visits appear to be

solidarity and charity. Persons who style themselves as humanitarians actively support township projects of various kinds, sometimes initiating these and/ or donating substantially to causes. In addition to the 'Mandela factor', media attention given to high-profile visits no doubt further popularised and created a certain fascination with townships. This said, the presence and role of such visitors in shaping township tourism have escaped scrutiny.

Leisure visits in the form of township tours gained popularity from the mid-1990s (Frenzel et al., 2015) alongside political tourism. In the late 1990s, advertisements and travel journalism on trips to Soweto and Cape Town's townships started to appear in the foreign newspapers, particularly in the travel supplements (McClarence, 1999; *Sunday Independent*, 27 February 2000; *The Times*, 3 January 1998; 25 September 1999). One company offered a 'township and winelands' day trip from Cape Town (*The Times*, 3 January 1998), and another a 'township and Robben Island tour' (*Sunday Independent*, 27 February 2000) which included a visit to the political prison where Nelson Mandela and other struggle stalwarts were incarcerated. It is argued that the emergence of leisure tourism post-1994 can be understood as part of the 'discovery' stage of the tourism area lifecycle. The discovery phase refers to new arrivals to a newly developed tourism destination marked by an increase in marketing efforts as seen in the late 1990s with respect to township tourism.

### Phase 3: Commercialisation

From the 2000s, the commercialisation of township tourism as an urban leisure activity is increasingly evident. In this phase, government enters the stage as an actor in the development of township tourism. The involvement of government (at national, provincial and local spheres) in township tourism development is in line with Bulter's 'local control or involvement' stage in the tourism area lifecycle.

In 2002, Rogerson (2002, p.177) averred that while townships have limited tourism infrastructure, they did have a strong attractiveness for international tourists who equate Soweto in particular as the 'the spatial embodiment of the struggle for democracy'. Early academic observers of township tourism describe township tours as a form of cultural tourism (Dondolo, 2002; Ramchander, 2004; Rogerson, 2002). Ramchander (2004, p. 8) maintains:

"Political violence may have made black township no-go areas for foreign tourists in the days of apartheid, but in 1976 and the political strife of the 1980s subsequently made townships such as Soweto world-famous, and it is not surprising that township tourism has increased significantly since the first democratic election in South Africa in 1994. Their legacy of violence and pain has made townships unlikely tourist destinations, yet busloads

of visitors arrived every day to sample the renewed vitality of township life. Most leave with a very different impression from the one with which they arrived, having gained new insights following tours led by local entrepreneurs, and discovering that townships are not depraved areas of violent crime, but vibrant centres populated by friendly people with inspirational stories to tell”.

Elements of culture are included in township tours through visits to *shebeens* (drinking) and jazz venues, artists, craft markets and dancing shows (Ramchander, 2004; Rogerson, 2004).

Scheyvens (2002) perceives township tourism as a form of ‘justice tourism’: tourists visiting sites of significance associated with the struggle and residents telling their stories to a receptive audience after decades of having their voices silenced by an oppressive and hostile government. This theme has reoccurred in a recent investigation in Cape Town which focused on the perceptions of residents: Muldoon (2020) observes that touristic encounters can create liminal opportunities for hosts and facilitate a level of ‘reconciliation’ between Black hosts and White visitors. Nonetheless, criticism of township tourism abound in academic circles and sometimes in the media. The infamous township coach tour, described by Ramchander (2004) as ‘safari-style drive-through tours’, is a widely regarded as voyeuristic, that is viewing poverty from a position of luxury.

During this commercialisation phase, charity continued to be a strong driver. Following on from the activities of high-profile visitors, townships tours undertaken by leisure visitors characteristically included visits to crèches, schools, clinics, hospitals and other upliftment projects. The charity trend is further manifested through the growth of volunteer tourism (Frenzel, 2016; 2020; Frenzel et al., 2015). At first, tourists donated to schools, families, community projects, clinics and artists (Ramchander, 2004) and later became involved in development initiatives as volunteers. A prominent example is the widely reported on Niall Mellon Township Trust which repeatedly called on volunteers to build houses in Cape Town’s townships as part of a ‘building blitz’ (Keaney, 2005; O’Donoghue, 2008). It is evident from news articles that these volunteers often visited townships first, were moved by the need they observed, and then decided to return with others in an attempt do something about it. Sympathy sparked action by those with resources and a desire ‘to make a difference’ are alluded to in the articles cited.

Succeeded by the growth of township tours, B&Bs (Bed-and-Breakfast) establishments broadened the township tourism offering (Rogerson, 2004). The hand of government is identifiable in the promotion of township B&Bs. Delegates to the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg were encouraged to stay in townships both in Soweto and Alexandra (Rogerson, 2004). During the Summit, Soweto was regarded as a ‘showcase’ for international



visitors (Kgagudi, 2019). A ‘Get off the bus’ campaign accordingly was launched by government agencies to encourage more persons to overnight in townships (Mgibisa, 2007). However, the campaign has achieved limited success and B&Bs continued to have low occupancies (Booyens, 2010; Mgibisa, 2007).

From 2000 onwards, authorities increasingly invested in government-led tourism development projects particularly in the townships around Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban in a response to the growth of foreign visitor demand in these cities. Projects were predominantly focussed on struggle heritage (see Table 3 for prominent examples). Not all developments have necessarily succeeded as tourism products - the Kliptown precinct development is an example of this (Figure 1). Mention of the sites are included to show that politicians and local officials actively promote ‘struggle heritage’ particularly by marking sites of significance and building museums or interpretation centres. Government officials routinely regard these initiatives as LED (Local Economic Development) projects even in areas where there are no real tourism potential. It is evident that during the commercialisation phase, township tourism has become part of pro-poor, tourism-led LED strategies (Booyens, 2010; Rogerson, 2006). This approach draws on tourism policy which stress that tourism development should be ‘responsible’ and promote ‘culture’ to showcase a destination’s ‘real African character’ with a focus on arts and crafts, heritage, historical and political aspects (DEAT, 1998; RSA, 1996).

**Table 3: Key Cultural and Struggle Heritage Products in Townships**

Type	Year	Township	City
GugaS’thebe Cultural Centre	Constructed in 1999	Langa	Cape Town
Hector Peterson Museum	Opened in 2002	Soweto	Johannesburg
Sharpeville Township and Memorial	Opened in 2002	Sharpeville	Vereeniging
The Red Location Museum	Opened in 2006, now closed	New Brighton	Port Elizabeth
Mandela House	First opened a heritage site in 1999. Restored, with new visitor centre opened the public in 2009	Soweto	Johannesburg
Vilakazi Street Precinct	Upgrade of public and tourism infrastructure completed in 2010	Soweto	Johannesburg
Cato Manor Heritage Centre	Initially constructed in 2012, currently being extended	Cato Manor	Durban

<p>Kliptown Precinct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Freedom Square (Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication)</li> <li>▪ Freedom Charter Monument</li> <li>▪ Soweto Hotel and Conference Centre (four-star boutique hotel)</li> <li>▪ Struggle heritage museum</li> </ul>	<p>Site opened 2005, the completion of sites and structures followed</p>	<p>Soweto</p>	<p>Johannesburg</p>
<p>Mpumalanga Heritage Centre</p>	<p>Unveiled in 2017</p>	<p>Mpumalanga</p>	<p>Durban</p>

*Source: Author – compiled from various sources*



**Figure 1: Freedom Square, Kliptown Precinct.** *Source: Author*

#### Phase 4: Diversification

Township tourism has increasingly diversified since 2010 with townships offering a wider set of services, activities and experiences. This corresponds with the ‘institutionalisation’ or ‘consolidation’ stages in the tourism area lifecycle.

In 2010, the country experienced a boom in foreign arrivals because of the FIFA World Cup. In anticipation of increased foreign tourist flows, authorities embarked on physical upgrading projects in townships close to major cities (Kgagudi, 2019). Projects involved the expansion of social housing, transport infrastructure, sport facilities, tourism attractions and also beautifying township spaces. For instance, the upgrade of Mandela House was completed in 2009 and

construction of the Vilakazi Street Precinct in Soweto was completed in 2010 (Kgagudi, 2019). The Orlando Stadium in Soweto which was rebuilt at a cost of R280 million (Gauteng Tourism Authority, 2020) is located in close proximity to the Vilakazi Precinct in Orlando West where tourism attractions and activities are clustered. In the run up to the World Cup, government also embarked on renewed efforts to promote township B&Bs and heritage routes (Briedenhann, 2011). While townships reportedly experienced an influx of visitors during the World Cup and despite all the initial optimism, the expected economic returns to locals proved disappointing (Briedenhann, 2011). Nonetheless, the World Cup coincided with the diversification phase of township tourism which acted as a catalyst for events-based tourism, sport and cultural, along with the expansion of other leisure and hospitality services increasingly in townships. The geographical spread of township tourism beyond the townships around Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg to those around small towns and rural areas are also evident in the diversification phase (Frenzel, 2020; Rogerson, 2014).

The diversification of township tourism in Soweto, one of the first slum tourism destinations (Frenzel et al., 2015; Steinbrink, 2012), is most pronounced. The township boasts heritage sites, adventure activities like bungee jumping and paintball, restaurants, festivals and cultural events, concerts, food markets, craft breweries, specialist shops, marathons and sporting events (Booyens & Rogerson, 2019 a, b). Additionally, townships around Cape Town have cultural and craft centres such as the GugaS'thebe centre in Langa, Makukhanye Art Room and the Shack Theatre in Khayelitsha. Initiatives such as these are often run by city councils, or as NGOs, often with the support of donors with the aim to support arts and youth development in impoverished communities (Booyens, Mkuzo & Morgan, 2021). These initiatives draw foreign visitors, some of whom become involved as volunteer tourists. Other activities and services on offer in Cape Town's townships include Airbnb accommodation; arts and food experiences; artisan coffee shops and restaurants such as the Department of Coffee and Streetside Bakery in Khayelitsha; recreation activities like kayaking and cycling in townships; and festivals and concerts of various kinds. Indeed, a manifestation of township tourism diversification is the emergence of creative tourism in townships (Booyens & Rogerson, 2019 a,b). Prominent examples are craft making experiences, street-art tours, drumming sessions, visiting jazz or visual artists, etc. The media has picked up on the experience-based township tourism trend as way to benefit locals (*Herald Live*, 13 June 2019; Mowlana, 2018; Niselow, 2019; Omarjee, 2019). At the same time, there is evidence of tourism precinct development which results in the spatial bundling of tourism activities and attractions, notable areas are the Vilakazi precinct in Soweto and the area around Guga S'Thebe Arts and Cultural Centre in Langa (Booyens & Rogerson, 2019b).

Another growing trend associated with tourism diversification is education or research tourism in townships, associated with charity and volunteering. This is a way for foreign students to gain credits towards their courses while overseas over summer holidays (Budworth, 2012). A recent Soweto study found that over a third of visitors interviewed were students, with several indicating that they visited for education or research purposes (Hoogendoorn, Letsatsi, Malleka & Booyens, 2020). Further recent observations in Langa revealed that local female entrepreneurs who market themselves on Airbnb typically house students and/ or volunteers (see Hofäcker & Gebauer, 2021). An example of a tourism NGO from Port Elizabeth which has broadened its development focus is the Calabash Trust. Calabash started offering townships tours in the late 1990s. They won the overall Responsible Tourism Awards<sup>5</sup> in the category ‘best for poverty reduction’ in 2004 (Chesshyre, 2004). The trust has since diversified their portfolio to support community schools (skills, infrastructure and facilities), facilitate story-telling workshops for parents and student through creative means (theatre/drama, art, music), offer environmental education and facilitate permaculture design and implementation ([www.calabashtraveltours.co.za](http://www.calabashtraveltours.co.za)). They offer volunteer opportunities to schools, universities and individuals and also for research.

## **Contributions**

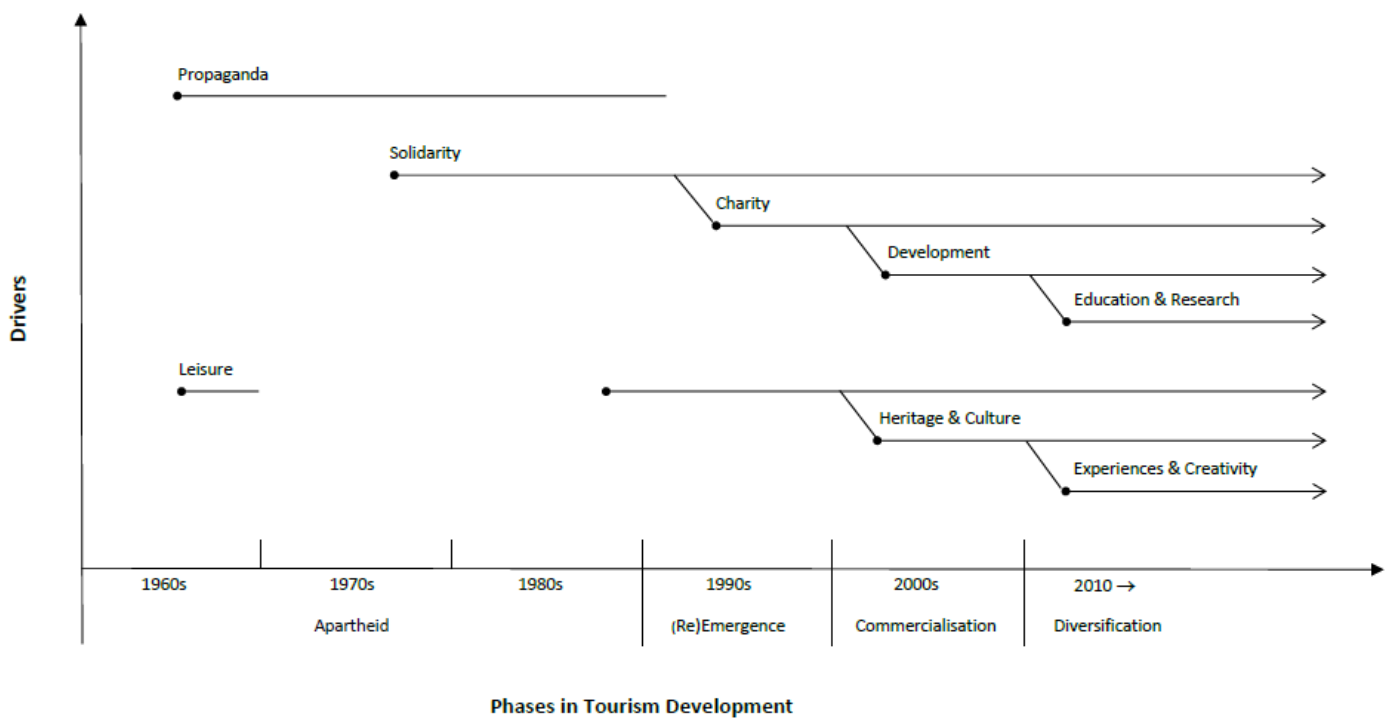
This chapter offers insights on the evolution of township tourism. The observation that multiple, co-evolving tourism paths can be identified (Figure 2), is the first contribution of this research. The development of paths (often complementary) is the natural outcome of evolutionary processes over time (Brouder, 2014; Brouder & Ioannides, 2014) and is not surprising in the light of tourism area development.

Three dominant drivers of township tourism are: propaganda, solidarity and leisure. The propaganda and solidarity drivers are both underscored by political motives. While Frenzel (2016; 2020) refer to township tourism during apartheid as political tourism, this chapter demonstrate that political tourism is a path-dependent thread running through the evolution of township tourism from its beginnings in the 1960s until the present day with high-profile visitors continuing to frequent townships. Politics are part and parcel of the place narrative of townships and township tourism as a phenomenon. The formation of townships was in itself a political act and in the case of Soweto, Kgagudi (2019, p.2) points to its centrality in ‘contemporary political and social post-apartheid South Africa’. The nature of political tourism, however, has shifted from propaganda in the early years, to solidarity during apartheid and most acutely after democracy, and then to charity

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<sup>5</sup> In association with The Times, World Travel Market and Geographical Magazine

and development emphases in later years with the growth of volunteer tourism which has undergone further diversification to focus on education and research. Leisure tourism coincided with the propaganda visits in the 1960s, but ceased in the 1970s and 1980s. While there is some evidence of leisure visits in the 1980s, the 1990s saw the re-emergence of township tours as an urban leisure activity. The commercialisation of township tourism gained traction from the 2000s with the growth of leisure tourism pushing political tourism into the background and while foregrounding heritage and culture heritage. Leisure tourism has diversified in recent years to include experience-based and creative tourism.



**Figure 2: Township Tourism Development Paths.** *Source: Author*

The second contribution of this chapter centres on the changing character of township tourism in the last decade: the township tourism product is diversifying and tourism precincts are expanding which points to maturing township destinations. Volunteer and experience-based tourism (cultural, creative and adventure) have raised the level of participation in the consumption of tourism experiences. Visitors who take part in volunteer and experience-based tourism are not simply onlookers or gazers who consume poverty, they co-create experiences with hosts which entail more complex motives. Tourist consumption patterns accordingly are shifting in certain respects from poverty to the leisure consumption (see Booyens & Rogerson, 2019 a, b; Jürgens & Donaldson, 2012). In addition, tourism precincts with heritage sites, up-market leisure facilities and services have developed in townships, along with a number of events, which are consumed by locals, South

African day visitors and foreign visitors alike. It should, however, be recognised that township tourism diversification remains unequal. Tourism development have expanded in Soweto, and to lesser degree in Alexandra, in the Johannesburg area, and also in some townships around Cape Town; but remain minimal in many other townships. The township tourism experience in Soweto, which has expanded dramatically, should for instance not be compared to the experience in a place like Imizami Yethu (Hout Bay, Cape Town) where touring poverty remains the dominant feature (see Huysamen, Barnett & Fraser, 2020).

Critiques of township tourism highlight that township tours typically result in limited, if any, benefits for local communities. However, it is argued that tourism diversification affords more opportunities for local entrepreneurship and employment. While investigations underscore that local Black entrepreneurs face various barriers and benefit little (Hikido, 2018; Koens & Thomas, 2016) there are some examples of success. Booyens and Rogerson (2019b) draw attention to Black entrepreneurs who own successful restaurants and craft breweries in Soweto, and also facilitate creative experiences in Soweto and Langa. In a recent investigation in Soweto, Kgagudi (2019) claims that there are growing opportunities for many small entrepreneurs and businesses. She interviewed several, active local Black tour guides. In another recent study in Soweto several residents reported that they have benefitted from tourism through ‘the sale of food and drinks in restaurants or cafe’s, working in B&Bs, selling crafts and clothing to tourists and providing forms of tourism-related entertainment’ (Hoogendoorn et al., 2020, p. 9). Emergent indications of greater local benefit and embeddedness along with government support for township tourism development, however, needs to be explored in more depth in future investigations on township tourism.

As a last word, the caveat should be added that at the time of writing township tourism has all but collapsed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Foreign tourism to townships has ceased and the mobility of domestic visitors severely restricted. The recovery outlook of township tourism remains uncertain. It is too soon to know whether township tourism enterprises will rebound when tourist demand returns and to what extent if and when it does. This said, as argued in this chapter; since township tourism development is path dependent it is likely that tourism will continue along similar patterns when it re-emerges (again).

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to thank Prof. Malte Steinbrink (Chair of Social and Cultural Geography at the University of Passau, Germany) for his useful comments on an earlier versions of this chapter and also the reviewers for their constructive feedback.

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