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‘Kicking Sand in the Face of Apartheid’: Segregated Beaches in South Africa

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Abstract: This article makes a contribution to address the overwhelming ‘present-mindedness’ of tourism geography scholarship. Using a range of archival sources an analysis is undertaken of the rise and demise of racial segregation on South Africa’s beaches during the period 1953–1989. The division of beach space along racial lines is an aspect of the implementation of what was termed ‘petty apartheid’. This analysis reveals that the national government’s attempts to legislate the making of beach segregation were uneven and contested in different coastal centres. By the 1980s, however, mounting opposition and resistance to the apartheid state resulted in the crumbling of beach apartheid and the formal desegregation of beach spaces.

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1. Introduction

In an analysis of the transformation of tourism destinations published a decade ago Saarinen (2004: 174) reminds us that the identity of a tourism destination is an historically-specific construct which “contains features from the present, traces from the past and signs of future changes”. This statement has much contemporary relevance to understanding South Africa as a tourism destination. South Africa has transformed from a destination where apartheid legislation sought to segregate tourist facilities and allocate them on a racially discriminatory basis to a post-1994 democratic, open and inclusive tourist economy with facilities open to all. Despite the efforts to eradicate traces of South Africa’s racist past, this recent and painful history is only a generation old and vestiges of the past reappear in unexpected places.

The imprint of the past on South Africa’s contemporary tourism landscape was highlighted dramatically in May 2015 by the appearance of a newspaper headline: “Outcry Over Beach Apartheid Sign” (The Mercury, 26 May 2015). The ‘offensive’ sign at Laguna Beach in Durban stated ‘African Bathing Beach’, a reminder of the era of beach segregation during the apartheid period. The discovery of this artifact of apartheid planning provoked a storm of controversy from local councilors who urged the sign be removed immediately. In particular, concern was expressed that international tourists might be puzzled and think they were not allowed to bathe on this particular Durban beach which perhaps in 2015 was reserved only for (South) Africans. By contrast, local academic observers disagreed. They stated the “sign reminded people that the apartheid government did not only divide up the land but also sought to separate the ocean itself” (The Mercury, 26 May 2015). It was argued that the artifact should remain and be left without any further explanation because to provide any reason would “kill the effect” (The Mercury, 26 May 2015). It was contended: “What would it say that under apartheid, Africans, Indians, Coloureds and Whites had separate beaches? Would it go on to say that the worst beach, with the most dangerous backwash, with no toilet facilities, was set aside for Africans?”. The local municipality wanted the erection of a plaque to

explain the context even as it was acknowledged that “it is celebrating the fact that 25 years ago Durban beaches were desegregated” (The Mercury, 26 May, 2015).

The above vignette underlines the traces of South Africa’s racist past in respect of present-day landscapes of tourism (see also Prochazka, Kruger, 2001). The aim in this paper is to offer a modest contribution to scholarship concerning tourism geographies of racism. Analysis is undertaken of the rise and fall of an extraordinary facet of apartheid tourism planning which sought to engineer the segregation of leisure on the country’s beaches for different racial groups. The study draws upon archival research material sourced from national depots in Pretoria and Cape Town, the National Library in Cape Town and the Historical Papers collection of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. These archival sources facilitate access to extensive collections of newspaper reports, photographs, personal accounts and legislative Acts. In particular, the legal framework of enforced segregation and separate amenities was traced from an examination of parliamentary House of Assembly Debates (HOAD) for the period 1965 to 1972. Finally, use is made also of the rich material published by the South African Institute of Race Relations and contained in the Annual Survey of Race Relations in South Africa for the period 1961 to 1990 (the year when beach apartheid was repealed).

The remainder of this paper is organized into five uneven sections of discussion. First, the article is located as a response to what Walton (2009a; 2009b; 2009c) argues is a persistent failure of tourism scholarship to grasp the significance of tourism’s past, a condition which arguably has impoverished our understanding of current developments. Second, a brief overview is given of key themes in tourism planning under apartheid. The next two sections turn to analyze the rise of beach apartheid, its legislative underpinnings and implementation for the spatial organization of leisure in the country’s major coastal destinations. The final section traces the so-termed “kicking of the sand” (Sunday Times, 8 October, 1989) or the growing resistance to this absurd exercise in racist tourism planning and subsequently its ‘fall’ with the legislative ending of beach apartheid.

2. Tourism Planning Research: The Limits of the Past

Walton (2009a) emphasizes that tourism studies must acknowledge more fully that the present cannot be understood without reference to what has gone before and urges “a need for historical awareness”. Butler (2015) reinforces the point that “a problem in tourism studies has been a prevailing present-mindedness and superficiality refusing deep, grounded or sustained historical analysis”. The appearance of the *Journal of Tourism History* is a welcome boost to scholarship around the histories and emerging historical geographies of tourism. In its maiden editorial Walton (2009b) hailed the journal’s launch as an “opportunity to pull together the history of tourism on a firm academic footing”. The need for historical studies in tourism is “important not only in its own right but also as a contributor to wider understandings of issues and processes in tourism studies and tourism management more generally” (Walton, 2009).

Arguably, with certain exceptions, most research by tourism geographers exhibits an overwhelming ‘present-mindedness’. The neglect of tourism’s past is reflected in several reviews published of tourism geographical research by among others Nepal (2009), Hall and Page (2009), Gill (2012), Hall (2013) and Saarinen (2014). The limited existing work by geographers on tourism’s past is confined mainly to investigations conducted in developed countries and is “largely concerned with the activities of the affluent” (Towner, 1995). Indeed, Towner (1995) points out that across tourism studies as a whole “we know remarkably little about the history of leisure” outside of the global North. Despite a growing body of literature “the history of tourism per se remains scattered” (Towner, Wall, 1991). In regards to specific debates about tourism planning and policy a scan of literature reveals minimal historical scholarship. Recent exceptions include Piglia’s (2011) investigation of the origins of tourism planning in Argentina and Cirer-Costa’s (2014) exploration of the development of Spain’s pre-Second World War coastal destinations. Minimal historical geographical work exists around the nexus of tourism and racism. One exception is Craggs (2012) portrayal of how the racial boundaries of public social life were

constructed and contested in the hospitality spaces of colonial Zimbabwe.

In the global South the South African experience provides potential fertile territory to rectify what Walton (2009a) views the tardiness of tourism scholars to examine tourism’s past in general and more specifically to investigate issues about historical tourism planning associated with racism. In a global review of research on historical tourism studies it was highlighted that work on twentieth century Africa is “very limited” and that “most publications on African tourism remain present-minded and policy orientated” (Walton, 2009: 788). Notwithstanding a surge in South African tourism geographical scholarship in recent years (Hoogendoorn, Rogerson, 2015; Visser, 2016) dedicated historical investigations are scarce (for exceptions see Pandy, Rogerson, 2014; Rogerson, 2011). This said, an understanding of the contemporary tourism landscape in South Africa can be enriched by historical investigations (Pirie, 2009, 2013; Rogerson, 2013, 2016).

3. Tourism Planning Under Apartheid

Grundlingh (2006) draws attention to the contrast between a burst of tourism research on post-1990 tourism in South Africa and the scant writings which exist for the pre-1990 period as a whole and the apartheid era in particular. In the immediate years after its election in 1948 the National Party paid little attention to tourism planning as it had more pressing priorities in terms of consolidating its powerbase and beginning designs for the planning of ‘grand apartheid’. The structuring of grand apartheid included the spatial segregation of the country’s racial groups within cities where Africans were viewed as “temporary sojourners” and forced to carry identity documents (*dompas*) to prove their employment and residence status (Simon, 1989; Lemon, 1991). More broadly, grand apartheid planning focused upon the territorial division of South African space between a ‘common’ white dominated space and the making of a set of segregated ethnically defined spaces for Africans in terms of the ten Bantustans or Homelands that were instituted under apartheid. (Fig.1).

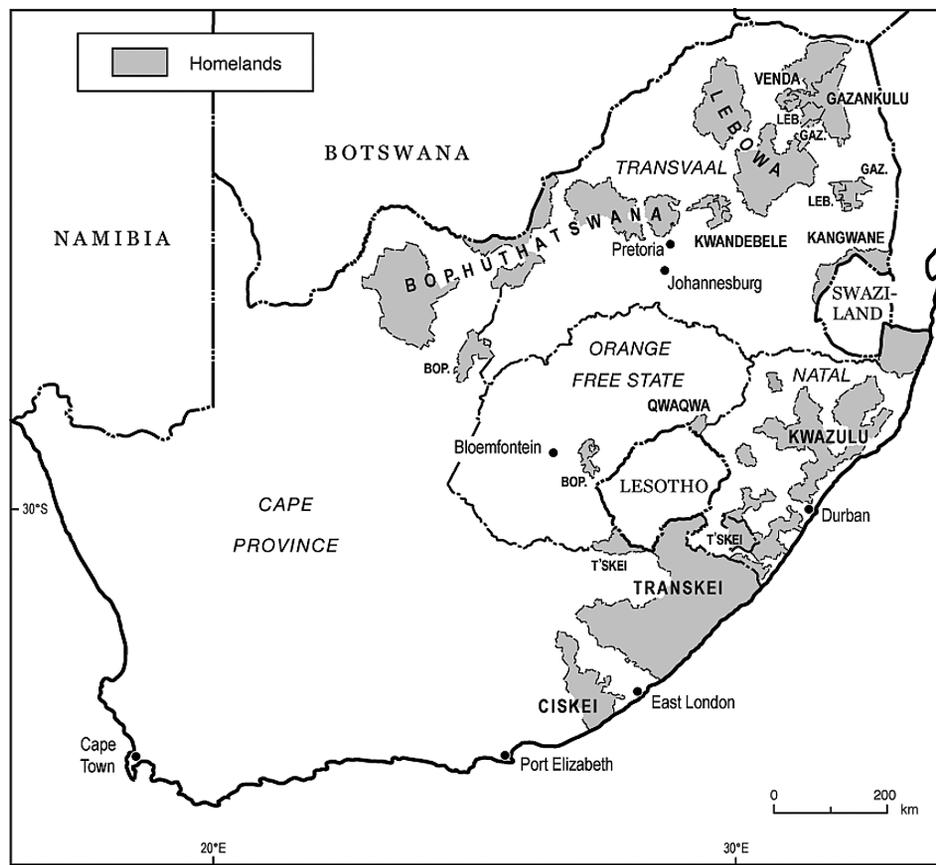


Fig. 1: The location of South Africa's Homelands.

Source: Author

During the early apartheid years tourism in the 1950s and into the 1960s was overwhelmingly a domestic affair as South Africa was a long haul destination and to reach the country meant a two-week sea passage for most international visitors (Ferrario, 1978). Nevertheless the advent of commercial jet travel in the late 1950s and rapid tourism growth in the 1960s pushed the sector onto the national government's policy agenda. As Grundlingh (2006) points out in 1963 greater interest was reflected in the establishment of a new government department, part of which was responsible for tourism. This said, in parliamentary debates during 1966 the new department was denigrated as follows:

Let us look at the Department of Tourism. Of all the Departments in South Africa, it is the smallest, the puniest, the most anaemic of them all. It was born in May 1963, and it is certainly not going strong (HOAD, 19 August 1966).

Under apartheid several major developments are observable in terms of tourism planning. First,

through SATOUR (South African Tourism) there began more active promotion of South Africa as an international destination. This marketing was, however, selectively targeted to high income not high volume tourism as government was cautious to ensure that South Africa would not be swamped by mass tourism "like Spain or the Caribbean, by hundreds of thousands of comparatively penniless and permissive tourists" who were deemed to "pose a threat to the traditionally conservative outlook of the South African way of life" (Ferrario, 1978). The promotional focus was upon the 'right tourists' and avoiding those with 'dubious morals'. This was seen as essential for attracting to South Africa groups of tourists who might comment favourably on the country on their return home, something that was critical given the country's increasingly tarnished image because of the Sharpeville killings in 1960 and rising criticism of the country's domestic policies (Grundlingh, 2006). Ferrario (1978) observes that in the early 1970s domestic tourism represent-

ed 80% to 85% of all tourist traffic both in terms of expenditure and numbers. This is illustrated by the fact that in 1973 “overseas tourists represented only 11.1% of the total visitors to the largest and most popular of the South African game parks, the Kruger National Park” (Ferrario, 1978). After the Soweto riots in 1976 and enactment of sanctions on South Africa the importance of international tourism was further eroded (Rogerson, Visser, 2004). Increasingly international tourism flows were focused less on leisure and rather on the category of visiting friends and relatives tourism (Rogerson, 2015a).

Second, whilst tourism promotion was not utilised directly as propaganda to promote apartheid, much publicity material during the 1960s and 1970s in tourism films and brochures did reflect common racial stereotypes and myths such as the ‘native races’ depicted as living harmoniously in rural habitats and ‘unspoilt’ by city life (Grundlingh, 2006). Arguably, much of tourism marketing focused on the contrasts between the ‘primitive’ and ‘modern’ with the Secretary of Tourism in 1963 stating “Here is an exhilarating land under a warm beneficial sun. Cities, alive with prosperity and confidence, form a contrast to picturesque Bantu Villages where ancient tribal rites and traditions are to be seen” (cited by Grundlingh, 2006).

Third, are the critical policy developments surrounding tourism for black South Africans. With the design of separate ethnic spaces from the late 1950s much attention was directed to planning ‘appropriate’ tourism spaces for them in particular in the rural Homelands (Rogerson, 2014). Under apartheid legislation separate tourism facilities had to be provided for blacks as hotels and resorts in ‘the common area’ of white South Africa would accept only white visitors. Because of racial segregation policies limited options were available for black South Africans to experience leisure at a resort facility. Before 1962 there were no destinations for the more affluent groups of black teachers or businesspeople, potential consumers of holidays and desiring to stay the night in paid accommodation (Ferrario, 1986, 1988).

During the 1960s, however, the apartheid state turned its mind to the provision of dedicated recreational spaces for the country’s black population (Rogerson, 2014, 2015b). In 1967 the Manyeleti Game Reserve was opened to serve as a dedicat-

ed holiday resort for the emergent black middle class. Teversham (2013) argues it potentially also fulfilled a political function as rural holiday resorts might draw urban blacks back to the countryside and reconnect them with the rural landscape and thereby entice them to relocate back to their former homeland. For the small black middle class a much more popular leisure destination during the apartheid years was the beach resort which opened in 1970 at Umgababa 36 kilometres south of Durban. This resort offered a second holiday option for African leisure seekers (Ferrario, 1988). Alongside these separate leisure spaces, the major planning issue during the apartheid period concerning black domestic tourism was the racial separation of the beaches in the major coastal centres of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Durban.

4. The Rise of Beach Apartheid

As argued by Møller and Schlemmer (1982: 3) whilst beach segregation was practiced voluntarily or by convention in South Africa throughout the 20th century it “was only strictly enforced after the National Party came to power after 1948”. Indeed, the rise and enforcement of beach apartheid must be understood as a fragment of the complex architecture around the institutionalisation of segregated spaces throughout the apartheid era. This said, a large amount of racist legislation already had been enacted in South Africa prior to the election of the National Party in 1948. For example, in 1923 the Native Urban Areas Act was passed requiring all South African towns and cities to establish separate African residential ‘locations’ and to ensure that Africans (blacks) were permitted in the so-termed white urban areas only so long as their labour was required, a stricture which guaranteed their ‘temporary sojourner’ status in cities (Lemon, 1991; Mabin, 1992).

From 1948 segregation policies yielded to formal apartheid planning with a battery of legislation introduced which, while South Africa was still part of the Commonwealth (until 1961), meant that much of this racist legislation was enacted (ironically) in the name of the British Crown. The apartheid project sought to enforce racial division in all

spheres of public and private life (Lemon, 1991). In the first two decades of rule by the National Party over a hundred laws were passed to support the visions of apartheid planners for racially segregated spaces. Among the most well-known cornerstones of apartheid legislation were *inter alia*: The Group Areas Act (1950 and 1966) which created race-based areas of residence; the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) which disallowed marriage between members of different race groups; the Bantu Education Act (1953) which established a separate curriculum for blacks that suited “the nature and requirements of the black people” and the Industrial Conciliation Act (1956) which enabled the Minister of Labour to reserve categories of work for members of specified racial groups (Lemon, 1991).

In terms of what became known as ‘petty apartheid’ the national government sought to regulate racial contact in public spaces by separating amenities such as park benches, public toilets, beaches, swimming pools and even graveyards. The foundation legislation for petty apartheid was the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act No. 49 of 1953 enacted in the name of “the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, by the Senate and the House of Assembly of the Union of South Africa” (Union of South Africa, 1953). This Act legislated for the segregation by race of all public amenities, buildings and transport in order to eliminate (or at least minimize) contact between non-whites and whites (Horrell, 1955). Formally stated the 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act was to “provide for the reservation of public premises and vehicles or portion thereof for the exclusive use of persons of a particular race or class, for the interpretation of laws which provide for such reservation, and for matters incidental thereto”. The Act made provision for punitive measures for its contravention:

Any person who willfully enters or uses any public premises or public vehicle or any portion thereof or any counter, bench, seat or other amenity or contrivance which has been set apart or reserved for the exclusive use of persons belonging to a particular race or class to which he does not belong shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding 50 pounds or three months imprisonment or to both such fine and imprisonment (Union of South Africa, 1953).

The separate amenities legislation was applied by apartheid bureaucrats with the goal to establish racially defined leisure spaces concerning the country’s beaches (Durrheim, Dixon, 2005). This extension, however, proved problematic. The 1953 Act did not define beach ‘occupation’ and therefore the implementation of beach segregation was delayed until a definition could be reached and subsequently enforced by law. In terms of existing racial discriminatory legislation, such as the Group Areas Act, it was unclear whether the activity of swimming constituted an ‘occupation’ of beach space. Another problem for apartheid planners was that the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 did not empower local authorities to implement beach segregation. According to Horrell (1961) local authorities “might reserve public premises or land or portions thereof for the exclusive use of persons of a particular race, but the term “land” included only land above the high-water mark”. Further disruption for apartheid designs arose from earlier segregation legislation of the Sea Shore Act of 1935 which declared the Queen, the owner of the sea-shore and the sea within the territorial waters of South Africa (Møller, Schlemmer, 1982).

In advancing the implementation of beach apartheid an Amendment Act was introduced in 1960 which had one clause only, namely a definition of land as including the sea and sea-shore (Horrell, 1961). The 1960 Amendment Act stated that the sea is “the sea and the bed of the sea within the three miles limit” and that the sea-shore is “the land situated between low-water mark and high-water mark” (Horrell, 1961). With this definitional constraint resolved, seemingly the way forward was clear for the enforcement of beach apartheid in South Africa’s coastal areas. For national government, however, this was not the case so further measures were enacted. In 1966 the Reservation of Separate Amenities Amendment Bill empowered any person in charge of any public premises “to reserve such premises for the exclusive use of persons belonging to a particular race – the term ‘public premises’ included the seashore” (Horrell, 1967). Finally, any potential lack of support from local authorities in coastal areas for implementation of apartheid plans was addressed by the Sea-shore Amendment Act of 1972 which empowered the Minister of Agriculture to delegate to provinces and local authorities for the

enforcement of apartheid on beaches. Any breach of this legislation was to be punished by fines or imprisonment (Horrell et al., 1973).

Evidence drawn from parliamentary debates about the 1972 legislation affords insight into the apartheid 'rationale' for the implementation of segregated beaches. In the national House of Assembly the Deputy Minister of Agriculture proclaimed as follows:

This bill recognizes the fact that the standards of living of the non-Whites continue to rise and that he is being enabled to an increasing extent to visit our beaches and to participate in the recreation facilities there. Because of the higher standards of living the non-Whites will attain in future as a result of their increased salaries, and because of the improved means of transport at their disposal, either private or public means of transport, the non-Whites will become more and more able to go out and look for recreation over week-ends and one of the places they would like to visit for recreation would be the beach. It is important that there should be no confusion in the minds of people as to what part of the beach they may visit and what part they may not visit; where they will give offence and where they will not give offence (HOAD, 6 March 1972).

Another Nationalist Minister echoed these sentiments:

We are pleased about the increasing opportunities they (non-Whites) have to visit these areas, but in the interests of everybody living in this country we should also like to ensure that they will use the freedoms and opportunities in an orderly fashion. We should always bear in mind that we should not give offence to each other. We do not begrudge the non-Whites their part of the beach which they will have the right to visit and where they can relax (HOAD, 6 March 1972, col. 2600).

The response issued by the anti-apartheid opposition which was led by Helen Suzman was as follows:

I must tell the hon. Member who has just sat down that the sentiment that he has uttered that the pay-packets of Africans will eventually increase to such an extent that they will be able to enjoy week-ends by the sea is rather wishful thinking, not so much from the pay point of view, but from the point of view of the amenities which are being set

aside for Africans to enjoy the sea-shores of South Africa... I think there is no point in opposing this Second Reading, because it is simply delegating authority from the Central Government to the provinces...I am of course opposed to the whole basic principle of setting aside these amenities in the way in which it has been done in the past. If one surveys the whole scene in the Cape Peninsula, one finds that it is a disgraceful scene of discrimination because hardly any decent or accessible beaches have been set aside for the Coloured people. On the whole of the Atlantic side there is, I understand, only one project despite the fact that there are thousands of Coloured people who would want to use the Atlantic Ocean for recreational facilities...

On the other side of the peninsula people who have been moved from places under the Group Areas Act have to travel for many miles and make expensive journeys before they can reach our sea-shores...one has only to read from members of the Coloured Representative Council about the dangerous and inaccessible beaches which have been allocated to the Coloured people in the Western Province to realize how exasperated they are at the obvious unfairness of the allocation of the sea-shore for bathing facilities. They complain that only the inaccessible or dangerous beaches have been allocated to them. (HOAD, 6 March 1972).

In a final defence and response to Mrs Suzman the National Party Minister could offer only the derogatory riposte that "It is indeed a pity that on this occasion we again had to have the hon. Member for Houghton's nagging" (HOAD, 6 March 1972).

5. The Making of Racially Separate Beach Spaces

The contested nature of the legislation regarding racial separation on South Africa's beaches was paralleled by an uneven implementation of this legislation across the country's coastal destinations. Following the 1960 Amendment Act there was a flurry of governmental committees and investigations concerning the zoning of beaches specifically for the three major coastal centres of Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth (Figure 1). The local authorities in all these cities were under pressure from national gov-

ernment to comply with the Act’s requirements. In all three cities the challenge was to identify separate beach spaces for the array of non-white apartheid racial groups. The choice of beach space necessarily had to be in alignment with the stringencies of the Group Areas Act because in terms of national government policy as specified in 1964 “non-whites must not be allocated beaches in proclaimed white group areas” (Horrell, 1965). In Cape Town an inter-departmental committee recommended the provision of seaside amenities separately for Coloureds, Indians and Africans on the coast of False

Bay, which was strategically a considerable distance from the city’s white residential areas and also from all non-white residential areas with the exception of the African township of Nyanga (Horrell, 1963). In Durban detailed plans for racial zoning under the Group Areas Act were submitted in response to government pressure with the result of various beaches established for specified racial groups, in particular for Indians and Coloureds. This said, certain of the proposed new beaches for Indians were located in close proximity to the recent development of luxury hotels and apartments for white residents, a situation

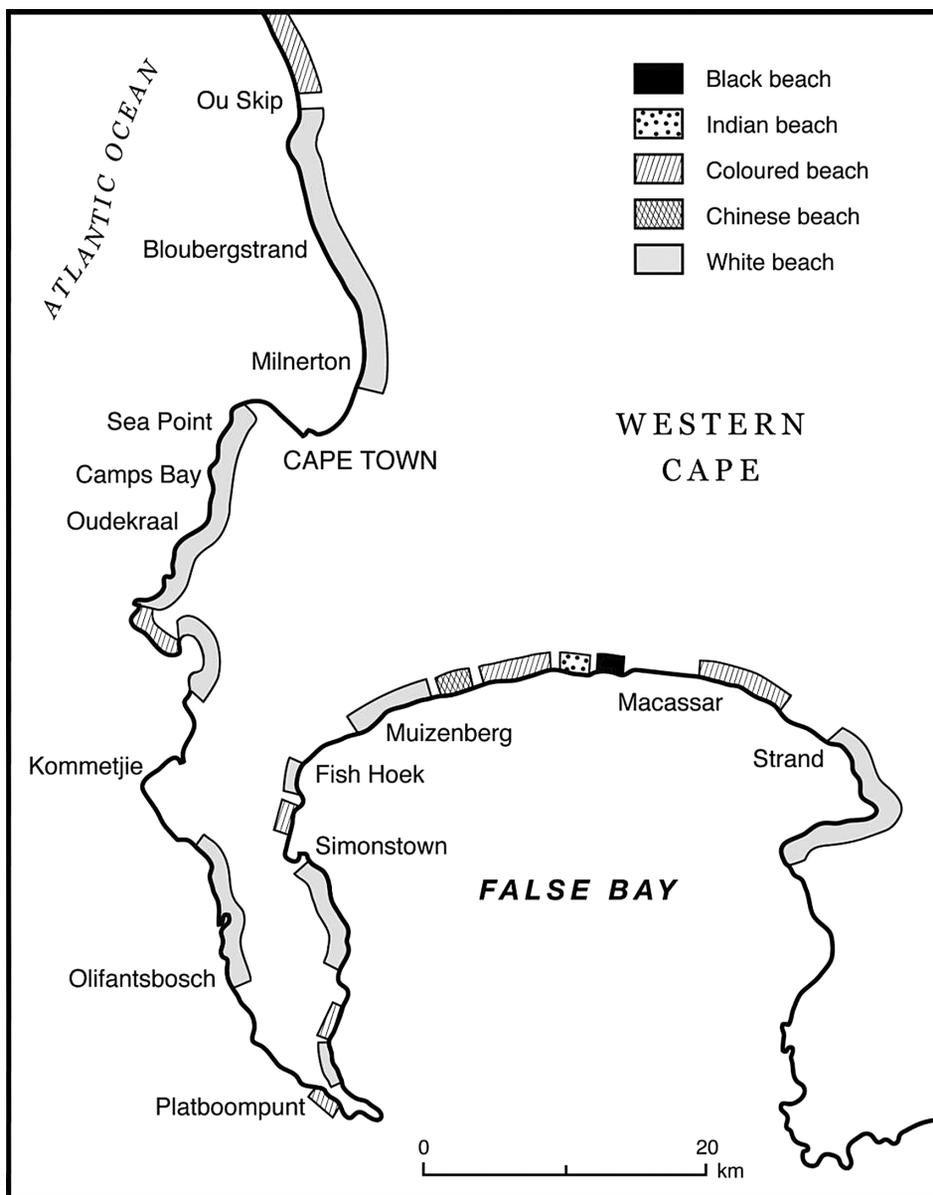


Fig. 2: Racially demarcated beaches in Cape Town. Circa 1970

Source: Author

which prompted vocal complaints from white Durbanites (Horrell, 1964, 1965). In Port Elizabeth the national Minister of Planning made recommendations in 1965 with regard to beach apartheid in the city. These recommendations, however, were in conflict to alternative suggestions earlier put forward by the city council which had been rejected by national government. These alternative proposals included

a request that beaches traditionally used by the city's Coloured bathers be allowed to continue. Nevertheless, the conclusion was made by local council that further objections were pointless with the main developed beaches now set aside for whites only with stretches of the seashore for Coloured, Malays, Chinese, Africans and Indians and separated by buffer strips (Horrell, 1966).

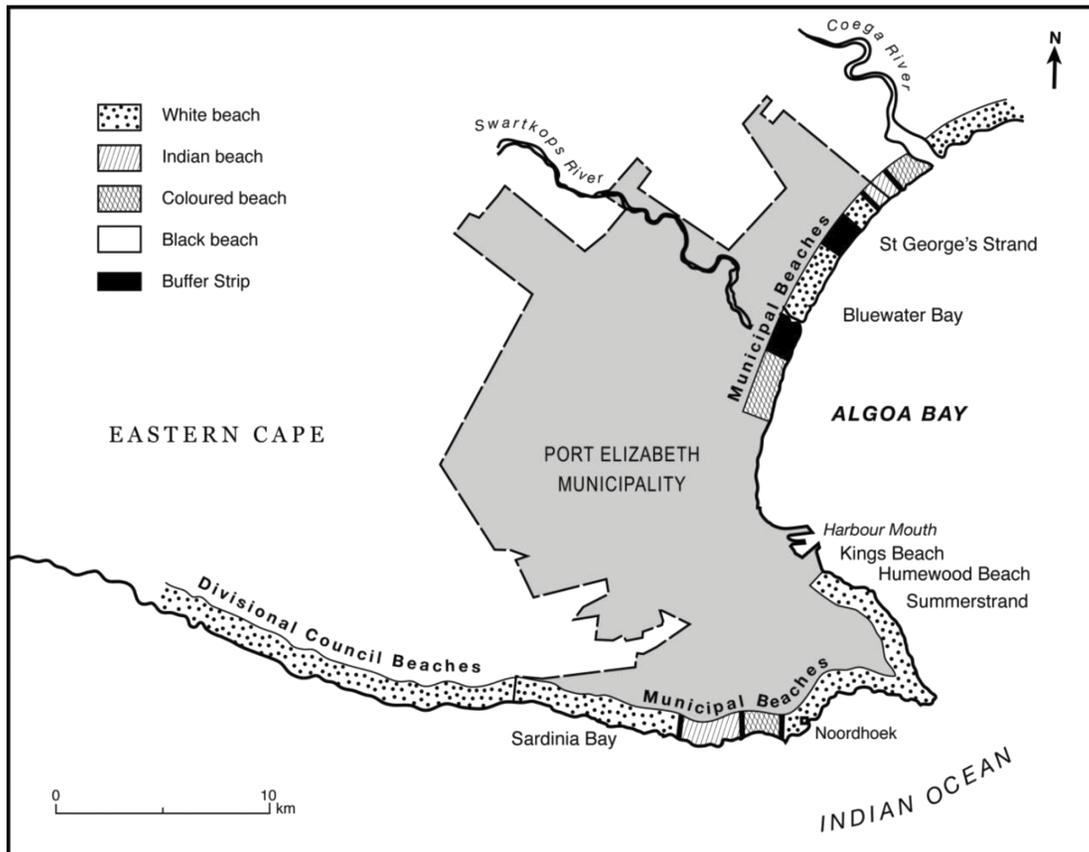


Fig. 3: Racially segregated beaches in Port Elizabeth Circa 1970.

Source: Author

The outcomes of the legislative requirement for segregated beaches for the country's classified racial groups can be illustrated on Figures 2 and 3 which show respectively the geographical organization of beach space for Cape Town (Fig. 2) and Port Elizabeth (Fig. 3). A patchwork of different spaces is disclosed with the major areas allocated for use by white bathers set apart at a considerable distance and sometimes by buffer zones from those for the use of non-white bathers. One common thread across all the coastal destinations was the inferior quality of beach spaces as well as access to the

beach for non-white communities. In Durban "most beaches were reserved for whites with the exception of a 500 yard beach for Indians and Coloureds respectively" (Horrell, 1967). The beaches set aside for use by non-white bathers were the less popular, suitable or safe beaches which, in some cases, were ill suited for recreational use and often treacherous. A distinguishing feature of the exclusively white beaches in the Durban area was that they were secured by the provision of shark nets which had been installed from the early 1950s to create safe protected swimming areas and "entrench white

privilege at the beach” (Thompson, 2015). By contrast the one small beach for all Africans in Durban was reported to be “pitifully lacking in necessary amenities”, not least shark nets (Natal Mercury, 10 January, 1970).

In Cape Town national government representatives were only prepared to concede minimal beach space for use by Coloureds in the Cape Peninsula at a distance of 21 miles from the city centre and at an outlying beach to which no public transport was available (Sunday Times 22 March 1964). In addition it was reported several Coloured beach spaces were not only difficult to access but were “dangerous in terms of swimming and bathing” (Horrell, 1967). The unequal allocation of beach facilities for different race groups is well illustrated by the area of Simonstown part of the Cape Peninsula. In Simonstown where 61% of the local population was non-white the best beaches and amenities were allocated for the exclusive use of white bathers. It was observed as follows:

The non-white sea shore is an unattractive stretch with limited access, because it is bounded by a fenced railway line. At high tide only two small beaches in this area remain uncovered: at one of these a factory discharges effluent, while at the other untreated sewage and garbage is washed ashore from ships. The beaches are unsuitable for bathing, fishing, diving or recreation of any kind ... (the beaches) lack all amenities and have no shade or grass (Horrell, 1965).

The demarcation of racially segregated spaces was to be assisted by the erection of notice boards at the entrance to each beach indicating for which race group beach space was reserved. Once again compliance with this mandate from national government was uneven at local government level. Compliance was greatest by the Durban city council where beaches were racially zoned in line with the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953. By 1967 all Durban beaches were allocated to separate race groups and indicated so by appropriate notices. The more politically liberal authorities of the City of Cape Town were particularly opposed to the imposition of enforced segregation and preferred instead to attract people to various beaches by providing facilities for them. It was considered in Cape Town that notices indicating reservation of beaches for one group or another were a potential

source of “ill feeling” (Horrell, 1966). Accordingly, for several years the Cape Town city council refused to put up beach apartheid boards with the result that many beaches were left un-demarcated until the council was instructed to do so by the National Party-controlled provincial administration. In 1964 the Cape Town council was instructed that unless it complied with the erection of beach apartheid notices that the provincial administration “would do so and charge the cost to the council” (Sunday Times, 22 March, 1964). A similar situation existed in Port Elizabeth where beach space was segregated by 1965 and yet the city council did not put up discriminatory signage until compelled to do so by national government remit. Further tightening of legislation to force the introduction of notices for reservation of beaches was enacted by the National Party through the Sea Shore Amendment Act of 1972 (Horrell et al., 1973).

By the early 1970s beach apartheid was in effect in almost all South Africa’s coastal areas, both in cities and smaller towns (Horrell, 1969; Gordon et al., 1978). The enforced separation of the races on beaches became a microcosm of the idiocy and fundamental unfairness of the larger architecture of apartheid planning. This is evidenced by three brief examples. First, in Cape Town the Coloured beaches were positioned where human sewage was released into the sea. Although there had been complaints about this situation for over a decade no heed was paid to the needs of Coloured beachgoers who were informed pollution was negligible. During 1976, however, one newspaper headline stated that two seagulls were reported to have died in the sewage-polluted sea off the Coloured beach which triggered an outpouring of grief for the seagulls within segments of the local white media. One observer, however, noted: “It is a sad reflection....that if the Coloured people were not black humans but white seagulls, they too, would now have the full force of public sympathy, and perhaps safer, sewage free beaches”(Sunday Times, 2 May, 1976). A second example is from Port Elizabeth where it was decided that blacks could be allowed onto the white municipal beaches during life-saving contests. This was qualified that only black contestants would be allowed into the water with whites. Groups of black spectators could watch the life-saving contests but were barred from the toilets of these beaches as they

were 'whites-only' and facilities could not legally be shared. Accordingly, black spectators would need to travel 5km away to Kings Beach which had a toilet with segregated facilities (Sunday Times, 9 January, 1977). Because of this segregation of facilities the French surfing federation subsequently decided not to invite South Africa to the 8th World Championship in Biarritz because of beach apartheid (Sunday Times, 9 March, 1980). A third example around the absurdity of race-space segregation on South Africa's beaches relates to a ceremony held to mark the 500th anniversary of the Portuguese navigator Bartholomeu Diaz's landing on the Cape coast in February 1988 at Mossel Bay, a coastal resort close to Port Elizabeth (Sunday Times, 7 February, 1988). The re-enactment involved indigenous people made up as 'Khoisan' sitting by their fire on the beach while Diaz and his landing party dressed in 15th century clothing stepped ashore at Mossel Bay beach. However, in 1987 this beach was designated a 'whites only' space and local 'non-whites' were not allowed to participate or enter the beach area (Sunday Times, 17 January, 1988). Talks were held between leaders of the different racial groups and the city council. Although it was decided that racial restrictions on the beach be lifted for the day local Blacks and Coloureds boycotted in disgust stating they would not attend "unless Mossel Bay beach was permanently desegregated" (Cooper et al., 1989). As a result the role of local 'Khoisan' was necessarily acted by local whites using dark boot polish and curly wigs.

6. The Demise of Beach Apartheid

By the 1980s apartheid was under serious attack both within South Africa and from international sanctions and boycotts. The impacts of sanctions severely disrupted business as well as South Africa's international sporting connections. In an attempt to temper growing dissent within the country during 1983 the national government led by P.W. Botha created a Tricameral Parliament in which Coloureds and Indians were granted a token degree of political participation in the political system by 'enjoying' certain jurisdiction over matters relating to health and education. The major flaw of the Tricameral

system was obviously that the African (black) majority were excluded. Allen Hendrickse, the leader of the Labour Party representing the Coloured population in the Tricameral parliament, scandalized the apartheid government in protest by swimming off a Port Elizabeth whites-only beach in 1985 (Sunday Times, 26 May, 1985). In a reaction to the furore the extreme right wing Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) demanded a meeting with city officials to discuss the matter and decided themselves to monitor whites-only beaches (Cooper et al., 1987). One outcome was that Hendrickse had to submit a formal apology to President P.W. Botha.

Following the Port Elizabeth city council decision authorizing municipal officials to lay charges against people contravening beach race laws, the American CEO of General Motors (based in Uitenhage, which adjoins Port Elizabeth) announced the company would pay the fines of any non-white bathers prosecuted for swimming on 'whites only' beaches. This intervention by a United States company to challenge petty apartheid of course did no harm to its image both at home as well as among local blacks who constituted 60 percent of the workforce. The CEO of General Motors declared the law segregating beaches as 'abhorrent' and considered that the local council had the power to open the beaches albeit added that "collectively it seems the Council has neither the courage to do so nor the integrity to deal with the issue urgently and openly" (The Star, 2 February, 1986). The stance taken by General Motors drew much positive local sentiment and ultimately the Port Elizabeth council conceded by overturning its earlier decision that municipal officials charge offenders as the mayor stated it "was in bad taste and harmed race relations" (Cooper et al., 1987).

By the early 1980s the structures of the apartheid system increasingly were under strain and crumbling as a result of a combination of internal unrest and violence, international isolation and sanctions and a domestic public which signaled a mounting desire for change (Simon, 1989). A national survey conducted by the University of Natal revealed in 1982 that 25 percent of whites favoured complete integration of beaches, 25 percent were willing to accept limited and gradual integration with the rest still opposed to any form of integrated beach spaces (Cooper et al., 1984). One planning response, which began in Durban, was the pronouncement in 1982

of a new category of beach space, namely the ‘open’ or ‘multiracial’ beach. Figure 4 shows that this innovation was relatively minor, however, in terms of the broad geography of beach segregation in Durban. Nevertheless, the opening of the multi-racial Battery Beach II became a source of much local controversy and generated protests from a segment of the local white population (Møller, Schlemmer, 1982). Bat-

tery Beach opened in November 1982 and despite misgivings from some quarters, no ‘incidents’ were reported during the festive Xmas season (Cooper et al., 1984). Nevertheless, the momentum for opening of beaches to all races was interrupted in Durban as it was countered by resident petitions against a wider roll-out of the concept of multi-racial beaches (Møller, Schlemmer, 1982).

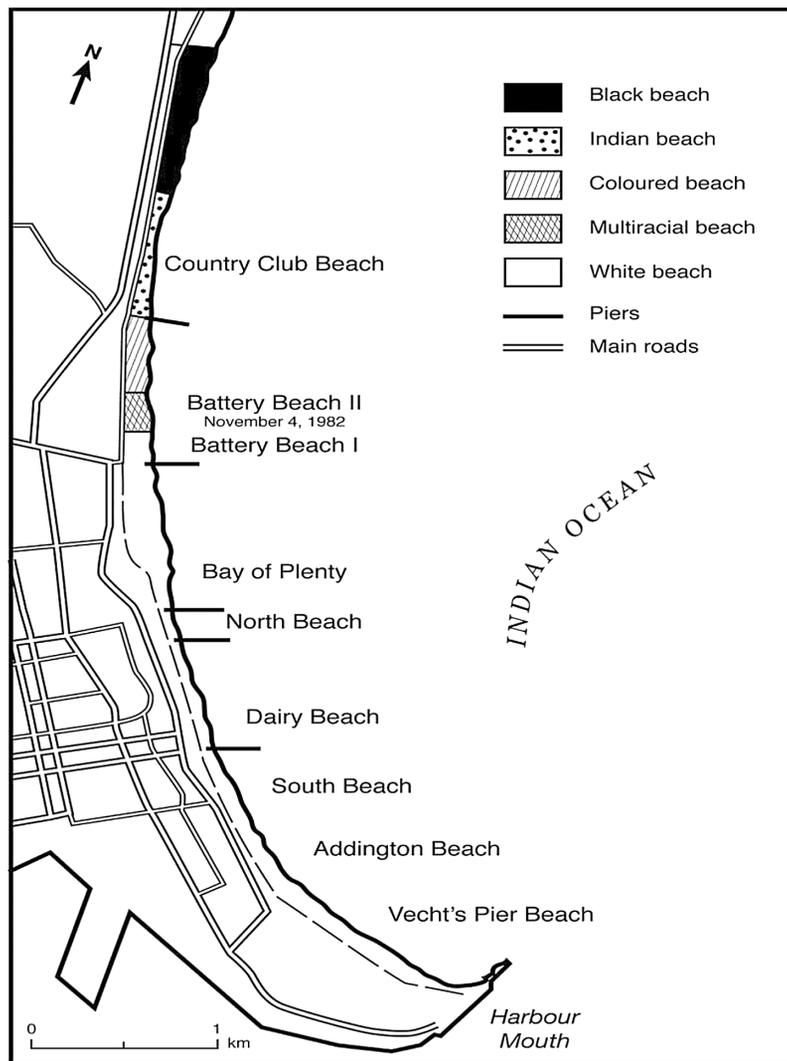


Fig. 4: Racially demarcated beaches in Durban, 1982

Source: Adapted after Møller, Schlemmer, 1982.

Across the major coastal centres of South Africa the demise of beach apartheid was geographically uneven and punctuated by several local episodes of resistance, petitions and referendum. Overall, the movement towards desegregation was contest-

ed during the early 1980s most vigorously among white stakeholders (especially) in Durban and (to some extent) Port Elizabeth. In Cape Town, the local resistance towards the opening of beaches was minimal. The attitude of the tourism indus-

try towards the opening of beaches was divided and ambiguous. A division was most evident between groups of large-scale and small accommodation providers. The large chain hotels welcomed the opening of the beaches more especially after the passage of the Liquor Amendment Bill 1986 which allowed them to provide accommodation, food and drink to whomever they wished. This Act was directly responsible for opening up a larger tourist market to the hotels and restaurants in particular in Durban which was a focal point of growing black domestic tourism in the 1980s (Ferrario, 1988; Rogerson, 2015b). By contrast the smaller accommodation providers, which mainly catered for a traditional white (mostly more conservative) clientele feared a substantial loss of trade if the city's beaches were opened up to black tourists (Natal Mercury, 6 January, 1984).

Two major referenda took place respectively in Durban 1983 and Port Elizabeth 1986. In November 1982 the Durban council voted in favour of one open beach and to open all of Durban's beachfront facilities to all races the following year. In response to a local public outcry a referendum was called. The strongest reaction had emanated from the city's right wing Civic Action League which accused the "mouth-frothing progressives" of being "responsible for the upsurge in crime and lawlessness in the city by encouraging Black people to ignore laws governing separate amenities" (Natal Witness, 23 February, 1983). It was contended that the council should spend its energies instead on providing 'separate but equal' facilities for all races rather than on desegregating existing amenities. The referendum was agreed and at a public meeting was attended by 1700 (mainly whites) people the proposal to open the beaches was rejected on grounds that the local tourist industry would collapse, white women would be 'ogled' by blacks and of fears that crime would escalate (The Star, 24 February, 1983).

Similarly, Port Elizabeth's referendum in 1986 was triggered by the council's decision to open all the city's beaches, a decision vehemently condemned by the right-wing Herstigte Nasionale Party which demanded a ratepayers referendum before any formal decision. The ruling National Party asked their local supporters to abstain and in a 16.6% poll, a clear reflection of public apathy to the beach apartheid issue, the No vote carried the day. Despite this neg-

ative vote the Port Elizabeth Council decided by 18 votes to seven to open the city's beaches, a decision denounced by right wingers as a 'rape of democracy' (The Star, June 27, 1986). In the more politically-liberal environs of Cape Town, public reaction to beach segregation took a different direction as local debates focused *not* so much about the opening of the beaches *per se* but against the exclusion which resulted from the local authorities fencing off the beaches and making people pay to use the so-termed "open beaches". At Fish Hoek in Cape Town 1300 signatures were collected to prevent the local town council fencing off the beach and making it a pay to use beach. Ultimately the strong local resistance resulted in the authorities' removal of the fence.

Across coastal areas of South Africa the advance of beach integration was marked by other forms of counter-resistance triggering a host of racist incidents. For example, in the seas off a small coastal resort, one young black teenager who was swimming was physically attacked and nearly drowned by a white Afrikaans holiday maker on the grounds that he "hated swimming with blacks" (Sunday Times, April 8, 1984). A further example was that of a Cape Malay lifesaver working at a white's only pool who was frequently threatened by holiday makers and told he would be "physically removed" if not replaced by a white employee. Objections were most strong towards the Coloured lifesaver "walking among white women in bikinis" (Sunday Times, July 1, 1984). Finally, in another case a white beach warden chased a Coloured South African professor off a Natal South Coast beach which was deemed as white beach space (Sunday Times, 10 December 1989).

Throughout the late 1980s as the broader anti-apartheid struggle intensified South Africa's beaches became sites of peaceful struggle and resistance. Common actions were protest swims at the remaining whites-only beaches by campaigners and organised multi-racial 'bathe-ins' on whites only beaches. A major role was played by the activities championed by the (multi-racial) Mass Democratic Movement which led a defiance campaign around the slogans 'Drown Beach Apartheid' (Sunday Times, 20 August, 1989) and 'All of God's beaches for all of God's people' (Durrheim, Dixon, 2001). This campaign included activities such as hosting protest pic-

nics on beaches reserved for whites (Sunday Times 8 October, 1989), organised movements to “flood” whites-only beaches and occupy the shore on certain target days (Sunday Times, 13 August, 1989), and the wading in of high profile (mainly) Coloured and Indian politicians into forbidden waters. Overall, it was evident that in contrast “to whites’ representations of the beaches as recreational and care-free spaces, for blacks they were a site of political struggle” (Durrheim, Dixon, 2001).

By the mid-1980s the demise of beach segregation was already taking place. Cape Town had opened its beaches by 1986 without waiting for any necessary governmental authority. In Port Elizabeth a more cautious approach and rate of progress was recorded. Here the city’s Coloured, Indian and Black beaches were opened to all races, albeit the white beaches remained segregated as the local council did not want to catalyse a public outcry and preferred to wait for the provincial administrator to make a final decision on desegregation. The most laggard of South Africa’s major coastal destinations regarding beach apartheid was Durban which by 1986 had only opened select beaches to all race groups. Indeed, it was mainly Durban and its surrounds where the most prominent protests were organized by the anti-apartheid Mass Democratic Movement (Cooper, McCaul, Hamilton, Delvare, Moonsamy, Mueller, 1990). By 1989 beach apartheid was in its death throes as increasing numbers of beaches had been opened to all race groups and the notorious whites-only signs were dismantled. It was reported in October 1989 that “the tide of change is steadily rising on the sands of South Africa’s holiday beaches” (Sunday Times 8 October, 1989). For most of the Cape Peninsula, Port Elizabeth and East London there was free access to all beaches, the last resistance being at the still closed beaches in Durban and surrounding areas as well as small resort towns of the Eastern Cape (Sunday Times, 8 October, 1989). In November 1989 the state president, F.W. de Klerk requested that local authorities desegregate all remaining beaches reserved for specific race groups with the outcome that by end 1989 all beaches were open (Cooper et al., 1990).

The final end of beach apartheid came with the repeal of the Separate Amenities Act in October 1990, a measure which was passed by 105 votes to

38 dissenters. The formal act was termed the Repeal of Discriminatory Legislation Regarding Public Amenities Appeal Act No 100 of 1990:

It is hereby notified that the State President has assented to the following Act which is hereby published for general information – No 100 of 1990: Discriminatory Legislation regarding Public Amenities Repeal Act, 1990.....This Act shall be called the Discriminatory Legislation regarding Public Amenities Repeal Act, 1990, and shall come into operation on 15 October 1990 (Republic of South Africa, 1990).

This legislation closed a remarkable chapter in the history of racist tourism planning in South Africa.

7. Conclusion: The Past in the Present

Among others Walton (2005) stresses tourism scholarship must “begin to pay serious attention to the relevance of historical research”. The value of evidence-based historical research and a grounded understanding of past events and processes is of feeding into and enhancing our interpretations of tourism’s present (Walton, 2009). These arguments are equally relevant and applicable to research undertaken by tourism geographers. This article recovers an important issue in the racist organisation of tourism space in South Africa. Specifically, it addresses the state’s application of measures of petty apartheid to institutionalize the separation of different race groups on the country’s beaches during the period 1953-1989. The making and unravelling of racial-spatial separation of South Africa’s beaches is primarily about the development of domestic tourism for the analysis is of a period when international tourism was of only limited significance for the national tourism economy. In many respects the implementation of racial segregation on South Africa’s beaches was one of the most controversial aspects of petty apartheid planning because of emotive debates which often were couched in terms of fears of ‘overcrowding’, anti-social behaviour and inadequate facilities (Simon, 1989).

The formal legislative demise of beach apartheid during 1990 did not result in radical chang-

es in the racial complexion of South Africa's beach spaces. The most dramatic changes occurred on Durban's main beaches as from 1990 the city became firmly established as the most popular destination for black domestic tourists. For much of South Africa, however, a high degree of unofficial racial segregation on South Africa's beaches has persisted to a large extent as a consequence of apartheid spatial planning. The massive exercise in social engineering carried out by successive Nationalist governments from the late 1940s to the late 1980s succeeded in creating exclusive enclaves for each of the racial groups which proved difficult to dismantle during the post-apartheid period. Now as a result of lack of access and transport cost considerations racial mixing on the country's beaches is evidenced only at peak domestic holiday periods (Prochazka, Kruger, 2001). Indeed, during January 2015 a newspaper article appearing a quarter of a century after beach apartheid was scrapped reflected that "South Africa's bathing spots are still mainly segregated". (Sunday Times, 5 January, 2015). This observation confirms that many 'traces of the past' remain in the tourism destination that is contemporary South Africa.

Note

Of necessity this paper has to use the language of apartheid in terms of the different racial classifications that were applied. A first level of distinction is between 'whites' and 'non-whites' with the latter term used as a collective for Africans (or blacks), Coloureds (mixed race) and Indians.

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