

## Restructuring the geography of domestic tourism in South Africa

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**Abstract.** Domestic tourism is relatively under-represented in tourism scholarship. This article attempts to analyse the role of domestic tourism in one of the ‘emerging world regions’ of tourism. In the case of South Africa domestic tourism represents a significant element of the country’s tourism economy. The objectives are to provide (i) an analysis of the growth, contemporary spatial patterns and restructuring of domestic tourism in South Africa; and (ii) an assessment of emerging policy debates issues taking place about domestic tourism. Using a detailed local level data base on tourism flows this paper provides fresh insight into the character and changing geography of domestic tourism in South Africa. The nature and dynamics of domestic tourism are shown to have shifted since democratic transition. The restructured geography of domestic tourism exhibits a number of continuities and changes with earlier times. Government is seeking to use domestic tourism as a basis for addressing spatial unevenness in patterns of tourism development. In terms of recent spatial change it is revealed the most significant developments are the strengthening of Ethekwini as the country’s leading domestic tourism destination and the relative demise of Cape Town as a hub for domestic tourists.

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of domestic tourism is relatively recent in origin as in pre-modern times discretionary travel lacked the formal borders that function as the definitions of modern states. Indeed, the notion of domestic tourism was instituted only in a modern world with formally constituted borders to distinguish 'local' from 'foreign' travellers (Cohen, Cohen, 2015a). Nevertheless, the term is a slippery concept encompassing an often seamless mix of diverse forms of discretionary travel some associated with everyday leisure activities and others more akin to work. In one of the earliest studies conducted on domestic tourism, Archer (1978: 127) stresses its positive impacts for bringing about "a spatial redistribution of spending power" as well as "an intermingling of people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds". Despite the fact that domestic tourism represents approximately 80 percent of world tourism flows, within tourism scholarship domestic tourists are given far less attention than their international counterparts (Scheyvens, 2002; Canavan, 2013).

Explanations for the dominant focus on international travellers relate to the greater availability of statistics on international tourism flows and "continuing recognition among government agencies of international travel as more significant from an economic perspective since at the national level inbound international tourism represents a form of income whereas domestic tourism represents the recycling of monies within the nation" (Kang et al., 2014: 3). Singh and Krakover (2015: 59) suggest another cause for neglect of domestic travel results from "the popular assumption that tourists invariably originate from distant lands and other cultures" with the consequence that domestic travellers sometimes are discounted as tourists. Over the past 25 years a number of tourism researchers have issued calls for more scholarly attention to be devoted to domestic tourism (Jafari, 1987; Pearce, 1996; Ghimire, 2001; Gladstone, 2005). As a response,

it is observed "studies on domestic tourism have gained slow momentum and interest in this topic has become apparent" (Singh, Krakover, 2013: 1). In particular, several researchers have interrogated domestic tourism and its contributions to tourism development in advanced countries (Athanasopoulos et al., 2009; Canavan, 2013; Singh, Krakover, 2013, 2015; Bel et al., 2015).

Among a range of development issues highlighted in literature about domestic tourism are *inter alia*, the growth and differential spatial patterns of domestic tourism activities, the local impacts of domestic tourism for destinations, its importance for sustainable regional development (particularly in remote rural areas), the preferences of domestic travellers for medium quality or lower-priced accommodation as compared to high quality accommodation preferences of international tourists, and the critical need for coherent tourism policy development around domestic tourism (Jafari, 1986; Barkin, 2001; Rao, Suresh, 2001; Seckelmann, 2002; Singh, 2004; Cortes-Jiminez, 2008; Kang et al., 2014; Bel et al., 2015). A key set of findings from international research relate to the significant and positive impacts of domestic tourism for local and regional economic growth/development and corresponding role for public policy in making domestic tourism an agent for spatial change (Barkin, 2001; Ghimire, 2001; Seckelmann, 2002; Cortes-Jiminez, 2008; Haddad et al., 2013; Kang et al., 2014; Bel et al., 2015).

Within tourism scholarship on the global South, however, it remains that "few tourism academics have 'braved' an initiative into this arena" (Singh, 2009: 2). Tourism research about the developing world mainly "deals with the international formal sector of five star hotels, upscale restaurants, and similar tourist facilities demanded by pleasure and business travelers from the First World" (Gladstone, 2005: 130). Only a handful of investigations exist particularly around spatial issues about domestic tourism. In Brazil domestic tourist flows are shown to contribute to reducing regional inequal-

ities as a channel for interregional transfers of income (Haddad et al., 2013). For China Goh et al. (2013) disclose that domestic tourism is reducing geographical unevenness in the national tourism space economy. Indeed, because of the re-distributional effects of domestic tourism it attracted the attention of policymakers. Among several examples, national governments in both China and South Korea have isolated the revitalization and expansion of domestic tourism as a core tourism policy issue (Ghimire, 2001; Kang et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2014). In China the boosting of domestic tourism included the introduction of the five day week in 1995 and of the 11 day long holiday week in 1999 which “effectively enabled the Chinese to take a three week break during the ‘Golden Week’ by combining it with other holidays” (UNWTO, 2012: 6). Domestic tourism flows have been shown also as important influences for inducing so-termed “pleasure periphery development in emerging economies”; the case of Brazil recently has been documented (Pegas et al., 2015).

In the Asian context it is considered that domestic tourism “often falls outside the dominant assumptions of what actually constitutes ‘tourism’ in an academic sense, which makes it effectively invisible in and to the relevant literatures” (Walton, 2009a: 235). Until recently, for example, amidst a growing volume of tourism scholarship on Asia the domestic tourism sector was “left unaddressed” (Ihalanayake, 2009: 264). Likewise, an early review of African tourism scholarship by Hyma et al. (1980) identified the neglect of domestic tourism. It argued that as compared to international tourism “little attention has been devoted to domestic tourism” in African research (Hyma et al., 1980: 540). Almost 30 years later a similar observation could be offered by Manwa and Mereki (2008: 35) that whilst much emphasis has been placed on promoting international tourism in Africa “very little is known about domestic tourists, their motivation, behaviour and impacts”. Reviews of scholarship disclose that across Africa urban scholars and tourism geographers have engaged with domestic tourism only at a minimum level (Sindiga, 1996; Awaritefe, 2004; Mazimhaka, 2007; Rogerson, Rogerson, 2011; Rogerson, Visser, 2011, 2014).

In South Africa the tourism agenda mostly centres on research investigations relating to interna-

tional or regional tourists to the country (Visser, Hoogendoorn, 2011; Hoogendoorn, Rogerson, 2015). During the early 2000s Koch and Massyn (2001: 143) observed that “relatively little is known about the country’s domestic tourism sector”. Most existing investigations around domestic tourism in South Africa concentrate upon particular facets such as visiting friends and relatives (VFR) travel, hotel accommodation development for domestic tourists or niche forms of tourism dominated by domestic travellers such as birdwatching, second homes tourism, time-share leisure, fishing or beer tourism (Hoogendoorn, 2011, 2014; Rogerson, 2011a, b, 2013a, b, c; Pandey, Rogerson, 2013, 2014; Rogerson et al., 2013; Hoogendoorn, Rogerson, 2014; Rogerson, Rogerson, 2014a; Rogerson, Collins, 2015). So far only a handful of studies address questions around the emerging patterns, geographies and impacts of domestic tourism in South Africa (Rule et al., 2004; Rogerson, Lisa, 2005; Rogerson, 2014a). It is against this backdrop of the strengthening policy importance of domestic tourism and of its relative under-representation in contemporary tourism scholarship that this study is positioned. The objectives are to provide (i) an analysis of the growth, contemporary spatial patterns and restructuring of domestic tourism in South Africa; and (ii) a critical assessment of emerging policy issues taking place about domestic tourism. Using a detailed local level data base on tourism flows this paper aims to provide fresh insight into the character and changing geography of domestic tourism in South Africa as well as unfolding policy debates around this critical dimension of the country’s tourism economy. In the next section a review of relevant scholarship and debates concerning domestic tourism in ‘emerging world tourism regions’ is undertaken in order to give appropriate context for analysis of the South African material.

## 2. Domestic tourism in the global South

In a significant observation Scheyvens (2007) draws attention to the need for expanded consideration of issues relating to domestic tourists in tourism scholarship on the developing world. Likewise, Taine (2014: 46) points out “domestic tourism particu-

larly in developing countries has had relatively little attention". For Asia and the Pacific the UNWTO (2012: 1) bemoans its neglect "both as an area of development and as a subject of research". For Walton (2009b: 4) throughout "much of Asia, Africa and the Pacific, at least, domestic tourism has been the poor relation in all kinds of tourism studies". Overall, despite its size and importance for debates about tourism development it is maintained "academic journals receive relatively few submissions based on research on domestic tourism in developing countries" (Scheyvens, 2007: 308).

Cohen and Cohen's (2015b: 68) modified mobilities approach seeks "to create a platform for the comparison of Western tourism with that from the emerging regions" It is argued this represents a framework that projects "the richness and variety of tourism research on and from the emerging world" (Chen, Chang, 2015: 60). Across different societies of the global South domestic tourism has a multiplicity of origins with pilgrimages and visiting friends and relatives often the most common early manifestations (Cohen, Cohen, 2015a). The expansion of domestic tourism across much of the global South is associated most recently with improvements in transport technologies, urbanisation and the growth of discretionary income among new middle classes (Ghimire, 2001). Existing literature points to several key underpinnings for the rise of domestic tourism in the global South with comparisons drawn with the Northern experience in terms of the strong desire to travel among the urban middle classes, growing economic health of many nations, improvements in transport which expanded mobilities, and of enhanced workers' benefits accompanied by an increase of tourist facilities and marketing (Ghimire, 2000; Gladstone, 2005).

Distinctions can be drawn between formal and informal sectors of domestic tourism (Gladstone, 2005; Rogerson, Letsie, 2013). Arguably, Cohen and Cohen (2015a) maintain that informal domestic tourism is a modification of pre-modern domestic travel and represents the principal segment of domestic tourism across much of the global South, albeit often it is excluded from official statistics. Informal sector domestic travel embraces mainly the lower and lower-middle income strata of society and much of it consists of VFR travel which greatly accelerated with rural-urban migration flows and

the accompanying disruption of local family and social networks (Pearce, Moscardo, 2006; Rogerson, Hoogendoorn, 2014). Across the global South the growth of new urban middle classes facilitated by greater automobility and available disposable incomes has been the engine for a take-off of more formal manifestations of domestic tourism. With rising household incomes, the freeing-up of government regulations concerning internal population movements, the expansion of an urban and industrial workforce and the introduction of new labour rights legislation "there has been a significant growth in the numbers of middle-income earners in Third World countries, many of whom are keen to pursue more leisure opportunities" (Scheyvens, 2007: 308). As shown in recent investigations, the motivations for domestic travel include pilgrimages, visiting friends and relatives, health, leisure travel, and business tourism (Ghimire, 2001; Chatterjee et al., 2008; Cochrane, 2009; Mariki et al., 2011; Madhavan, Rastogi, 2013; Kasim et al., 2013; Rogerson, Letsie, 2013; Cohen, Cohen, 2015a, b; Rogerson, 2015a, b).

Several studies demonstrate the promotion of domestic tourism can have significant economic, socio-cultural and economic impacts and contribute to objectives of both national and local economic development (Haddad et al., 2013; Kang et al., 2014). Mutinda and Mayaka (2012: 1593) assert domestic tourism "has the potential to make several economic and socio-cultural contributions to a country, key among them being national integration and cohesion and creation of opportunities through various economic linkages at destinations". Additional positive impacts of domestic tourism include the geographical spread of tourism benefits (Rogerson, Lisa, 2005) and non-economic benefits such as support for nation-building and integration (Scheyvens, 2007). Many researchers point out the potential economic contribution of domestic tourism can be significant even in circumstances when domestic tourists do not have high buying power (Sindiga, 1996; Scheyvens, 2002; Walton, 2009b). Alipouret et al. (2013) highlight the untapped potential of sustainable domestic tourism in Iran. Ghimire (2001: 5) contends domestic tourism can function as an economic dynamo for tourism development in many countries. In particular, it can offer 'self-reliance' because it can protect the

tourism industry from international instability (recession, terrorism) as well as being a stabilizing element in a tourism economy as it protects the incomes and employment of tourism product providers in so-termed 'off-season' (Taine, 2014). Christie et al. (2013: 59) observe in Africa "growth in GDP per capita has led to the emergence of a new middle class of African consumers who have discretionary income to travel". Arguably, they forward that "under the right conditions, the tourism sector can tap this wealth" (Christie et. al., 2013: 59).

Overall, it is contended from a development perspective, tourism scholars of the global South "should be very interested in domestic tourism because it makes up the vast majority of tourism flows and thus many claims for tourism's ability to contribute to poverty alleviation must apply to domestic tourism" (Scheyvens, 2007: 308). In particular it is viewed domestic tourism can be a vital catalyst for local economic development as domestic tourists "typically purchase more locally produced goods and services than other categories of tourists, thus supporting small-scale enterprises and the informal sector" (Scheyvens, 2007: 312). Notwithstanding the potential advantages of domestic tourism, across the global South in the majority of tourism policies it is overlooked as national governments preference the more glamorous promotion of international tourism (Rogerson, Letsie, 2013). Only recently has the potential economic significance of domestic tourism garnered the attention of some national governments with the increasing ability of more affluent travellers to patronise more upmarket tourist facilities that initially were the exclusive preserve of international tourists. This has been given further impetus by the long weekend excursion linked to public holidays, a borrowed concept from advanced countries which has boosted the rhythm of domestic travel (Cohen, Cohen, 2015a). As is the case with parts of Western Europe, such as Spain (Oviedo-Garcia et al., 2014), extended weekend breaks are an important period for domestic travel mobilities across several parts of the global South. Often there occurs an expansion of a local pleasure periphery around cities or an extended spatial recreation belt to furnish an increasingly diverse range of product offerings designed to tempt the domestic traveller away from sometimes congested and polluted urban environs (Wu, Cai, 2006).

One reason for the bias against domestic tourism is the preoccupation of many governments in the global South to shift tourism 'up scale' in order to maximize foreign exchange earnings for destination development (Christie et al., 2013). Scheyvens (2007: 308) argues "there is an insidious perception that domestic tourism is the 'poor cousin' of the more glamorous international tourism market, and that domestic tourism cannot bring the same range of development benefits to a country". This said, countries such as Brazil, India, Indonesia and South Korea encourage domestic tourism as a vehicle for national integration and nation building seeking to channel local tourists to destinations of collective symbolic significance (Ghimire, 2001; UNWTO, 2012; Kang et al., 2014). A rise of policy interest about domestic tourism is noted also in several African countries. In Rwanda Mazimhaka (2007) identifies an important potential role for domestic tourism in broadening and diversifying the base of the national tourism economy. In Namibia Ndlovu et al. (2011) stress the need for a national strategy for domestic tourism because of its great potential. Likewise, in Botswana Mawa and Mmereki (2008) acknowledge considerable opportunities for developing domestic tourism but with the caution that it is constrained by the current emphasis in national tourism policy of pursuing "low volume high cost" forms of tourism. Lastly, with the collapse of international tourism in Zimbabwe following the Mugabe land seizures, that country's tourism industry necessarily has relied largely on domestic tourism in a similar fashion to that of apartheid South Africa during the period of economic sanctions on international tourism.

### **3. Restructuring domestic tourism in South Africa**

#### **3.1. The emergence of domestic tourism**

Historically, the emergence of domestic tourism in South Africa was dominated by the country's minority white population (Koch, Massyn, 2001). During the first half of the twentieth century a network of facilities in terms of infrastructure and accommodation facilities was established and centred particularly upon encouraging travel from the country's

inland cities, such as Johannesburg and Pretoria, to the seaside coastal resorts around Durban, East London and the Garden Route from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town (Rogerson, Lisa, 2005; Rogerson, 2011). This domestic tourism-induced pleasure periphery represents one of the earliest such phenomenon in emerging economies (cf. Pegas et al., 2015). With improved automobilities and the opening of Kruger National Park in 1926 the range of domestic tourism destinations widened to include nature tourism areas.

Under apartheid the segment of domestic leisure travel continued to strengthen and represented almost exclusively by South Africa's white population which enjoyed the highest incomes, mobilities as well as access to leisure amenities (Rogerson, Lisa, 2005). This formal domestic tourism economy based upon the white market expanded to the point that by the 1980s South Africa exhibited one of the strongest and most well-developed domestic tourism economies outside of the developed world (Koch, Massyn, 2001; Rogerson, Lisa, 2005; Pandey, Rogerson, 2013). Grundlingh (2006) points out the most distinctive characteristic of domestic tourism, beyond the enduring popularity of Kruger National Park, was national government's initiatives to encourage white domestic tourism into the Black Homelands where a series of casino resorts were constructed during the 1970s and early 1980s. The casino resorts sought to give economic legitimacy to the sham independence of Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei and Venda (Rogerson, 2003). The resorts, particularly those close to major urban centres, were popular with overnight visitors mostly from 'white' South Africa. Accordingly, in this way South African "domestic tourism became inextricably bound up in the politics of apartheid" (Grundlingh, 2006: 117-118).

During the period 1948-1970 virtually no black leisure market existed as apartheid legislation prohibited and made unwelcome the use of tourism facilities by South Africa's black population (Rogerson, 2014). By the 1980s, however, the first signs of changes in the racial complexion of formal domestic tourism began to appear (Rogerson, Lisa, 2005). The dismantling of racially determined restrictions on access to tourist amenities and attractions combined with growing prosperity among a small section of the black population precipitated a no-

ticeable burst of black domestic tourism that began in the 1980s and accelerated into the 1990s (Ferrario, 1988; Rogerson, Lisa, 2005). The most dramatic changes occurred in the traditional beach holiday areas of Durban and the south coast of Natal where by 1985 special rates were available to attract black holiday groups which was "a phenomenon unthinkable only 2 or 3 years earlier" (Ferrario, 1986: 347).

But, as argued elsewhere, another aspect of black domestic tourism was expanding in the form of a little recognized or 'hidden' informal sector of travel. This informal economy of domestic tourism was represented by movements out from the country's urban areas to rural 'second homes' which were situated in the areas created as labour reservoirs under South Africa's political economy of cheap labour. Traditionally, these rural areas were source regions of migrant labour for the cities of South Africa and functioned as the supply areas for 'cheap labour' the anchor for a coercive labour regime which separated geographically the spaces of labour force maintenance and renewal (Wolpe, 1972). The emergence and large-scale growth of an informal sector VFR return travel back to the so-called rural Homelands represents the other side of the coin in terms of the making of South Africa's cheap labour economy based on migratory labour (Rogerson, 2014, 2015b, c). The flow, however, was not just unidirectional from urban to rural as streams of VFR movements occurred from rural areas into the cities with increasing visits from friends and relatives (Rogerson, Hoogendoorn, 2014).

The first official national surveys of domestic tourism were undertaken in the 1990s. Although these surveys were based on small sample populations they served to demonstrate to national government both the growth of domestic travel in general as well as to signal changes in its composition. Arguably, as observed by Koch and Massyn (2001: 144), the shifting racial complexion of domestic tourism in South Africa "was attributable to the ending of apartheid and an increase in prosperity among 'previously disadvantaged' social groups" in particular the country's black population. Of particular value was that the early national surveys offered estimates of the domestic market in terms of differentiating five purposes of travel, namely visits to friends and relatives (VFR), leisure or holiday travel, business travel, religious travel and travel

for health or medical reasons. The profile that was sketched suggested that whilst almost two-thirds of domestic travel was accounted for by VFR travel, this made up only 37.2 percent of expenditure. By contrast, travel for leisure purposes, which represented only 16 percent trips, accounted for 44 percent of expenditure and business travel with only 6 percent of trips accounted for 12.8 percent of expenditure. Religious travel and travel for medical purposes accounted for the smallest shares of expenditure, albeit religious travel represented almost 10 percent of all national domestic trips (Rule et al., 2004; Rogerson, Lisa, 2005). The largest geographical flows of domestic leisure travel were identified as from the inland metropolitan areas of Gauteng to the coastal destinations of KwaZulu-Natal and to the game reserves of Mpumalanga province, most notably Kruger National Park. Essentially these patterns reflect the historical establishment of the country's domestic tourism pleasure periphery. As is typically the case of domestic tourism, seasonality issues were evident with the peaks of travel in the months of April and December corresponding to school holiday periods around Easter and Xmas.

### 3.2. Growth and changing geographies

The contemporary state and geography of domestic tourism can be analysed through using the comprehensive local level data base constructed by Global Insight which provides details for the period 2001 to 2012 of the tourism performance of all local authorities in South Africa in respect of *inter alia*, the number of tourism trips as differentiated by purpose of trip; number of trips and bednights by origin of tourist (domestic or international); and estimated tourism spend. This data base builds upon a range of sources including South African Tourism (SAT) official tourism data and other local sources in order to generate estimates of trips, bednights and spend for all local government areas in South Africa. In terms of interpreting the trends in domestic tourism in South Africa this data provides the most accurate profile of the trajectory and shifting geography of domestic tourism for the country. By supplementing this information from other data from South African Tourism a picture of the changing landscape of domestic tourism can be drawn

**Table 1.** Profile of Domestic Tourism in South Africa 2001-2012

	Total domestic trips	Total domestic bednights	% total trips	% total bednights
2001	19 340 347	121 819 543	83.6	77.3
2006	27 723 409	144 560 154	83.4	76.3
2010	29 871 776	152 642 222	79.9	70.7
2012	25 899 431	144 418 321	75.0	66.7

Source: Author calculations from Global Insight data

Table 1 provides a profile of domestic tourism in South Africa as a whole for the period 2001-2012. Three points must be highlighted. First, that the total numbers of domestic tourism trips shows a healthy rate of expansion from 19.3 million in 2001 to reach a peak of 29.8 million in 2010, the year that South Africa hosted the FIFA Soccer World Cup. Since 2010, however, the global financial crisis has impacted upon the South African economy which witnessed marked economic slowdown as the growth rate of gross domestic product reached its lowest levels in 15 years. This poor economic performance underpins the substantial downturn in the numbers of domestic tourist trips between 2010 and 2012 which fell by nearly 4 million or 13.4 percent.

Arguably, therefore, to a large extent, the “growth of domestic tourism is a function of economic growth in the country” (Henama, Sifolo, 2015: 119).

Second, these trends in total trips are paralleled by evidence for total bednights. Once again a picture is disclosed of a consistent rise in domestic tourist bednights for the period 2001-2010 and a fall in bednights between 2010 and 2012 such that the total bednights in 2012 are below that recorded for 2006. Three, it is evident domestic tourism trips account for the largest share of total tourism trips and total recorded bednights. Nevertheless, despite the absolute growth in domestic tourism in the period 2001-2010 the share of total trips and bednights has been progressively falling. This has ac-

companied a corresponding increase in the relative importance of international tourism to South Africa’s tourism economy. With the absolute reduction of domestic travel in the period 2010-2012, by 2012 domestic travel accounted for 75 percent of total trips and two-thirds of bednights, a much reduced share from the situation recorded a decade earlier (Table 1). Financial constraints are cited regularly as the major barrier to travel by domestic tourists (Statistics South Africa, 2012: 37). Henama and Sifolo (2015: 112) aver that “the development of the domestic tourism market is challenged by the dominant unemployment, poverty and inequality that are affecting the South African economy”.

Information on recent purpose of travel can be gleaned both from South African Tourism and from the official Domestic Tourism Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2012; South African Tourism, 2014). This confirms that the largest element in domestic tourism, as indicated by overnight trips, continues for purposes of visiting friends and relatives. According to SAT data of total domestic trips undertaken in 2012, VFR travel accounted for 72.3 percent, leisure travel 11.6 percent, religious travel 7.7 percent, busi-

ness travel 6.7 percent and travel for medical purposes 0.5 percent. In terms of the volume of VFR travel this is estimated to account for 82 percent of domestic bednights most of which occurs outside of the formal accommodation sector. In South Africa the overwhelming majority of VFR tourism is in unpaid accommodation. Further, the component of religious travel, which is observed as larger in volume than domestic business travel, is again mostly taking place in unpaid forms of accommodation (University of Venda, 2014). For the low income market segments in South Africa payment for accommodation “remains relatively uncommon” (Mthente Research and Consulting Services, 2013: 58). For such groups the availability of friends and family is a key determinant of choice of domestic destination and length of stay; the most important activities are “socialising and family time, followed by shopping and opportunities to enjoy night life” (Mthente Research and Consulting Services, 2013: 14). What this means is that the 18 percent share of total domestic bednights that is in paid accommodation, such as hotels, guest lodges or bed and breakfasts, almost exclusively is domestic leisure and business travellers.

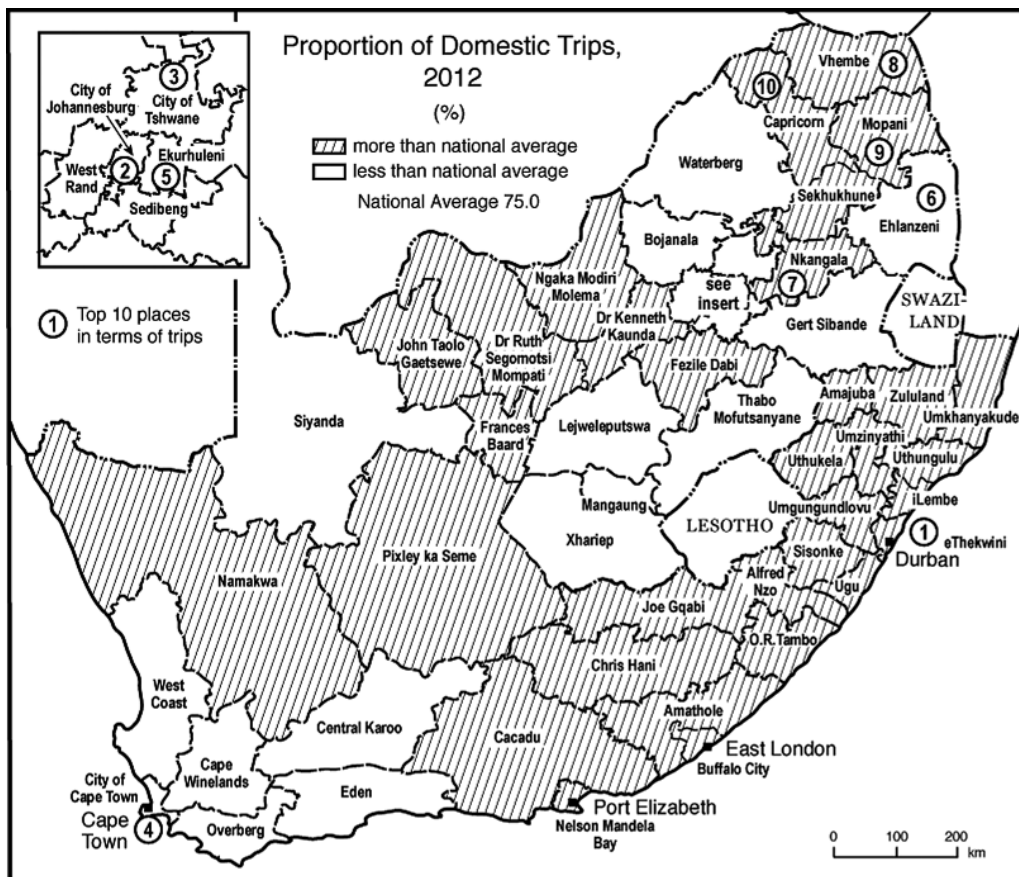


Fig 1. Destination of domestic tourism trips in South Africa 2001

Source: Based on Global Insight data



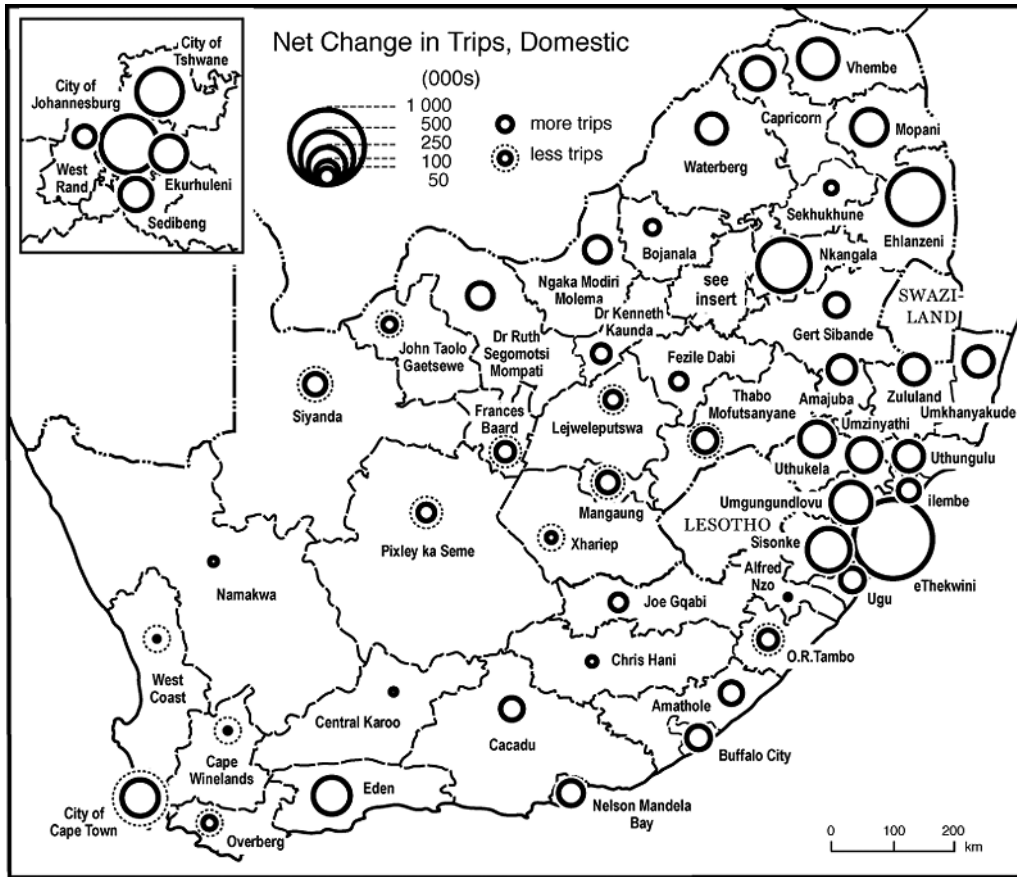


Fig. 2. Destination of domestic tourism trips in South Africa 2012

Source: Based on Global Insight data

Analysis of the Global Insight data which is provided on a municipal basis allows the construction of the changing patterns of domestic tourism flows. These are mapped on Figures 1 and 2 which show respectively the destinations for domestic travel as indexed by total domestic trips in 2001 (Fig. 1) and in 2012 (Fig. 2). In examining the geographical patterns of domestic tourism several points can be noted. First, the spatial distribution of domestic tourism is markedly different to that observed for the distribution of international tourists in the country. The patterns of (long haul) international leisure travellers exhibit concentrations at the tourist ‘hotspots’ of Cape Town, the Winelands, the gateway of Johannesburg, and areas surrounding South Africa’s major nature tourism attractions mainly situated in the eastern part of the country (Cornelissen, 2005). By contrast, the broad geography of domestic travel is much more evenly spread across the country. Second, the overall landscape of domestic tourist

trips is heavily weighted by the significance of VFR tourism (Rogerson, 2015b, 2015c). This explains the large volume of domestic trips which can be observed to ‘non-traditional’ tourism destinations, many of them rural areas situated in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. Three, as indexed by total numbers of trips the most important domestic tourism destinations are South Africa’s major cities. The five leading domestic destinations in both 2001 and 2012 are all metropolitan areas, namely the inland centres of Ekurhuleni, Tshwane (Pretoria) and Johannesburg and the two coastal centres of eThekweni (Durban) and Cape Town. Indeed, taking in the other three metropolitan areas of Buffalo City (East London), Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth) and Mangaung (Bloemfontein), South Africa’s eight metropolitan areas were the destination for 7.2 million domestic trips in 2001, rising to 10.4 million by 2010 but with a decline to 9.4 million by 2012 (Rogerson, Rogerson, 2014b).

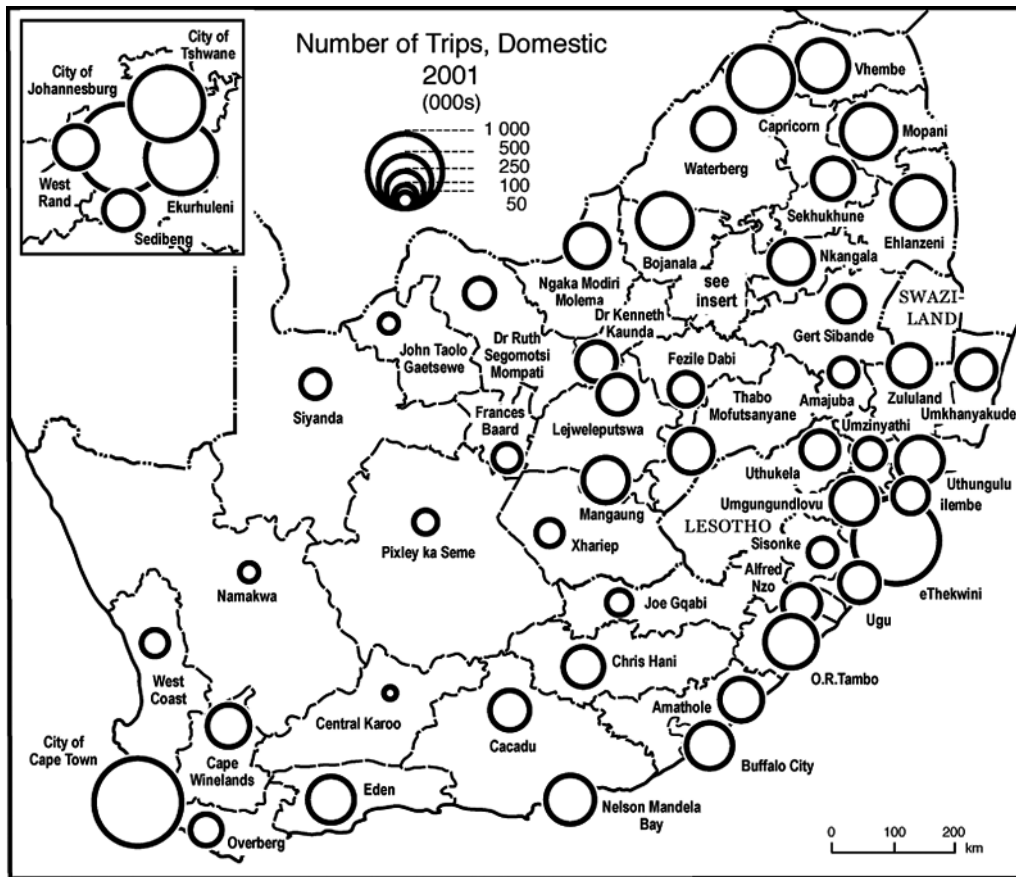


Fig. 3. Net change in total domestic trips 2001–2012

Source: Based on Global Insight data

Figure 3 provides a perspective on the changes occurring in patterns of domestic tourism between 2001 and 2012. Three points must be stressed. First, is that there is evident an uneven pattern of change in domestic tourism flows across different destinations. The largest absolute growth of domestic tourism trips is recorded in the two metropolitan areas of eThekweni (Durban) and Johannesburg. Indeed, the growth in eThekweni between 2001 and 2012 resulted in it surpassing Johannesburg as the leading national destination for domestic travel by 2012. This rise can be explained in terms of the area's attractiveness as a leisure destination but equally because eThekweni is South Africa's leading destination for VFR travel (Rogerson, 2015c). The municipality of eThekweni is an extended metropolitan area containing large tracts of peri-urban and rural spaces which were incorporated in 2000 and include substantial numbers of translocal communities that engage in circulatory migration flows linked to VFR travel. Second, significant growth in domestic tour-

ism trips is evidenced in several other destinations, notably Tshwane (Pretoria), the leisure destination of Eden district as well as several mainly rural municipalities of Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces such as Ehlanzeni, Vhembe and Nkangala all of which are migrant source areas.

Three, net declines in numbers of domestic tourism trips are evidenced in other parts of the country. The declining municipalities for domestic tourism are all situated in the Western Cape, Northern Cape or Free State provinces. Most striking are the declines recorded in the two metropolitan destinations of Cape Town and Mangaung (Bloemfontein) (Rogerson, Rogerson, 2014b). The largest decline is shown in Cape Town. Explanations for Cape Town's demise as a domestic tourism destination are related in part to its weak performance for VFR travel, the core component of domestic tourism. As Henama and Sifolo (2015) observe another reason is the rise of Cape Town as an iconic international tourism destination which has resulted in

the ‘displacement’ of domestic tourists because of the high prices charged and the reorientation of the

city’s leisure offerings towards the market of long haul international travellers.

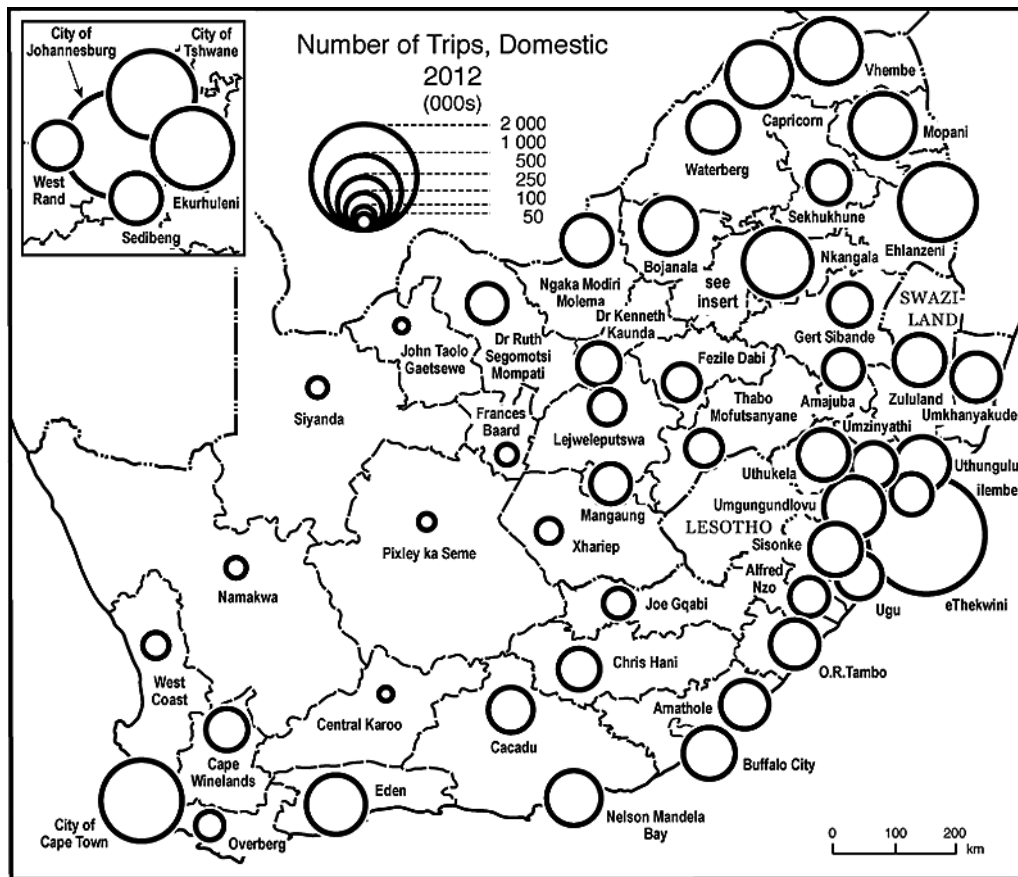


Fig. 4. Share of domestic trips in total trips 2012

Source: Based on Global Insight data

Finally, it is useful to examine the relative share of domestic trips as a proportion of total tourism trips for each municipality. This gives a basis for identifying which municipalities in South Africa are most dependent upon domestic tourism. This analysis was conducted for 2012 and compared to the national pattern that 75 percent of all tourism trips are accounted for by domestic travellers (Table 1). Figure 4 shows the municipalities which are over-represented and under-represented by domestic travel. In terms of over-representation, it is revealed domestic tourism is the major component of the local tourism economy of a large swathe of municipalities across the country. Among these municipalities are three major metropolitan areas of eThekweni, Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth) and Buffalo City (East London) as well as a considerable number of mainly rural municipalities in the former Home-

lands. This finding is highly relevant for tourism planning in South Africa as part of both local and regional economic development programmes (Rogerson, 2014, 2015d). Areas of under-representation are indicative of municipalities where domestic tourism, albeit potentially significant, is in relative terms not the most significant component of local tourism economies. The list of such destinations includes much of the Western Cape, especially Cape Town and the Winelands, and the inland centres of Johannesburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni.

### 3.3. Policy issues: national and local development

The unfolding domestic tourism economy is of policy concern both to national and sub-national lev-

els of government in South Africa. As has been observed the “sustainability of the tourism industry in South Africa depends on a robustness of the domestic tourism market” (Henama, Sifolo, 2015: 119). In strategic planning undertaken by the Department of Tourism it is emphasized consistently domestic tourism “is high on the agenda” (Department of Tourism, 2013: 6). Among the goals of South Africa’s National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) issued in 2011 is to grow not only the contribution of tourism to GDP in South Africa but specifically the contribution of domestic tourism.

Within the NTSS domestic tourism is viewed as a high priority for strategic intervention to achieve a 2020 target of facilitating 5 million more domestic holiday trips than in 2009. During 2012 the Department of Tourism released its national domestic tourism growth strategy. The strategy was compiled against a background context of research that showed a post-2010 decline in the numbers of domestic trips. In 2011 the proportion of the adult population that had taken a domestic trip was recorded as 44 percent (Department of Tourism, 2012). Research by South African Tourism suggested the biggest inhibiting factor to domestic tourism is affordability in terms of costs and low incomes (Department of Tourism, 2011: 22), the latter impacted by South Africa’s poor economic performance since the 2008-9 financial crisis. Another barrier to domestic tourism is, however, ‘lack of interest’ in travel and the belief that tourism is “only for white people” (Mthente Research and Consulting Services, 2013: 89). Other constraints to travel are the escalating costs of petrol and poor quality of public transportation in South Africa. Among vital policy concerns raised were “limited leveraging” of VFR tourism, that there exists only “limited volume of domestic business tourism,” and a “limited tourism culture among South Africans” (Department of Tourism, 2012: 17).

South Africa’s domestic tourism strategy seeks to reverse the downturn in domestic travel and to increase total number of trips to 40 million by 2015 and 54 million by 2020, and numbers of holiday trips from 4 million in 2009 to 6 million by 2015 and 9 million by 2020. Overall, the vision is to “grow domestic tourism for a sustainable tourism economy” and specifically to increase expenditure, volume, address seasonality, and ensure geograph-

ical spread (Department of Tourism, 2012). In this respect action points for intervention are to “improve both upper and middle-class residents’ perceptions of local holiday making; to increase the number of first-time domestic holiday travellers from the black market, and to provide more affordable and accessible tourism experiences for the domestic market” (Department of Tourism, 2011: 8). The analysis acknowledges the success of the Sho’t Left marketing campaign but considers that its focus was too narrow and focused on a specific segment, namely ‘the young and upcoming’ (Rogerson, Lisa, 2005). A broadening of this advertising campaign was needed to focus on encouraging all South Africans to enjoy the benefits and experiences of a world class leisure destination which was “on their doorstep” (Department of Tourism, 2012: 31). The marketing to encourage more domestic travel was built around the branding of “Whatever you are looking for, it is here”. Key interventions include infrastructure investment, the introduction of new tourism products particularly around heritage and culture, differentiated marketing, and implementation of tourism awareness education programmes and campaigns.

The prioritisation of domestic tourism in tourism planning South Africa has been driven mainly by economic considerations. Nevertheless, there is an emerging sub-strand in domestic tourism policy which links to providing expanded facilities for working class leisure and more recently for social tourism. During the early 2000s the country’s major trade union movement put forward proposals to purchase and convert the state-run Aventura resorts into working class recreation and leisure destinations (Koch, Massyn, 2001). This scheme was not realised, however. Recently, national government has indicated proposals for partnerships with the private sector for developing low-cost holiday resorts and facilities for ‘ordinary South Africans to enjoy affordable holidays (Department of Tourism, 2013). The proposals surround the potential conversion of many under-utilised or unused state and municipal properties that might be converted into tourism facilities (Mthente Research and Consulting Services, 2013: 51). The strategy is to facilitate social tourism in terms of “Holidays for All” by initiating a budget tourism chain with “a public-private partnership to develop tourism facilities

and opportunities specifically for “black communities” and ‘lower income families’” The proposals are likened to the Butlin’s resorts in the United Kingdom some of which involved conversion of old army buildings resorts into simple budget style resorts or holiday camps for working class holiday-makers (Ensor, 2013). Other models described as informing unfolding South African planning for social tourism are the leisure facilities established through “former socialist and Swedish trade union movements” (Mthente Research and Consulting Services, 2013: 52). Suggested facilities at these resorts include self-contained family and dormitory style accommodation, kitchens/canteens, sports/recreation facilities, audio-visual resource centres, teaching/learning spaces and even budget-style conference facilities (Mthente Research and Consulting Services, 2013: 52). In addition the Department of Tourism signals its support for social tourism activities which relate to initiatives which make tourism “accessible and affordable to various disadvantaged groups that would not otherwise be able to experience” (Mthente Research and Consulting Services, 2013: 51). One example by the Department is a memorandum of Agreement with Gogo on Tour, an organisation that provides travelling experiences to poor senior citizens at no cost. In this particular example the service provider (Gogo on Tour) is used by the Department of Tourism as an ambassador for social tourism to support domestic travel for groups of grandmothers (Anon, 2014a, 2014b).

Finally, in terms of policy towards domestic tourism, the role of local governments cannot be overlooked. The National Tourism Sector Strategy emphasizes the central role of local government as a partner or stakeholder in expanding the tourism sector and achieving the desired outcomes of national tourism policy (Department of Tourism, 2011). Over the last five years national government launched several important programmes and initiatives to strengthen the contribution of local governments in tourism planning. Among the most significant initiatives are preparing a Tourism Planning Toolkit for local governments and launch of the Local Government Tourism Development and Growth Programme which is a partnership between national government and the South African Local Government Association (Department of Tourism, 2012). In terms of enhanced planning for domes-

tic tourism the first step is to understand the role it plays in local economies and the different constituents of domestic tourism. The results of this analysis underline a need for capacity building for local governments in domestic tourism planning especially those local governments which either are the leading destinations for tourism visits or localities highly dependent upon tourism in their local economies (Rogerson, 2013).

#### 4. Conclusion

Arguably, domestic tourism remains relatively neglected within tourism research (Scheyvens, 2007; Singh, 2009; Singh, Krakover, 2013, 2015). This article attempted to analyse the role of domestic tourism in one of the ‘emerging world regions’ of tourism as identified by Cohen and Cohen (2015a). Given the dimensions of domestic tourism flows across the global South a renewed focus on this topic is warranted. In the case of South Africa domestic tourism is an important component of the country’s tourism economy. The nature and dynamics of domestic tourism, however, have shifted over the past two decades since democratic transition. In particular, the former almost exclusively white domestic leisure tourism economy has been radically transformed with the rise of the black middle class. The restructured geography of domestic tourism exhibits a number of continuities and changes with earlier times. In terms of spatial change the most significant issues are the strengthening of Ethekwini as the country’s leading domestic tourism destination and the relative demise of Cape Town as a hub for domestic tourists.

In addition to re-energising the expansion of domestic tourism, national government aims to promote a greater ‘balance’ or evenness of spread in the benefits of domestic tourism, particularly with respect to the most lucrative elements of leisure and business travel. Overall, however, the South African landscape and geographies of domestic tourism continues dominated by VFR travel which was moulded by the making of circulatory migration during the political economy of apartheid. Despite radical political change VFR travel movements between urban and rural homes are little altered (Rogerson,

Hoogendoorn, 2014). The continued dominance of VFR travel in South African domestic tourism highlights the need for policy “leveraging” to maximise its potential impacts for local as well as national economic development (Rogerson, 2015c, d). Moreover, an enhancement of the policy awareness and capacities of local government around domestic tourism is needed to maximise the potential of domestic tourism to contribute towards the goals of national tourism policy and more widely of national economic development programming in South Africa.

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