Racism and Human Ecology

White Supremacy in Twentieth-Century South Africa

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böhlau

KÖLNER HISTORISCHE ABHANDLUNGEN

Für das Historische Institut
herausgegeben von
Norbert Finzsch, Sabine von Heusinger,
Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp und Ralph Jessen

Band 55

RACISM AND HUMAN ECOLOGY

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von

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Mit 36 Tabellen, 4 Karten und 14 Abbildungen

BÖHLAU VERLAG WIEN KÖLN WEIMAR

Content

Acknowledgment

0. Introduction

The research project upon which this volume is based dealt with the territorial planning, racism, and environmental protection measures in their function as hegemonic elements of a racially structured society in South Africa that ultimately brought about the collapse of the socio-economic systems of the black Homelands. Within this social and ecological collapse, there was a relationship between economic, ecological, political, social, and ideological factors. The aim of this project has been to analyse these interactions and to investigate the relationship between the institutionalised structures of modernisation experts and the frequently divergent interpretations of various stakeholders. The study was part of the interdisciplinary DFG-funded research project 'Resilience, Collapse and Reorganisation in Social-Ecological-Systems of East- and South Africa's Savannahs' (RCR).

0.1 Research Question

Concepts of planned modernisation are always found in a context of divergent social, ideological, ecological, and economic factors. The history of South Africa from 1948 to 1994 can also be seen as the history of a major society-spanning project; an attempt to build a 'modern' state on the basis of racial segregation. A radical policy of segregation in South Africa, known by the name Apartheid, existed in the country from the late 1930s. This programme was incorporated into policy in practice from 1948 after the election victory of the Afrikaner nationalists[1] and officially ended in 1994 with the election of the African National Congress (ANC) to the party of government with Nelson Mandela as president.

In the late 1950s, one of the core elements of Apartheid policy was implemented: territorial racial segregation. Already existing Native Reserves were upgraded to so-called Homelands. The Apartheid government tried to create the white national state it desired using territorial separation. These areas, pejoratively known as Bantustans by their black population, were declared 'national states' and portrayed as a South African form of decolonisation.[2]

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1 Christoph Marx, "Zwangsumsiedlungen in Südafrika während der Apartheid". In: Isabel Heinemann, Patrick Wagner (eds.), "Wissenschaft – Planung – Vertreibung: Neuordnungskonzepte und Umsiedlungspolitik im 20. Jahrhundert" (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), 173–195: 173, 174.
2 Ibidem.

This volume deals with the major societal project of Apartheid and, within this framework, the concept of spatial segregation and large-scale environmental protection measures. The so-called Betterment Schemes, which were planned and implemented by the South African government from 1940 to 1970, played an important role both in the above settlement and in environmental policy. Among the black population, they were one of the most hated instruments of social control used by the Apartheid regime. Betterment planning, which was intended to halt the ecological decline of the Bantustans through increased control of and intervention in African agriculture, was also an example of the interplay of environmental factors, political and economic interests, and ideology.

Betterment planning was the official reason for the forced relocation of 3.5 million people in South Africa in total. The government made efforts as early as the 1930s to combat soil erosion and improve agricultural production in the black Reserves. These plans reached a high point with the 1955 report from the Commission for Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa (Tomlinson Commission).[3] They involved the reorganisation of rural land into residential areas, areas suitable for development, and pastures. The result was the relocation of many families into centralised, village-like areas, as well as rural urbanisation resulting from displacement. With this reorganisation came agricultural intervention. This, however, did not initially increase productivity.[4]

The Betterment programmes can be roughly divided into three phases: 'stabilisation', 'reclamation' and 'rehabilitation'. However, these three phases cannot be clearly distinguished from one another. Betterment had several components. First were the environmental components, which I will outline briefly below.

Stabilisation was defined generally as measures to protect the soil and prevent further damage to the environment. Reclamation represented the necessary steps to regenerate resources that had already been damaged. Rehabilitation referred to the relocation of the part of the population that could not have an independent agricultural existence. These 'surplus people' were to be involved in the improvement of the economy, as for example, in urban development. These phases were fluid, however; it is still disputed, for example, whether the focus of the measures taken in the 1950s was stabilisation or reclamation.[5]

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3   Union of South Africa, "Summary of the Report of the Commission for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa". (Report of the Tomlinson Commission) U. G. 61/1955. (Pretoria: Government Printer: 1955).

4   Chris de Wet (ed.), "Moving Together, Drifting Apart. Betterment Planning and Villagisation in a South African Homeland". (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press 1995), 39.

5   Ibidem, 222, 223, 224.

The crucial component of Betterment was, in my view, the implementation of a complete spatially-based settlement policy based on ethnic categorisation. This categorisation made the measures, which were actually rather unspectacular, politically and economically relevant. The political disenfranchisement of the majority of the population was fixed in legislation by the racist Land Act as early as 1913, which resulted in practice in an increase in the displacement of black share-croppers and small-scale farmers from entire regions. The innovation was that entire regions were granted to whites by law, with 93 per cent of South Africa appropriated by the white minority.[6] The remaining Reserves were held by blacks. Given this near-unsustainable division of land, the question arises of how the regime was able to survive for more than forty years. Africans were virtually denied land ownership; land that they had already acquired was now 'reacquired' by white farmers. Ultimately, this Land Act helped commercialise white agriculture by eliminating black competitors.[7] In practice, environmental problems and inefficient agricultural production in the Homelands were inevitable; nonetheless, the Tomlinson Commission declared that the blacks were solely responsible for this, and the difficulties were presented as their sociological and psychological problems.[8] Betterment helped the implementation of the settlement schemes designed by the Apartheid government, which guaranteed control over the African population and their livestock.

The idea that inefficient management and communal administration and management of black farms were the cause of soil erosion, low agricultural production, and environmental problems in the former Homelands is still being discussed today. The principle of communal farming is often blamed for environmental problems. Based on Garrett Hardin's essay 'The Tragedy of the Commons', various researchers, including Vincent Kakembo as well as other RCR group project members, have endorsed changing from communal to commercial farming.[9] But if

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6   Union of South Africa, Department of Native Affairs, "Report of the Natives Land Commission Vol. 1". U. G.19-16. (Cape Town: Cape Times Limited, Government Printers, 1916), National Archives of South Africa (NASA), National Archives Repository (public records of central government since 1910) (SAB), Secretary of Justice (1899–1966) (JUS) 423 1/152/16, 200.

7   Marx, Wissenschaft, 175.

8   De Wet, Moving Together, 54.

9   Vincent Kakembo, "Land Degradation in Relation to Land Tenure in Peddie District, Eastern Cape". International Conference of Land Tenure in the Developing World with a Focus on South Africa, Cape Town, 27–29 January 1998 (Cape Town: gtz, FILSA, 1998), 452–458, accessed 20.10.2016. E. Kotzé, A. Sandhage-Hofmann, J.-A. Meinel, C. C. du Preez, W. Amelung, "Rangeland Management Impacts on the Properties of Clayey Soils Along Grazing Gradients in the Semi-Arid Grassland Biome of South Africa". Journal of Arid Environments 97 (2013), 220–229.

historical conditions are taken into consideration, this idea seems less certain; part of this work will investigate such questions. Using a wide range of archival material and botanic and agricultural studies, as for example those of Timm Hoffmann, I will show that communal tenure systems are not directly comparable to commercial ones and can even be more viable in areas with high ecological uncertainty.[10] Generally, the condemnation of African farming was a typical argument in the Apartheid ideology and an early indication of its strength: A hegemonic discourse, a strong political narrative, and a pseudo-scientific foundation.

To analyse this socio-ecological process, we must take into consideration the individual actors' interests and the initial situation. The reason for the development of the Betterment Schemes is commonly accepted as lying in soil erosion and a looming ecological collapse in the Homelands, as mentioned. This reasoning corresponds to the scientific discourse that began in the 20th century, according to which soil erosion was a serious threat. However, the measures that followed this must be seen in the context of government policy between blacks and whites – soil protection in a racially structured society.[11]

A functional transformation of the Bantustans and therefore a change in settlement planning and Betterment can be identified from the 1960s. A structural change in the South African economy, the mechanisation of agriculture, and a shift to capitalist modes of production in industry and mining made the country's mass of cheap labour superfluous. A further split within the black African population then took place. Because of a lack of skilled workers, the government invested in training a portion of the Homeland population. The aim was to create a black middle class in the hope that it would work in the interests of the Apartheid regime. The remaining 'surplus people', then including the unemployed, the elderly and the sick, were relocated to the Bantustans, which now constituted a sort of dumping ground. The relocation of 'surplus people' made resettlements a mass phenomenon.[12] However, it performed a function directly linked to the ecological problems. The Betterment Schemes had not stopped the erosion of the soil. The Bantustans all suffered from overpopulation, overgrazing and ecological destruction. This destruction resulted in more and more people flocking to the cities; in the capital-intensive industry, they were, however, no longer needed. As

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10 M. Timm Hoffman, Simon Todd, "A National Review of Land Degradation in South Africa: The Influence of Biophysical and Socio-Economic Factors". Journal of Southern African Studies 26 (4) (2000), 743–758.

11 Peter Delius, Stefan Schirmer, "Soil Conservation in a Racially Ordered Society: South Africa 1930–1970". Journal of Southern African Studies 26 (4) (2000).

12 Marx, Wissenschaft, 177, 178.

a result forced displacement from the cities increased.[13] At the same time, large rural townships such as Botshabelo emerged because of forced relocation.

When considering the completely unrealistic goals of the Apartheid regime regarding territorial and demographic policy, the question arises of how the system was able to survive for over 40 years. It was an authoritarian regime, with associated repressive institutions. Nevertheless, using repression and violence alone, it would be a virtual impossibility for an absolute minority to rule over 87 per cent of the population and relocate these people into 13 per cent of the total land area. Strong political narratives and ideologies were necessary to maintain power and hegemony. A major goal of this study is to elaborate on these and describe them in more detail. The first thing to point out is that the economy, politics, and ideology in South Africa existed in a far-reaching ideological context that reflected above all two themes; the territorial segregation of the 'races'; and the problematic distribution of land and bureaucratic/technocratic planning that intervened in the black population to preserve the economic and political superiority of the white minority.

When examining the planning and implementation of Betterment, forced relocation, and ethnic division, it becomes apparent that the policies of the governing party (the National Party), while having the appearance of a clear system, in practice were formed arbitrarily and unpredictably. Actions were frequently either taken as a single step, or a long time passed between two phases.[14] The reason for programmes not being centrally coordinated was that the South African state was organised in a very bureaucratic and scattered way. Goals and the means to achieve them often did not match up, which often resulted in unrealistic policies and aimless activity.

In this political, ecological and economic context, the Betterment Schemes were unsuitable for solving the real problems of agriculture or to prevent an ecological collapse and create viable agriculture programmes.[15] There was a complex of politics, ideology, and ecology within the socio-ecological system of the Homelands. The term Socio-Ecological System (SES) refers generally to systems that exist between humans and nature. In such systems, the centre of this abstractly defined complex is the connection between social relationships and conditions in nature. SES is mostly seen from the viewpoint of managing this system.[16] It is quite

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13   Ibidem, 179, 180, 181.
14   Laurine Platzky, Cherryl Walker, "The Surplus People. Forced Removals in South Africa". (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), 132.
15   De Wet, Moving Together, 67.
16   For example: Egon Becker, "Socio-Ecological Systems as Epistemic Objects". Marion Glaser, Gesche Krause, Beate Ratter, Martin Welp (eds.), "Human-Nature Interactions in the Anthropocene: Potentials of Social-Ecological Systems Analysis". (London: Routledge,

possible to see the South African Homelands as Ecological Systems. Likewise, the ecological collapse that resulted can be traced back to the relationship between social and ecological conditions. But the extent to which the Betterment Schemes helped regulate this system and increase its resilience is questionable. Rather, it seems that justification was being sought for displacement and forced relocation on a large scale. One indication of this is the lack of meaningful attempts to improve environmental conditions. If looking at the scientific arguments for Apartheid, the question arises as to how publications that found almost no acceptance internationally could be used to form a system in which ecological circumstances became the conveyor belt for measures such as Betterment. It is this set of scientific, ideological and environmental factors that will be used for interpreting the events which are the subject of this study.

0.2 Theory and Methods

For an analysis of this topic, several perspectives are required. The period that is the focus of this study is the 1960s and 1970s. Assuming that the actual major political and social project was the structuring of the population according to the Apartheid regime's ideology, an overview of the segregation era is needed, as well as of the early phases of Apartheid. As well, the ideological and political foundations of the later Homeland policy of the South African government will be presented. Following a discussion of the basis of Bantustan policy in the 20th century, the ecological conditions of the Betterment Schemes will be examined. As mentioned in the previous section, it has been disputed whether this was in fact intended to prevent an ecological collapse caused by the failures of the black population, or was simply to enable more efficient use of the Bantustans as a reservoir of cheap labour. The question of whether the former is convincing can be determined by geological investigations. For this, the state of scientific research at the beginning of the 20th century must be taken into account. The fear of soil erosion and its ecological consequences was widespread in South Africa at this time, primarily because of various American publications on the topic.[17] It thus had to be established whether or to what degree soil degradation had occurred. It stands to reason that it was not the black population's inability at fault. Rather,

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2012), 37–59. B. H. Walker, L. H. Gunderson, A. P. Kinzig, C. Folke, S. R. Carpenter, and L. Schultz, "A Handful of Heuristics and Some Propositions for Understanding Resilience in Social-Ecological Systems". Ecology and Society 11 (13) (2006). http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol11/iss1/art13/, accessed 20.10.2016.

17 Delius, Schirmer, Soil Conservation, 719.

it seems likely that forced overpopulation, severe repression, and difficult economic and social relations in the Reserves were responsible. These factors were only reinforced later in the Apartheid regime's reign. To clarify the above two questions and establish the intentions behind the Betterment Schemes, why they were needed and the consequences of individual measures, sources documenting the planning and implementation of the Schemes will examined.

The analysis of the Betterment planning of the 1960s and 1970s will be undertaken in several steps. First, the changes in Homeland policy in this period will be illustrated in a discussion of the ecological, economic and political factors. Then the behaviour of the individual players will be considered, with the government the primary subject of this investigation. The fact that its policies, while apparently systematic, were actually based on poorly coordinated activities can be worked out from various records and reports.[18] Different groups can be identified within the black population: First, the relocated people themselves, who reacted with indignation and occasionally resistance and revolts. And then, the local governments, which actively took part in the Betterment programmes and played an important role in the supposedly independent Homelands.

While these considerations relate to South Africa as a whole, here the example of a single region will be taken: the Thaba Nchu District in today's Free State. Here the process of so-called displaced urbanisation is significant, urbanisation as it emerged in rural townships due to expulsions and racial segregation. In this context, it is interesting that the townships in Thaba Nchu did not develop by chance. Colin Murray and other authors have written about the township of Bothabelo, but they did not use the report of the 'Bloemfontein 85' conference or various reports from the National Archives of South Africa, reports that have provided information about how detailed the planning of the Onverwacht/Botshabelo township actually was.[19]

In conclusion, these various aspects will be considered in relation to the social and ecological collapse that occurred in the Homelands. For this, various theories about space, such as those of Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and Edward Soja, have been used to examine the individual detailed mechanisms of how the power and hegemony of the Apartheid regime was retained by planning of space and ethnic categorisation. As well, their applicability to the theory of SES has been weighed.

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18 For example: Ivan Evans, "Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa". (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

19 Correspondence between Sekretaris van Samewerking en Ontwikkeling, Kaapstad and Prof Fourie, Bloemfontein, Opvolging van Konferensis: Bloemfontein 1985, 8. 6. 1979, 21. 8. 1979, NASA, SAB, Department of Co-operation and Development (1973–1986) (SON) 1606 D12/2/4/2/4/3 vol. 2, 187, 188, 217, 218.

To examine the third type of power in South Africa, environmental power, it had to be assessed whether SES can be applied to this case study. As has been mentioned by others, this is problematic because of the current unavailability of sources. To consider the Bantustans as an SES seems quite reasonable. It is also undeniable that the change in environmental conditions can be traced back to human interventions. Social ecology, the 'science of social relations to nature', offers clues here. This relatively new field, which deals with the mutual relations between nature and society, arose from a multitude of disciplines and has developed into an integrated field of environmental research.[20] However, the concept of SES and its management often assumes that it is primarily intended to control resilience. But it is questionable whether this was the objective of Betterment planning. The suspicion is that to a considerable extent protecting the soil and improving agriculture provided a pretext for protecting the interests of the Apartheid regime, namely, the creation of a 'white' national state. This assumption must be examined by weighing the factors listed above, above all at an empirical level. Geological studies show us the extent the Betterment Schemes were successful or meaningful from an ecological and agricultural point of view. Parameters for this are also the population density and ethnic composition of South Africa's population.

Through the study, I often change between macro and micro levels. On one hand, this method reflects the wide range of sources that had to be analysed and interpreted. But more importantly, it offers the possibility of looking at social, economic and ecological interconnections at a national as well as a local level.

There are two appendices. Appendix 1 consists of diverse population statistics taken from the digitalised censuses. Appendix 2 contains various maps.[21] Maps or tables used only once are provided in the text; those that are used more often are found in the appendices.

0.3 Sources

Because of the nature of interdisciplinary work, with its different methodologies, to reach any conclusions it is necessary to evaluate sources of various types. For documenting the aims of the South African government, its official publications

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20 Egon Becker, Thomas Jahn (ed.), "Soziale Ökologie. Grundzüge einer Wissenschaft von den gesellschaftlichen Naturverhältnissen". (Frankfurt/Main, New York: Campus, 2006).

21 The appendices are documented in the Social Science Open Access Repository (SSOAR): Katharina Loeber, "Racism and Human Ecology: White Supremacy in Twentieth-Century South Africa – Appendix" (2017): http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-50743-9, accessed 8.3.2017.

were above all needed. Mention should be made here of the Tomlinson Report and the documents of the various commissions and committees that dealt with the racial question and the structuring of the Homelands, particularly the Bantu Affairs Commission. However, there are also various individual publications, as for example, those of the South African Department of Information, 'The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood'. While these publications are not complete, they are available in great numbers and so it is possible to gain a relatively complete picture of the government's interests.

The main focus here has been documents from the National Archives of South Africa in Pretoria, Bloemfontein and Cape Town. Files from the Secretary of Native Affairs and the Department of Agriculture contain various clues about how the Apartheid regime's Homeland policy was implemented. Correspondence should also be mentioned here, such as commission reports, etc. The available material is quite diverse and patchy in many places. This problem is due in a large part to the lack of structure in South African archives. Gathering information often proved difficult because the sources were unsorted or not in the location indicated. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the National Archives and Records Service was completely restructured in 1996 after the African National Congress took over. Many files from the Cape region were transferred to the regional archive in Cape Town, where there is quite a lot of information on segregation policy and Betterment from 1910 to 1970. Nearly all of the material from the former Orange Free State was apparently brought to the central archive in Pretoria. This is where a large amount of previously unpublished material is held that is particularly relevant for the case study in question, the Thaba Nchu District until its incorporation into the former Republic of Bophuthatswana, especially about the planning of the township Botshabelo.

Another significant problem was the use of racial terms in archival material. In the Apartheid system there were four racial categories. Three of them remained in force during the 20th century: Europeans and whites, terms that were used more-or-less interchangeably; Coloureds; and Asians. *Afrikaaner*, Afrikaner and Africander are terms used for whites who are Boers. The indigenous people were defined as Natives during both the colonial and segregation era. From the 1950s on, they were called Bantus. In the 1980s, the designation was Blacks. The definitions of the indigenous population changed over the years, reflecting the political development from the colonial era to the South African Union and Apartheid state. The use of language reflects changing Apartheid policies, with a phase of tribalisation and growing black consciousness. I will discuss this process of linguistic shift in detail in chapter 2.1.

Another problem was choosing the terms to use in my own text. In all cases, the terms used in sources are marked as such. In fact, 'Black' and 'African' are contested terms. Their usage has attracted much academic debate. Issues of terminology are important as they produce real consequences for the lives of those using and/or who are subsumed within a particular definition.[22] Individuals have the right to choose how they wish to be identified. Some Pan-African scholars consider 'black African' a racist and pejorative colonial term due to the fact that there is no trans-historical African identity. Therefore, in Africa's ancient history the term 'African' as an identity would have had no meaning; people defined themselves as members of kingdoms, religions and ethnic groups.[23] In the case of South Africa, even the terminology of ethnic groups is problematic. I will show in chapter 2.2 that Apartheid theorists used ethnic categories often invented by whites to disguise racism and to distort the proportions of the population. According to Deborah Posel, after decades of Apartheid's racial reasoning, the idea that South African society comprises four distinct races – Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Africans – has become a habit of thought and experience, a facet of popular 'common sense' still widely evident.[24]

After discussions with various scholars, I decided to follow scholars like Colin Murray and William Beinart, who use the term Africans as well as the term Blacks. I will use these terms to deal with racial segregation and in my arguments on a macro level. When emphasising the history and culture of black South Africans, I prefer the term indigenous people or the name of the respective ethnic or religious group. In chapter four I will often deal with conflicts between the Tswana and the South Sotho people on a micro level; naturally I will name the ethnic groups at that point.

One needed source proved difficult to obtain. Scientific documentation of soil erosion and agriculture in the Homelands is important for the scientific foundation of the assumptions listed above. While there are some government publications available – South Africa has a long history of research into soil degradation and there are various types of publications on the subject as well as a long series of public research projects – it must be kept in mind that most of these were influenced by the interests of the Apartheid regime. There are two

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22 Uvanney Maylor, "What Is the Meaning of 'Black'? Researching 'Black' Respondents". Ethnic and Racial Studies 32, 2 (2009) 369–387: 369.

23 'Alik Shahadah, "The African Race. Defining African Identity Today". African Holocaust 12 (2009), , accessed 20. 10. 2016.

24 Deborah Posel, "What's in a name? Racial Categorisations under Apartheid and Their Afterlife". Michigan State University Libraries (2001), 50–74: 55, http://digital.lib.mnu/projects/africanjournals/transformation/tran047/tran047005.pdf, accessed 20. 10. 2016.

problems connected to this: firstly, research activities were often local in nature and the Homelands were the focus of little attention; secondly, non-agronomic aspects of soil degradation were ignored.[25] Agronomic studies that are objective are difficult to find. One possibility is to use the data that has been collected within the partial project A1 of the DFG-RCR project, by the research group 1501. However, then one must take into account that the research has been carried out on the current state of the soil in the selected region and thus, the results only allow speculations to be drawn about the past. This is possible to a limited degree using geoscientific and chemical methods. A helpful study was published in 2003 by the Centre of Development Support (CDS). Also very useful was the method of repeat photography used by the plant conservation unit in Cape Town. Repeat photography, the production of an exact duplicate of a landscape photograph at a later point in time, allows one to observe changes in vegetation over a longer period. A similar source for this kind of visualisation is offered by the area photography carried out by the South African organisation 'National Geo-Spatial Information' (NGI) from the years 1950 to 1996.

In 2013, most of the South African census from 1960 to 2011 were digitised. This made it possible to examine the statistical methods used in South Africa during the Apartheid era and calculate the distortion of population numbers through ethnic categorisation. This information has been graphically represented and discussed below.

0.4 State of Research

Today, there are many publications on the Apartheid regime. These include numerous and various analyses of the relationships in southern Africa between environmental conditions and the course of historical events. Of particular note is the work of Chris de Wet and William Beinart. Already in 1984, Beinart explicitly pointed out the connection between soil erosion, nature conservation, and ideas of progress in southern Africa between 1900 and 1960.[26] Laurine Platzky together with Cheryl Walker, and Elaine Unterhalter have provided good overviews of forced relocation in the 20th century. Unterhalter primarily describes the timing of forced removal, its political backgrounds and how forced evictions were undertaken. She devotes several chapters to the various types of forced relocation

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25 Hoffman, Todd, National Review of Land Degradation, 745.
26 William Beinart, "Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development: A Southern African Exploration 1900–1960". Journal of Southern African Studies, 11, 1 (1984), 52–83.

in the towns and in the countryside.[27] Platzky and Walker's emphasis is more on the experiences and living conditions of resettled people, using examples from different regions.[28] Platzky and Walker participated in the Surplus People Project, a project that emerged in the 1980s aimed at resisting forced relocation and improving the living conditions of small-scale farmers.

On the basis of the Homeland policy described above, Fred Hendricks argues that the Betterment Schemes were not motivated by environmental protection or soil conservation. In his view, the Homelands were created solely for the purpose of dividing the land unfairly and providing cheap labour.[29] A few more recent theories have arisen based on various ecological factors, political and social interests, as well as ideology. For example, in his 1997 volume on Homeland politics in South Africa, Albrecht Isert devotes much of his discussion to ideology, together with political and economic questions. He also deals with the entire period of Grand Apartheid from 1950 to 1990.[30] Another interesting work – which, however, deals with a different political context – is the 2007 monograph by William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, "Environment and Empire". The authors' thesis is that imperialism is generally inseparable from the history of global changes in environmental conditions. However, they do not deal with one geographical area, instead using a number of different case studies.[31] Also of note are Peder Anker's "Imperial Ecology and Colonial Knowledges", Volume 2 of the series "The Rise and Fall of Modern Empires".[32] The work "Black Mountain" by Colin Murray is notable with regard to the district of Thaba Nchu, as well as the as yet unpublished dissertation by Christiane Naumann dealing with the RCR's ethnological sub-project.

In connection with ecological aspects, it should be noted that there was a real threat of collapse, which in fact later did occur due to soil fertilisation. According to Chris de Wet, the aim of measures before 1945 was to prevent excessive soil deterioration.[33] Nevertheless, research has shown that the infrastructure interventions led to better political control of the Bantustans. Because of the political and

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27 Elaine Unterhalter, "Forced Removals. The Division, Segregation and Control of the People of South Africa". (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1987).
28 Platzky, Walker: The Surplus People.
29 Fred T. Hendricks, "The Pillars of Apartheid: Land Tenure, Rural Planning and the Chieftaincy". (Uppsala: Academiae Upsaliensis, 1990), 187.
30 Albrecht Isert, "Die Homeland-Politik in Südafrika". (Frankfurt/Main: Lang, 1997).
31 William Beinart, Lotte Hughes, "Environment and Empire". (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
32 Peder Anker, "Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire". 1895–1945 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001). Saul Dubow (ed.), "The Rise and Fall of Modern Empires. Vol. II: Colonial Knowledges". (Fanham: Ashgate, 2013).
33 De Wet, Moving together, 54.

social focus of earlier research, an important type of source, official documents, was already evaluated in the 1980s. For the current study, such documents were also examined, but a large amount of the groundwork had already been laid by earlier researchers. Geological and agronomic information came in large part from such documents. However, references to purely scientific research are rarely found, and the assertions found therein are generally not supported by such. Few details are provided on ecological matters. Thus this has rarely been a focus of this study; it is an aspect that still needs research. Although Colin Murray has written an excellent historical account of the political economy of the Thaba Nchu area, his work addresses social-ecological aspects only marginally. Regarding his research on the phenomenon of displaced urbanisation, he obviously did not have access to the planning reports of Botshabelo of the late 1980s that I was able to use.[34] In contrast, the environmental history of Kuruman, for example, has already been elaborated in detail by Nancy Jacobs.[35] Useful here is recent geographical and geochemical research that has also taken historical factors into account, as for example the study by Monica Giannecchini, Wayne Twine and Colleen Vogel, as well as the studies of the various RCR project groups.[36]

An important aim of the RCR project was to investigate the relationships between social, economic and ecological factors, focussing on two research sites in Kenya (Lake Naivasha and Lake Baringo) and two in South Africa (Kuruman and Thaba Nchu). I took part in the first phase of the RCR project (2010–2013). The project was divided into nine sub-projects, each having an individual thematic focus. The historical project C1 was my area, whereby I chose South Africa as my overall research region, using the developments in one district as a case study. Because little was known about human–environment relationships in the Thaba Nchu area, I chose to examine exclusively this district. The general aim was an analysis of the interconnection between social and environmental processes during Apartheid South Africa using a wide range of smaller case studies.

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34 Colin Murray, "Black Mountain: Land, Class, and Power in the Eastern Orange Free State, 1880s to 1980s". (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).

35 Nancy Jacobs, "Environment, Power, and Injustice: A South African History". (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

36 See, for example: Monica Giannecchini, Wayne Twine, Coleen Vogel, "Land-Cover Change and Human-Environment Interactions in a Rural Cultural Landscape in South Africa". The Geographical Journal 173 (1) (2007), 26–42. M. Timm Hoffman, M. E. Meadows, "The Nature, Extent and Causes of Land Degradation in South Africa: Legacy of the Past, Lessons for the Future?", Area 34 (4) (2002), 428–437.

1. The Implementation of Apartheid, Conservationism, and the Beginning of Betterment Planning

1.0 Introduction

The official date marking the 'New Model State' of South Africa is 26 May 1948. This is the date the United National Parties won parliamentary elections, a coalition of conservative and right-wing parties. Nonetheless, it makes sense to look at the years of the South African Union (1910 – 1948) as well, since important steps in building a 'white nation' with strict racial control and the segregation of the black population were taken in this era. Systematic forced resettlement did not take place during these so-called segregation years, but the politics, legislation, and ideology of a racially ordered society began to be implemented. To understand the origins of Apartheid, the following will examine the interaction between scientific investigation, public intervention and ideology in early post-colonial South Africa.

In the early 20th century, research into land degradation, especially colonial ideas about the destruction of natural resources, intensified in South Africa. The major concern was the impact of settler agriculture on fragile environments.[37] From the 1930s, numerous publications and official investigations demonstrated the interest of the South African government in this issue.[38] The state wanted to play a leading role in combating this danger and so intervened in various ways. The so-called Betterment Schemes were officially prompted by the ecological crises in the Native Reserves. The South African government blamed the ecological problems on overstocking, although the people living there perceived the main problem to be shortage of land.

In general, land degradation is a product of the interplay between different ecological and socio-economic factors.[39] In South Africa after 1948, ecological crises and schemes to combat soil erosion went hand in hand with the radical restructuring of the society based on the system known as Grand Apartheid. Betterment Schemes were developed and implemented under the pressure of building up a racial ordered state, with white Boers aiming at strict racial control and the segregation of the black population. As a result, 3.5 million people were forcibly resettled. This chapter will examine the political, ideological, economic,

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37 Delius, Schirmer, Soil Conservation, 720.
38 Hoffman, Todd, National Review of Land Degradation, 743, 744.
39 Kakembo, Land Degradation in Peddie District, 474.

and ecological factors that influenced official investigations and interventions regarding the problem of land degradation, as well as the interrelationship between this issue and the beginning of forced resettlement of blacks into so-called Native Areas. It examines how racist attitudes and disparities in the political and economic status of black and white people were important factors in how soil conservation strategies were formed. These influenced the implementation of a system of segregation and eviction, as well as the appropriation of former indigenous land.

The first part of the chapter will describe the political situation when the Union of South Africa gained independence in 1910, including the government's segregation policy, especially the Natives Land Act of 1913. This will be followed by a description of the political radicalisation of segregation in the 1940s. The second part of the chapter will deal with the economic background and the so-called poor white problem, comparing various scholarly discourses and the state's interventions in pursuit of soil conservation.

1.1 The Union of South Africa: Legislation, Administration, and the Beginning of Spatial Segregation

1.1.1 The Early Union and the Natives Land Act 1913

The Union of South Africa gained independence from British rule in 1910.[40] The South African (Anglo–Boer) War (1899–1902) had shown that the economic and strategic interests of the United Kingdom (UK) would be better protected by collaboration than by military force, and thus the UK formally decolonised the region.[41] The conditions under which the four former colonies Cape Colony, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange River Colony (ORC) joined together involved various conflicts of regional and racial interests, as well as ideologies. In the end, the South Africa Act united the territories occupied by white people under a government that represented the two white communities.[42] Although the constitution of 1910 united the country under a single government, it did not make South Africa an independent sovereign state in all respects. Above all, the Union

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40 Harvey M. Feinberg, André Horn, "South African Territorial Segregation: New Data on African Farm Purchases, 1913–1936". The Journal of African History 50 (1) (2009), 41–60: 41.

41 J. D. Hargreaves, "Decolonization in Africa". (London, New York: Longman, 1988), 8.

42 Leonard Thompson, "The Compromise of the Union". Monica Wilson, Leonard Monteath Thompson, "The Oxford History of South Africa. Vol II. 1870–1966". (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 325–364: 350, 363.

was still bound by the decisions of the British king and had to act on the advice of his British ministers of state regarding questions on war and peace. Whites dominated the government and controlled political and economic decision-making power. The majority of the population, most of them indigenous Africans, had virtually no voice in government. After discussions with South African leaders, the British imperial government appointed Louis Botha as prime minister with no elections held. The Transvaal political leader, a successful farmer and Anglo–Boer War general, had organised a new political party, *Het Volk*, in 1904. Botha and Jan Christian Smuts, a former colonial cabinet minister, believed that the best policy for South Africa was one of 'unity and cooperation', to bring about harmony, good relations, and an end to bitterness between the two white societies – English-speakers and Afrikaners.[43] General Louis Botha's government was dedicated to conciliation between Briton and Boer, and contained almost as many British as Dutch names. Botha chose his government carefully from all provinces. It was ironic that during elections, it was difficult to distinguish between the policies of the South African and the Unionist parties. Both stressed the idea of a single white South African nation and professed a non-doctrinaire Native policy; neither supported special protection for Afrikaners.[44] For Africans, the most important questions were how to regain land lost as a result of Dutch and British colonisation, and how to increase their power in political and economic terms. One of the overriding objectives of British Liberals, according to historian Ronald Hyam, was the improvement of the position of Africans. Liberals saw a white self-government as the most effective way to achieve that aim. Black Africans would benefit from reconciliation with whites and their fears would be reduced.[45] On the other side, the white government grappled with the so-called Native Question. A clear intention of white South Africans was to dispense with earlier inhabitants of the region. The new state was based on a compromise between the agrarian, mining, and industrial interests of the various groups in the white population.[46] The idea that South Africa was a white man's country had taken root between the 1870s and 1913. According to the South African historian Hermann Giliomee, the society that emerged from this position was unique, both in the world of

43 Harvey M. Feinberg, "The 1913 Natives Land Act in South Africa: Politics, Race, and Segregation in the Early 20th Century". The International Journal of African Historical Studies 26 (1) (1993):65–109: 70, 71.

44 T. R. H. Davenport, "South Africa: A Modern History". 4th ed., Cambridge Commonwealth Series (London: Macmillan, 1991), 231.

45 Ronald Hyam, "African Interests and the South African Act, 1908–1910". The Historical Journal, 13 (1) (1970), 85–105: 87.

46 Hargreaves, Decolonization, 9.