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South African identity as reflected by its toponymic tapestry

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This article aims to point out that the geographical names collectively also reflect the hearts and minds of those who gave the names, ultimately expressing what it means to be a South African in the face of shared historical and cultural experiences that motivated the bestowal of the name. The effects of the policy of transformation are discussed focusing on how transformation differs from mere change and how these two concepts apply to the geographical names of South Africa and its peoples. The policy of changing geographical names for the sake of transformation is discussed from the perspective of it being an ongoing process often misunderstood by policymakers as well as people subjected to it. Using the onomastic framework of the etymological and associative meanings of place names it will be pointed out that being South African involves both shared and differentiating experiences leading to the conclusion that there is no definition for a South African identity and that a national identity is subject to a consciousness and tolerance of social diversity and need.

Suid-Afrikaanse identiteit weerspieël in sy toponimiese tapisserie

Die artikel toon aan dat die geografiese name kollektief ook die gedagtes en harte van die naamgewers reflekteer wat uiteindelik 'n beeld gee van wat dit beteken om Suid-Afrikaans te wees met 'n gedeelde geskiedenis en kulturele ervarings wat tot die name aanleiding gegee het. Die effek van 'n beleid van transformasie word bespreek met die fokus op die verskil tussen blote verandering en transformasie en die rol daarvan op geografiese name in Suid-Afrika en sy mense. Die beleid van naamsverandering word bespreek vanuit die hoek dat dit 'n aaneenlopende proses is wat dikwels misverstaan word deur sowel beleidmakers as die mense wat daaraan onderwerp word. Deur middel van die onomastiese raamwerk van die etimologiese en assosiatiewe betekenis van plekname word aangetoon dat om Suid-Afrikaans te wees beide gedeelde en gedifferensieerde ervarings insluit en lei tot die slotsom dat daar geen definisie vir 'n Suid-Afrikaanse identiteit is nie, en dat daar nie 'n nasionale identiteit sonder 'n bewustheid van sosiale verskeidenheid en behoeftes kan wees nie.

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SUN MØDIA
SIOEMFONTEIN

The premise that a South African spirit and the descent, history, cultural and economic background of the country's peoples can be derived from geographical names rests on the onomastic principle that place names have meanings that reflect the motivational forces behind the bestowal of the names. Naming a place often starts with a description such as "river of reeds" (*umblanga* in isiZulu), ultimately becoming a referential expression and a name to identify a place used by the people. The naming is followed by its standardisation and official acceptance by an authoritative body. Its inherent meaning remains the same even if there might no longer be reeds in the river, making the meaning opaque. Not all names are descriptive. An associative, emotional or etymological meaning indicates what the people of the land encountered, what they value and how history influenced their lives.

In line with Said (1994: 380), this study does not accept the politics of identity whereby sanctioned narratives define who you are, who your heroes are, what you should value, and so on by internalised norms of self-identity. Nor does this point of view disregard the cultural heritage of the various cultural groups in South Africa. In her book *A change of tongue*, Antjie Krog (2003) touches on the psyche of being a South African. There is no doubt that her portrayal of various South Africans made no allowance for holy cows. Nobody was spared and her clear language cut right to the core of motivations and intentions, exposing the essence of historical and social incidents. Since 1994 the moulding of a South African nation in the aftermath of the liberation struggle is a dynamic process involving change for everyone to attain an outcome of transformation. Krog's (2003: 5) quotation of Noam Chomsky is relevant not only to her interpretation of transformation, but also to this article on toponyms as a reflection of being South African in the process of transformation:

Some rules are transformational: that is, they change one structure into another according to such prescribed conventions as moving, inserting, deleting, and replacing items. Transformational Grammar has stipulated two levels of syntactic structure: deep structure (an abstract underlying structure that incorporates all the syntactic information required for the interpretation of a given sentence) and surface structure (a structure that incorporates all the syntactic features of a sentence required to convert the sentence into a spoken

or written version). Transformation links deep structure with surface structure.

Although Chomsky referred to transformational grammar, it is also applicable to other fields of study as the basic assumption remains the same; some changes are on the surface while the deeper changes imply features that are linked to the visible surface changes by a process called transformation. Some things can therefore change on the surface without being transformation, if there is no deep internal change.

In applying this to the South African toponymic scene we find that place names have changed through the course of history, giving a diachronic picture of the various language and cultural groups that visited a particular place. The question is whether these were surface changes or whether there was also a change in the internal composition and activities of the relevant communities after the name change. When a new government comes into power communities are affected by changes, of which geographical names are but one aspect. In many instances where geographical names are proposed to be changed, motivated by negative connotations experienced by one sector of a community, another group has more positive feelings regarding the name. Although this often points to the associative meaning of names, the etymological and lexical meaning of some names also points to human involvement that could lead to either positive or negative reactions. Explaining how the meanings of different geographical names reflect man's experiences and feeling, the name giver implies a search for the conditions as the motivating force under which the names were given. Common traits of being South African are illustrated by using place names as a linguistic act, a product of the human mind.

An assessment of the extent to which the changing of names reflects true transformation of society and the demand for social cohesion in the light of political and social changes will be discussed in light of the fact that the linguistic and cultural variety of South Africans enriches the toponymic tapestry, giving it depth and immeasurable historical value. The aim of this article is not to give a linguistic analysis of the names, but to point out aspects of meaning in names in order to show how social realities contribute towards naming as a linguistic act. In

doing so, explaining the motivational forces behind the existence of a name for a geographical feature is the key to its meaning.

1. Methodology and data

Most of the data used for this article is a selection of geographical names from Raper's *New dictionary of South African place names* (2004). Other examples come from the Department of Arts and Culture's data lists and various brochures in the tourism industry. Along with examples of geographical features referred to by toponyms (place names), hydronyms (water features) and oronyms (names of hills, mountains, and so on), these examples include railway sidings, monuments, as well as the new names of local and district municipalities and transfrontier parks given after 1996. Not all the names are official but are nevertheless expressions of communities who identified a place according to its natural features, its significance due to an incident or to commemorate a person of interest. The presentation and processing of the data is based on an interpretative framework with an explanatory rather than a descriptive approach (*cf* Heidegger's views as discussed in Hurst 2008: 7). These names include most of the country's languages, with the African languages collectively being the majority. All aspects of meaning, be it etymological, associative, referential, descriptive or lexical, form the descriptive backing of a name and are therefore the basis for further interpretation with regard to the motives of the people involved in the name-giving process. The descriptive backing of names is often hidden and only through research do the associative meanings of a semantically opaque name make sense.

This study aims to present geographical names that are examples of the diversity of the South African nation. Although it would be impossible to arrive at a definition for a national identity through the different meanings of a name, it is possible to derive a picture from naming practices of how average South Africans from different walks of life express their experiences of daily life in naming a place. The word "average" is important as there are no typical South African, only typical human activities, experiences and approaches to life that cut through all differences of social variables of being South African. The reflection of human involvement in the country's industrial,

economic and cultural activities also finds a place in the selection of names for this article. The examples are arranged under different headings that indicate names given by different linguistic and cultural groups in diachronic order, starting with the Bushman and Khoe, followed by names from other languages, then anthroponymic names from all South African languages, names referring to shared hardship and joy, and followed by names illustrating activities associated with being South African. This approach leaves no room for what Esterhuysen (1981: 60) terms “cultural chauvinism”. However, although cultural chauvinism is not a recommendation for social cohesion and nation-building, cultural affinity and identity could also be building blocks, stitches, and threads that keep the tapestry together as a whole providing there is, at a deeper level, a common goal of national unity. Where the politics of identity tend to divide and isolate people into “theirs” and “ours”, the toponymic landscape of the country gives a non-manipulative and objective picture of who the South Africans are at a certain point in time.

Geographical names speak of human involvement through times of adversity as well as prosperity on this southern tip of the African continent. To appreciate the immense role played by all the peoples of this land, dating back to the indigenous hunter-gatherers, the Bushmen; the cattle owners, the Khoe; the other indigenous tribes of Africans, and the descendants of navigators and settlers from the European continent, the semantic content of a selection of names given by these groups will serve as examples of cultural assets reflecting their lifestyle and experience.

2. A toponymic landscape

The South African toponymic landscape can be described as a tapestry of many colours, hues and patterns. It not only reflects the cultures of thousands of years ago but also reflects contemporary man in many situations. A meaningful discussion of being South African, as reflected in the country’s geographical names, requires more than merely understanding the way things are at present. It also requires an understanding of how things were in the past and

... a sense of their future, inscribed in the potential for re-interpretation (for projecting a new interpretation) which explains,

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enriches or expands it, allowing it to become more than what it is at present (Hurst 2008: 7).

This is necessary as the policy of name changes, executed by the Department of Arts and Culture through their advisory body, the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC), stems from the practice of previous governments and authorities to supplant indigenous names with what is termed colonial and apartheid names (Fikeni 2011a: 10). The same driving force of the politics of power and control is currently at work, leading to redressing the past by using terms such as “change” and “transformation” of the country’s toponymic landscape.

The selection of names for this article not only shows how people view the world around them, how they experience life and what they value and remember, but also reflects the history and natural resources of the country. The etymological meaning of many names indicates how the people of an area were affected by their surroundings. This experience is fixed and frozen when naming geographical features such as towns, cities, settlements, historical sites, rivers, mountains, plains, roads, highways, railway sidings and any other features visited by man. The names of the new structure of metropolitan areas, districts and municipalities given after 1994 point out what is important to a great number of South Africans and illustrate true transformation of the toponymic landscape of South Africa. Other names in need of change are harder to transform as they have associative meanings that are part of history – a history that is “intertwined and interdependent, and above all [carries] overlapping streams of historical experience” (Said 1994: 378) shared by all South Africans, irrespective of race, gender, religion, age or economic status.

The matter of changing, adapting, reconstructing and standardising names started hundreds of years ago when names of Bushman and Khoe origin were phonologically adapted to other indigenous languages such as isiXhosa, isiZulu, Setswana, Sesotho, and so on, and languages such as English, Dutch and German used by European settlers. The changing of names occurred every time a new authority came into place. Adaptations of Dutch place names to Afrikaans occurred soon after the Afrikaans language became the preferred medium of communication among the descendants of the earlier

settlers and their household staff and slaves. The Afrikaans-speaking communities, currently the second largest language group in South Africa, have a variety of speakers, most of whom have little in common with the Dutch who arrived at the Cape in the seventeenth century. This is the reason why it is often heard that members of this language group consider themselves African, having no links to Europe except maybe an inherited surname. The rationale is also that Afrikaans as a language developed on this continent and is derived from Africa. The toponymic landscape of South Africa reflects the history of both the indigenous population and those nationalities that came from other parts of the world either for humanistic reasons or with imperialist motives.

3. The people of South Africa

It is fair to ask what South Africans have in common that could enhance social cohesion to the extent of agreeing on the naming of a place and attaining the ideal of a transformed society. Geographical names describing the natural resources and topographical splendour of South Africa is a topic on its own; yet these names are appreciated by South Africans who call themselves lovers of nature, but this would also include experiences of natural disasters and wildlife. Being South African can also be echoed in names that reflect attitudes, feelings, values, fears, gratitude, happiness, hopes and dreams in the light of socio-political, historical and cultural experiences in times of conflict or unity. A plea was made by Fikeni (2011a) in his speech at the National Geographical Names Workshop to acknowledge the pain caused by fellow South Africans, not defensively but honestly, that diversity be accepted but that a common vision be developed. South Africans have more than names, they have a coat of arms, a flag, an anthem, a common history, respect, values, traditions, religions, a heritage, and an array of languages. In the abstract of his speech Fikeni (2011a: 10) proposes:

... a name review approach and methodology that will take into account our diverse heritage and unearthing as well as affirming the names that have been misunderstood or erased.

Most of the names in the different categories to be given have not been changed and reflect the variety of the lives of the people

of South Africa. The examples will be discussed according to certain cultural and social groups in the South African community while highlighting specific trends.

4. Categories and tendencies

4.1 Group A – The Bushmen and Khoe

The first inhabitants of Southern Africa were the Bushmen, groups of hunter-gatherers whose presence can be traced throughout the country in names also given to places by other people who came into contact with them. One such name is *Senwabarwana* ('where the Bushmen drink'), a municipal village in Limpopo province; another is the historical Khoe name for the Boesmans River in the Eastern Cape, recorded in 1752, *Sakolka*, a Khoe name for the Bushmen. According to Raper (2004), who is a specialist in this area of research, the Khoe had another name for the Bushmen, 'abiqua', and this is reflected in names such as *Abiquaskop* ('abiqua's hill') and *Abiquaput* ('abiqua's well'). Descendants of the Bushmen have cultural societies and indicated that they are proud to be called Bushmen, preferring it to the term 'San' meaning 'dog'/'thief' in the Khoe language. The people themselves do not find 'Bushman'/'Boesman' an abusive term as some politicians would like to believe. This was explained at a social cohesion campaign in the Eastern Cape organised by the SAGNC. Place names such as *Boesmanskop*, *Boesmansrivier*, *Boesmanland*, and so on remind us of the first people who trod the South African soil. Many names adapted from their language still exist in either an adapted or translated form (cf Raper 2008).

When the Khoe arrived with their cattle, many conflicts arose as the newcomers and their cattle encroached on what was believed to be Bushman territory. A new society ultimately emerged and new names were given. Many names for geographical features given by the Bushmen and Khoe were adapted or translated by the Dutch and English after their encounter as settlers on the southern tip of the continent because the languages of the different tribes of Bushmen and Khoe were difficult to master due to the many clicks and suction sounds. These sounds are still to be found in the names of many places as well as in languages such as isiZulu and isiXhosa (Raper

2007: 118-21). In the Cape the Khoes ultimately became slaves, cooks and herders for the settlers during the eighteenth century and tried to speak the languages of their masters. The Goniqa tribe of the Khoes integrated with a Xhosa tribe during the eighteenth century and lost their racial distinction. The geographical names from the Bushman and Khoes languages are unique to this country and continent and should be treasured as heritage. The descriptive names not only reflect how the Bushmen and Khoes identified places, for instance *Abbabeigaskop* ('hill where many red trees grow'); *Biedouw River* ('river where the indigenous biedou plant grows'); *Kraggakamma* ('place of fresh water'), and so on, but also localise and describe different tribes and people, for instance *Outeniqua Mountains* (named after the Outeniqua tribe whose name means 'men who carry honey'); *Dgaaus Landt* ('land of the red Bushman'); *Namaqualand* ('land of the Namaqua tribe'); *Gourits River* ('river of the Gouriquas tribe'), and so on. Some names also reflect a trait of many South Africans of being close to nature, aware of its colours and characteristic features such as *Debe River* ('brackish river'); *Gqora River* ('blue river'); *Kaba Kloof* ('red ravine'); *Karoo* ('dry, hard'); *Kariega* ('steenbok flats'); *Tsitsikamma* ('sparkling waters'); *Garies* ('couch-grass'); *Zuney* (<Khoes 'salty valley'), and so on. The majority of the descendants of the Khois and Bushmen adopted Afrikaans as their home language.

Acknowledgement of this minority group in the South African population can also be found in names given to new structures such as the local municipalities formed after 1994. Transformation of the geographical demarcation of the country into provinces, as well as district, local and metropolitan municipalities opened the door for new names such as *!Ka!Garib Local Municipality* (<Khoes 'big great river'); *!Kheis Locality Municipality* (<Khoes 'a place where you live'); *//Khara Hais Local Municipality* (<Khoes 'big tree'); *Xhariep District Municipality* (< Khoes 'big great river'); *Great Kei Local Municipality/River* (<Khoes 'sand'), *Cacadu District Municipality* (Khoes 'bulrush'); *Namakawa District Municipality*, and so on.¹

Names from other South African languages featuring in these structures will be mentioned later in this article.

1 Cf <<http://sagns.dac.gov.za/localauthorities.asp>>

4.2 Group B – The Portuguese, Dutch, French, British and other groups

This group includes the names given by navigators and dignitaries who came ashore as early as the sixteenth century. Many South Africans also descend from survivors of shipwrecks who became part of the existing coastal society. Most of these names were given in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and can be traced in the names of businesses or in adapted or translated forms. Unlike other countries with imperialist motives, it appears that Portuguese names in South Africa do not repeat similar place names in Portugal, mainly because they were navigators on their way to the East who never settled in this country as they longed for their home country (Meiring 2005). They did, however, honour their navigators and saints, as is evident in the examples cited in Meiring (2005).

The Dutch who came as officials of the Dutch East India Company made a more substantial impact than the Portuguese. Although some of the Dutch names have been changed to Afrikaans, many still exist in their Dutch form as well as names honouring historical figures such as Jan van Riebeeck, Simon van der Stel, and so on in place names such as *Riebeeckstad*, *Riebeeck-Kasteel*, *Riebeeck-Oos*, *Riebeeck-Wes*, *Stellenbosch*, *Stellenberg*, *SimonsTown*, *Baviaanspoort*, *Stellenbosch*, *Rodezand*, *Bonteheuwel*, *Paarl*, *Delft*, *Robben Island*.

Names, among others, of British origin such as *East London*, *Newcastle*, *Belfast*, and so on reflect a common characteristic of man to use place names from his home country to make him feel at home in a foreign country. South African place names from the Dutch homeland are *Amsterdam*, *Delft*, *Amersfoort*, *Bakoven*, and so on, some of which have been changed to African names in recent times. The German component in South African place names consists of founders of settlements being renamed, but once again the homeland features in names such as *Hamburg*, *Berlin*, *Hanover*, *Dannhauser*, and so on. German soldiers in the vicinity of the castle in the seventeenth century were members of the British-German Legion who settled in the country from 1857. German integration into the South African nation is also notable in the northwestern part of the country from the time when Namibia was under German administration. Many South African surnames are variations of the surnames of the French

Huguenots who fled to this continent for religious reasons. Their knowledge of the wine-making industry led to South Africa being a leader in this sector. Many names of French origin such as *La Rochelle*, *Artois*, *Bordeaux*, *Marseilles*, and so on, reflect this influence, and are mostly found in the Western Cape where the vineyards abound. Scottish towns such as *Aberdeen*, *Rosebank*, *Rosetta*, and so on point to a Scottish presence in South Africa.

4.3 Group C – Anthroponymic toponyms

South Africa has many anthroponymic toponyms (names honouring people). The following statements describe the tendency in South African naming practice to honour heroes and to use place names from home countries in new surroundings. The tendency to name places after dignitaries was already a trend and is a typical trait of any South African group in power. It started with the Portuguese, who honoured their saints with the place names mentioned previously. Afrikaans place names such as *Pietermaritzburg*, *Dewetsdorp*, *Bothaville*, *Delareyville*, and so on refer to historical figures of Afrikaans origin. Not all names represent political heroes but also historical figures with a social impact on the population: *Fynnland* and *Dunn's Reserve*, named after Henry James Fynn and John Dunn who settled in KwaZulu-Natal in the nineteenth century with their Zulu brides, and *Buysdorp* where the descendants of Coenraad de Buys and his indigenous brides settled. The Griquas honour their leader Adam Kok in the name *Kokstad* in the Eastern Cape. Place names honouring British dignitaries are, for instance, *Worcester*, *Wellington*, *Darling*, *Malmesbury*, *Cradock*, *Grahamstown*, *Harrismith*, *Lindley* and *Carnarvon*. British colonial rule is unmistakably obvious in the names of forts. Approximately 60 forts bear the names of, among others, leaders, commanders, chiefs, while eight forts are named after towns and settlements. Some forts have been declared national monuments while others do not bear any status. Examples of forts referring to leaders include *Fort Armstrong*, *Fort Beresford*, *Fort Brown*, *Fort Durnford*, *Fort Edward*, *Fort Grey*, *Fort Innes*, *Fort Mapoch*, *Fort Napier*, *Fort Nongqai*, *Fort Usber*, and so on. Examples of settlements built on original sites where forts were erected are *Fort Beaufort* (built around a fort; The War of the Axe started in 1846 referring to a dispute over an axe in this town), *Fort Cox* (settlement and agricultural college), *Fort Hare* (the well-known

University of Fort Hare was built on this site), *Fort Jackson* (industrial site built on this site), *Fort Nottingham* (village built on this site), and so on (Meiring 2010: 107). With reference to the Eastern Cape, Fikeni (2011b) reminds us that "... the 100 year war of resistance was fought in this region hence the place is punctuated with so many forts ...".

As mentioned earlier, it is a typical South African characteristic if not universal practice to commemorate leaders, heroes, dignitaries, and so on when naming places. The policy stipulated in the *Handbook on Geographical Names* recommended by the SAGNC is that names of living persons should generally be avoided in the naming of places (SAGNC 2002: 5). This recommendation is not respected in the case of new names of district, local and metropolitan municipalities from the data lists of the Department of Arts and Culture honouring heroes such *Nelson Mandela, Albert Luthuli, Gert Sibande, Alfred Nzo, King Sabata Dalindyebo, Chris Hani, Dr J S Moroka, Steve Tshwete, Francis Baard, Govan Mbeki, Moses Kotane, O R Tambo, Sol Plaatjie, Thabo Mfutsanyane, Mogale, Sekbukhune, Ndlambe, Makana*, and so on, as part of the transformational policy bearing mostly the names of African and other indigenous leaders.

Anthroponymic place names with either a positive or negative connotation (Meiring 2010a), depending on the point of view, include names of clans, leaders, chiefs, commanders, generals and warriors from different cultures. The following selection from Raper (2004) illustrates the point of a shared history of violence as most cultural groups are involved in the motivations for the names:

KwaMagwaza: < isiZulu for 'place of the stabber' referring to the Magwaza clan; *KwaMatiwane*: < isiXhosa for 'place of Matiwane' referring to a Xhosa Chief whose warriors were destroyed by British troops in 1828, was pursued by King Shaka and executed; *BenHope* (mountain): < Magistrate Hamilton Hope murdered by the Mpondos in 1880; *Chelmsford Dam* (dam): < Lord Chelmsford, Commander of the British forces against the Zulu in 1879, renamed in 2001 to *Ntsongwayo Dam*, after the Zulu commander; *Danster's Kloof* (ravine): < Xhosa leader Nzwane (Danster), son of Rharhabe, who in the 1790's fled from Chief Ndlambe; *Delareyville*: < General De La Rey of the Boer forces during the Anglo-Boer War, shot by the police for failing to stop at a road block; *Grahamstown*: < Colonel John Graham who fought against the Xhosa who suffered devastating losses. This was the military headquarters and centre of the 1820 British settlers. (The association with the cruelty suffered during this battle is so negative that the name of this town has been proposed by the Eastern Cape Provincial Names Committee

as one that should be listed as a geographical name which is abusive and should be changed. No official proposal has been made to the South African Geographical Names Council); *Hobhouse*: < Emily Hobhouse, a British philanthropist who focussed the attention on atrocities in the concentration camps where Boer women and children were kept during the Anglo-Boer war; *Makgobas Kloof*: < Afrikaans for 'Makgoba's ravine' referring to a Batlou chief who was beheaded by the Swazis; *Makhado* (settlement and district): < a powerful but controversial Venda Chief, Makhado, who ruled in 1864. He refused to co-operate with Voortrekker leader Louis Trichardt and missionaries in the area of the Soutpansberg.

The measure of negative associative meaning that the two names *Makhado* and *Louis Trichardt* have among different communities is clear with the proposal that the town *Louis Trichardt*'s name be changed to *Makhado*, and the number of objections against this proposal with an eventual court case to rule whether sufficient consultation had been done in the community. Other names that have been changed officially, of which the visibility is prominent on signs, can be found in the data base of the Department of Arts and Culture. Not all of these changes were met with antagonism and negative attitudes resulting in court cases; this is an indication of the measure of goodwill among South Africans of different cultures.

As far as gender is concerned, it is noticeable that women were not commemorated to the extent that men were in naming places. This is a universal trend and mainly due to the different social roles attributed to men and women. Men went to war, women remained at home or did social work. Although women such as those in royalty as well as Emily Hobhouse and the wives of commissioners and leaders were commemorated, the names of women do not appear in place names to the extent that the names of men do. This does not, however, reflect that women in South Africa are not currently liberated. It merely reflects a social reality that women did not play the political and social roles that South African men did in the past. Some places honour royalty (*Victoria West, Victoria Bay, Adelaide, Alice*); the wives of dignitaries during the imperialist era (*Lady Frere, Lady Grey, Ladysmith, Ladybrand*); the wives of commissioners, donators, and so on (*Cornelia, Carolina, Constantia, Sannieshof, Port Elizabeth, Creighton*) and a few who refer to community leaders (*Cetuville, Masangwanaville, Mashabane, Mabloseni*) and *Hobhouse* mentioned earlier.

Another group reflected in some older place names refers to pioneers who contributed to the development of the country as pathfinders, frontiersmen and entrepreneurs who paved the way for others to follow. An example is *Jabavu*, suburb in Soweto named after Davidson Don Tengu Jabavu, co-founder of the ANC, first black academic in the country, professor in Latin and African Languages, editor of the first full-fledged newspaper for the black community, son of the Cape rebel John Ntengu Jabavu who was intimidated and persecuted because he refused to support the expansion of the British empire. He was honoured at the Anglo-Boer Monument in Paarl which commemorates inhabitants of the Cape who stood up for democratic principles of freedom and justice against the British imperialist war of 1899-1902. He was also instrumental in founding the University of Fort Hare. The Jabavu name was also carried on by Noni Jabavu, grandchild of Davidson Jabavu, by being the first Xhosa woman to publish biographies about her family (Jabavu 1960 & 1963) (Jabavu 1960: 14, Van Bart 2005). Other pioneers are remembered in names from Raper (2004) such as, among others, *Baynsfield* (Sir Joseph Baynes, dairy industry); *Bakkerkop* (E M van Zinderen-Bakker who led the first South African expedition to Marion Island); *Bain's Kloof Pass* (Andrew Geddes Bain, road engineer); *Baragwanath* (John Albert Baragwanath who established a store, canteen and hotel on the site of the well-known Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital).

4.4 Group D – Names of new entities

The creation of new entities in the form of municipal/district/metropolitan areas and freedom/transfrontier parks led to innovative naming to reflect the new South Africa. A few of the new names were mentioned under the discussion of anthroponymic names and those with a Bushman and Khoe heritage. Other names include those referring to natural features of the fauna and flora of the areas. For example, names from the Eastern Cape will be used as presented by the Department of Arts and Culture (undated data lists). Of the six district municipalities, three are anthroponymic and commemorate heroes of the struggle (*Chris Hani*, *O R Tambo* and *Alfred Nzo district municipalities*). The other district municipalities bear names such as *Cacadu* (name of a river < Khoe 'bull rush river'), *Amatole* (three explanations of its origin (cf Raper 2004: 9) and *Ukhahlamba* (< isiZulu

name for the Drakensberg referring to ‘pointed spears’). Raper (2004: 76) gives other explanations. The name is presently under scrutiny due to possible confusion with similar names for features in KwaZulu-Natal. The *Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality* covers Port Elizabeth and neighbouring towns. The names of local municipalities vary from commemorative names to descriptive names, of which the majority are indigenous. The district municipality with the most balanced linguistic naming practice is *Cacadu* where the names of local municipalities are in Khoé and two of the three official languages of the province, for instance isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans. Examples of isiXhosa names are *Ndlambe* (name of a king), *Makana* (name of the prophet/leader in the attack on Grahamstown in the nineteenth century) and *Ikwezi* (‘a star’), while names derived from Khoé are *Camdeboo* (‘green hollow’), *Kouga* (name of a river ‘many hippos’) and *Kou-Kamma* (probably a combination of Khoi *kou* ‘candle bush’ and *kamma* ‘water’). English names are *Blue Crane Route* and *Sundays River Valley* while *Baviaans* is the Dutch for ‘baboon’ and could not count as an Afrikaans name.

The names of other local municipalities in the Eastern Cape collectively are twenty-four in isiXhosa, three from Khoé, two in English and none in Afrikaans. The local municipalities in the *Cbris Hani District Municipality* and the *Alfred Nzo District Municipality* are all in isiXhosa, indicating successful transformation of the naming of Eastern Cape municipal structures, yet a violation of the principle of the equity of languages according to the constitution of the country. However, the majority of the population and language groups in an area should also be taken into account. Similar patterns of naming municipal structures in other provinces reflect the transformational drive that ultimately changed the toponymic landscape of South Africa. This correlates with the changing profile of the South African society in its transformational process.

The new transfrontier parks (also referred to as “freedom parks”) are a cross-border endeavour correctly described by Nelson Mandela:

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I know of no political movement, no philosophy, no ideology, which does not agree with the peace parks concept as we see it going into fruition today. It is a concept that can be embraced by all.²

Of course, the names of these parks bear the key to reconciliation and transformation because of the wide spectrum of associative meaning in the combined names. The conservation areas shared by South Africa, Swaziland, Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Lesotho lead to cross-border initiatives to establish conservation areas for the protection of southern African game and overall biodiversity. This not only led to new indigenous names but ensured economic stability for the local communities due to employment opportunities in the erection of the infrastructure and major opportunities for the development of tourism. This is an example of transformation at its best, a fresh new approach to conservation, with names from most of the indigenous languages:

- */Ai-/Ais-Richtersveld* (a resort in Namibia with hot mineral springs < Khoer 'fire-fire' plus the name of a region in the Northern Cape province named after a Rhenish minister);
- *Kgalagadi* (< Setswana 'semi-desert', including parts of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa);
- *Kavango-Zambezi* (in the river basins of the Okavango (named after a chief Kavango) and Zambezi, an area where the borders of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe converge, including the Caprivi strip and the Victoria Falls);
- *Greater Mapungubwe* (named after and including a famous archaeological site in the Limpopo province, part of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, < Tshivenda 'place of the jackals';
- *Great Limpopo* (named after the river between Zimbabwe and South Africa, < Ndebele 'rushing water', covers areas of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe;
- *Lubombo* (includes five transfrontier conservation areas between Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland, and
- *Maloti-Drakensberg* (< Sesotho 'mountains' plus Afrikaans 'mountains of the dragons', also includes the uKhahlamba Drakensberg World Heritage site.

2 Cf <<http://wwwpeaceparks.org>>

4.5 Group E – Names associated with experiences of hardship or happiness

Being South African unavoidably implicates being exposed to a history of war, hardships, political oppression and danger. However, being South African is also an experience of finding happiness, peace and joy in the sharing of a country so rich in its opportunities for all those who are prepared to share what life in South Africa has to offer.

The following names are laden with historical significance as well as associative meaning, causing conflicting reactions among South Africans. These descriptive toponyms refer either to violence or goodwill, implicating the people of the country. The names illustrate the human quality of a person who can be violent but who also strives for goodwill and peace, a bipolar situation involving victims and executioners across all social groups (Meiring 2010b: 47). This was also clear in the earlier examples cited for anthroponymic names that reflect positive or negative associations. Names and their explanations representing historical clashes between different cultures and languages and those reflecting hardship or happiness, selected from Raper (2004), include *Bloedrivier/Blood River* (the battle between 12 000 Zulus and 460 Voortrekkers in 1838 where the blood of the Zulus was said to turn the river red. This river has a Zulu name *Ncome*, ironically meaning ‘the pleasant one’). Under the new government led by President Nelson Mandela the commemoration of this day (named Day of the Vow given by the Voortrekkers as a day of thanks) was aptly changed to Day of Reconciliation; *Emfabantu (mountain)*: < isiXhosa for ‘the death of the people’ referring to the battle in 1826 when the Thembu tribe of the Xhosas was beaten by the Mfecane of the Zulus. Also known as *Hangklip Mountain; Hauboobis/Haububis*: < Khoe for ‘death, struggle, bitter bloody battle’. It is also the Khoe name for *Stryrivier* (‘quarrel river’); *Enyati*: < Khoe for ‘/noa’ (‘shoot’), Dutch ‘schiet’. *Enyati* is the Xhosa name for *Schietfontein* (‘shoot fountain’). This is an example of a translation from Khoe and a Xhosa phonologisation of the Khoe word; *Battle Cave*: < a cave in the Giant’s Castle Nature Reserve with Bushman paintings depicting a conflict between two tribes; *Moordenaarspoort*: < Afrikaans for ‘murderers’ gate’, an historical name for a place where many Khoe from the Griqua tribe and Bushmen were murdered by the Basotho.

It later became a mission station, then a town, now *Bethulie*, ironically meaning ‘maiden of the Lord’ or ‘chosen by God’ in Hebrew, given by the French Missionary Society. The place is also associated with the graves of women and children who died in the concentration camp during the Anglo-Boer war. This background description makes the name both descriptive and connotative, allowing further interpretation regarding human involvement.³

Descriptive toponyms reflecting hardship through forces of nature are motivated by the experiences of South Africans in a country with extreme temperatures and rain. It stands to reason that climatic conditions and the dangers of wild animals and insects affect the lifestyle of a country’s people, mould them and build them up as the resilient and strong nation known universally as survivors. The following names from Raper (2004) are a few examples that reflect what people endured: *Banghoek*: < Afrikaans for ‘corner/glen of fear’, a glen where people experienced the danger of lions and leopards when crossing the hill called *Helshoogte* (‘hell’s heights’); *Ongeluksnek* near the Lesotho border is a dangerous route taken by the Griquas in 1860 on their way to settle in what was then known as ‘Nomansland’, today Griqualand East; *Kamkusi*: < a railway siding of which one explanation refers to Tshivenda ‘infested with lions’; *KuNkwana* (mountain): < isiXhosa meaning ‘ice cold’ < Khoe ‘ice, frost, cold’; *Mabopane* (an urban area): < Northern Sotho meaning ‘coldness of the veld, despair, slow death’, but also ‘make bricks by hand’; *Madlabantuli* (river): < Siswati for ‘the one that eats people’ referring to the danger when a river is in flood (this kind of metaphor is common in African languages); *Mount Misery*, a name with two explanations that have violent undertones, referring either to cold and windy climatic conditions where British troops fought, or to a part of Lotheni Pass where a punitive party was held up in pursuit of San marauders; *Kwa-Ndlutshile*: < isiXhosa for ‘the place where the huts have been burnt’, referring to a raging fire that destroyed villages in 1869.

Associative meanings attached to names often add to the semantic content of the name. Many names do not have any lexical reference to violence but their descriptive backing is associated with war or other forms of violence, for instance social injustice leads to protest actions

3 Similar examples from Raper (2004) are discussed in Meiring (2010a: 100-10).

in townships and many of these names are associated with the presence of police action or riots. Clashes between political factions also lead to hostile actions with which a place becomes associated. The lexical meanings of these names often express the opposite of the associative meanings. For instance, a place such as *Boipatong*, meaning 'place of shelter', is associated with an attack by the Inkatha Freedom Party with fatal results and trauma for young children which would shape their lives, both negatively and positively, as in the case of the Bafana Bafana captain Aaron Mokoena (De Villiers 2010). Similarly, places such as *Sharpeville*, *Sebokeng* ('place of gathering' in Sotho) and *Langa* ('sun' in isiXhosa) are associated with protests resulting in violent clashes with the police and causing fatalities. A similar connotation is attached to *Bhisho* (< a hlonipha name for Xhoxho, who was a son of Ngqika, where a massacre took place (Raper 2004: 27).

Other names with a connotation of a negative descriptive backing in the sense of suffering due to illness, conflict or war are discussed in Meiring (2010a). This indicates how these names reflect a shared history and heritage that shaped a collective experience of what it means to be a South African. Despite the hardships reflected in the above place names, being South African is also characterised by messages of peace, hope, safety, well-being and happiness, as reflected in names from Raper (2004). Peace is reflected in *Agisanang*: < Setswana for 'live together in peace'; *Kagiso*: < Setswana for 'place of peace'; *Kgotsong*: < Southern Sotho for 'place of peace'; *Khanyiso*: < isiXhosa for 'peace'; *Vrede*: < Afrikaans for 'peace'. Other names in Raper (2004: 396) that reflect peace include *Vrededorp*, *Vredefort*, *Vredehoek*, *Vredenburg*, and so on. Well-being is reflected in *Ncome River*: < isiZulu for 'the pleasant one'; *Blyde River*: < Dutch for 'happy' river referring to the safe return of the Voortrekkers. Its previous name was *Treur River* (Afrikaans for 'river of mourning') because the rest of the party thought they were dead; *Giyani*: < Shangaan for 'place where people dance for joy'; *Guguletu*: < isiXhosa for 'our pride'; *Ikbutseng/Khutsong*: < Setswana for 'place of rest'; *Pilgrims Rest*; *Rustenburg*: < Dutch for 'town of rest'; *Kathlehong*: < Northern Sotho for 'place of success/happiness/shelter'; *Bophelong*: < Sotho for 'place of good health', and safety is expressed in *Boipatong*: < Sotho for 'place of shelter' where the owner of a farm allowed unemployed families to build huts for themselves on the farm; *Boitumelong*: < Setswana for 'place of happiness'; *Bothebolong*: <

Sotho for 'place of protection'; *Botshabelo*: < Sotho for 'place of refuge'; *Duduza*: < isiZulu for 'place of comfort/consolation'; *Entsimkeni*: < isiXhosa for 'place of support'.

This spirit of fellowship stems from the African philosophy of *ubuntu*, 'a person is a person through other persons', in isiZulu and isiXhosa *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* and in the Sotho languages *Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang*, meaning 'I am because we are'. Being South African should ultimately mean the *ubuntu* concept which is a demand for respect for others regardless of their circumstances.

4.6 Group F – Cultural and economic activities

Names reflecting differences in language, culture and religion are indicators of the diverse South African society. However, economic activities indicate how South Africans explore possibilities and opportunities that strengthen the nation as a whole.

4.6.1 Languages

South Africa has eleven official languages, mostly of African origin, including Afrikaans, English and Indian languages. Descendants of the Khoe are making efforts to learn and teach some of the nearly extinct Khoe languages. These official languages inevitably result in names for different places that refer to the same thing, for instance 'place of the leopard/cheetah' in *Mangaung* (Southern Sotho), *Mabloseni* (Xitsonga), *Mankzweng* (Northern Sotho), *Luipaardsvlei* ('marsh of the leopard'), *Tygervallei*, *Tierpoort*, and so on where the names with 'tier' (tiger) refer to the leopard or the cheetah. We also find 'place of red ochre/red ground/red sand' in *Ntsumaneni* (Shangaan), *Luwundini* (Tshivenda), *Awakhaes* (Khoe), *Roodezand* (Dutch), *Bomvini* (isiZulu), *Rooilaagte* (Afrikaans), *Red Hill*, and so on (Raper: 2004).

Similar varieties exist with other words from the fauna and flora of the country being the element of description. Names referring to the colours in nature abound and deserve to be researched as a topic on its own.

4.6.2 Economic activities

South Africans are well known for their economic abilities and, in particular, their agricultural expertise. Taking cattle farming as an example, we find names dating back to the Khoi cattle owners who

provided the navigators with fresh meat, for instance names from Raper (2004) referring to 'the cattle people', the Goutiquas who lived at the site of the *Gourits River*, a river that was named *Rio das Vaccas* ('river of cattle') and *Rio dos Vacqueros* ('river of the cattle people') by the Portuguese navigators. *Vleesbaai* ('bay of meat') was also named *Angra das Vaccas*. The Eastern Cape town *Patensie* is a phonological adaptation of Bushman 'where the cattle stays'. We find cattle farming in all its variations in names such as *Botrivier* < 'botter rivier' (butter river); *Beestekraal* ('cattle kraal'); *Beesvlei se Berg* ('mountain of cattle marsh') which is a translation of Khoe *Kwakanap*, the name of a watercourse meaning 'cattle marsh'; *Amatola Mountains* and *Amatole district municipality* (<isiXhosa 'ithole' ('an unweaned calf')).

What Coetsier (1993: 102) quotes about the importance of cattle for the Xhosa people is likely to be true for most cattle farmers in the country, namely that "... cattle is the foremost and practically the only subject of his care and occupation, in the possession of which he finds complete happiness". This is also true with regard to other forms of farming.

Economic activities are also reflected in names referring to the processing of indigenous fruits, for instance the marula which is unique to South Africa. The marula is a national fruit associated with the country and used in liqueurs, jams and other products for export purposes. This industry is a source of income for rural women who use the fruit for making jelly, syrup, beer and dried rolls. The nuts from the pith are said to be high in healthy oils. The fruit of the marula is reflected in names such as *Nblovea* (Shangaan for marula juice, the unfermented, undiluted form of marula liquor), a tributary of the *Sabie River*; *Maroelakop* ('marula hill') and *Maroelapan* ('marula dam').

The ripe little black berries of another wild plant (isiXhosa *msobo* ('deadly nightshade')) used for jam-making were initially sold at home-industry shops but are today also found on supermarket shelves. The leaves are used for cooking. The little place *Msobo* in the Eastern Cape derives its name from this plant. Other places include *Ceres* < a Roman goddess of agriculture, a place known for its fruit and juice industry; *Citrusdal*, where many of South Africa's export oranges are grown; *Golden Valley*, named after the colour of the ripe fruit, mainly apricots,

grown under irrigation from the Great Fish River. The fruit industry forms an important part of the South African economic scene and many depend on it for a livelihood.

4.6.2 The mining industry

The mining industry is well represented in toponyms. South Africa is well-known for its mining activities. This major industry started many decades ago and was the root of many wars between South Africa and countries with imperialist motives. To many South Africans the gold-mining industry meant a source of income and shaped their lives; they often spent months at a time away from their homes. To others it meant wealth and prosperity and the accompanying lifestyle. The following names selected from different sources reflect this category: *Thabazimbi* < Setswana for 'mountain of iron' is a mining town established in 1953, yet remains of clay pots and the melting of iron found on the surrounding hills are proof of mining activities dating back to 1400-1600 before the town was established or had a name; e*Malableni* (the new name for Witbank), meaning 'a place of coal' in isiZulu, isiXhosa and isiNdebele). In a name such as *Gauteng* (Sesotho for 'place of gold') the phonological similarity to Afrikaans 'goud' is obvious; *Egoli* (isiZulu for 'place of gold'); *Gold Reef City*, *Gondvlake*, *Pilgrims Rest* and *Barberton* are associated with the mining of gold. *Abbots Hill* was named after Abbot, a prospector in the Barberton gold industry in the nineteenth century; *Allanridge* after prospector Allan Roberts, and *Barberton* after a prospector, Graham Barber. The diamond industry is associated with *Kimberley* and *Cullinan*. It is interesting to note that the African name for Kimberley is *Teamane*, a phonologisation of Afrikaans 'diamant' meaning 'diamond'. Copper is/was mined at *Musina* (meaning 'copper' in Tshivenda) and *Copperton*. Names reflecting other mining activities can also be researched.

4.6.3 Religion

South Africans are often described as a nation with a deep-rooted religious heritage consisting of various forms of worship. The role of missionaries from various countries in establishing mission stations and the influence these had on the lives of people cannot be evaluated or measured except by word of mouth from those, and their descendants, who were subjected to it, voluntarily or not. One point of view is that

... the exporting to Africa of Christianity, commerce and civilisation in the interest of uplifting the indigenous population shaped the indigenous South African both positively and negatively as the good intentions of European colonialists and missionaries became awkwardly entangled with exploitation, separatism and supremacy (L'Ange 2005: 173).

Others believe in the sincerity of missionaries who came to spread the gospel in order to save souls and uplift the people. From Raper (2004), names with a religious connotation reflect the presence of missionaries: *Morija* < Biblical name meaning 'provided by the Lord', gathering place of the Zionist Christian Church with thousands of members; *Pella* (Roman Catholic mission station); *Adams Mission* (established in 1836, destroyed by Dingane, rebuilt in 1839, an educational institution named after Dr Newton Adam, an American missionary); *Bethel*: Hebrew for 'house of God', a mission station established in 1837 by the Berlin Missionary Society on land near Stutterheim donated by Xhosa Chief Gosela; *Bethelsdorp*: Hebrew for 'house of God' and 'dorp' (Afrikaans for 'town'), a mission station for the Khoe established by the London Missionary Society on Theuns Botha's farm; *Mariannhill*, founded in 1882 as a Trappist monastery, now a Roman Catholic mission station, and *Mount Ayliff*, a mission station in the Eastern Cape, named either after the missionary, or an official or a magistrate (Raper 2004: 253). *Genadendal* (Dutch for 'valley of grace') was the first mission station and was established by the Moravian missionary George Schmidt in 1738. It became a large economic hub where millinery, ironmongery and copper industries flourished. Descendants of missionaries, slaves and the Khoe lived in harmony in this town. Genadendal became the pioneer place for teacher training, printing and architectural engineering. The name was also chosen by President Nelson Mandela on 1 February 1995 for the official residence, Westbrook, in Cape Town.

From Kadmon (1993), the Biblical names *Bethlehem*, *Eden*, *Ebenezer*, *Elim*, *Hebron*, *Berea*, *Bethany*, *Hermon*, *Mamre*, *Mount Carmel*, *Pniel*, *Siloam*, and so on are noted in South African toponymy. There are undoubtedly more names associated with other religious activities to be researched.

5. Transformation and change

Whereas most names for the new structures mentioned earlier are African names, not necessarily the names of persons, with a few Khoe, English and Afrikaans names, the process of transformation has been successful in representing the majority of South Africans in these names. The country has a colonial past and a liberation struggle still fresh in the memory of some South Africans. Efforts to bring about reconciliation is a strategy to reach an outcome of transformation so that every South African can share in the joy of being a liberated nation, free from divisional structures between different groups of people. Geographical names are targeted to be part of the liberation struggle and the establishment of an African identity. Similar political moves were made by previous authorities. Honouring the legacy of the past as a gesture of reconciliation is not always a good reason to justify the status quo, especially if some of the older names are abusive to a certain community. Names such as *Verwoerdburg* had to be changed due to the connotation of Verwoerd as the leader of the policy of apartheid. As part of the history of South Africa, the removal of such names is a strategy to develop a new order (transformation), a kind of evolution from one social order to a new more just society. To maintain the delicate balance between a goal of national unity and providing for social diversity demands that the politics of identity should not be a precondition for the strategy to reform and renew. Successful transformation of society, with the ultimate social cohesion as the foundation of a South African society, implies a social consciousness that takes into account the "... improvement and non-coersive enhancement of life in a community struggling to exist among other communities" (Said 1994: 377).

In this regard, Fanon (Said 1994: 323-5) mentions that "... unless national consciousness at its moment of success was somehow changed into a social consciousness, the future would hold not liberation but an extension of imperialism". This implies that a consciousness of social and political need should underpin the recommendations to change a specific place name. As such being South African can be enriched to create a transformed society that would be beneficial to all South Africans.

The question is how do South Africans view the toponymic landscape of their country – is it a reflection of all its peoples or only of the majority in power? Are older names abusive in the sense that they have negative associative meanings of being part of a previous era, or does the abusiveness lie in the lexical meaning of the word? Reactions to recent changes of geographical names, which include replacement with older established names, the translation of a name into another language and innovative new names, were met with mixed attitudes from communities. Strong opposition came from communities who were of the opinion that they were not consulted sufficiently while others welcomed the new name. Objections will always be unavoidable as South African society is not homogeneous on any level. The process of change cannot be termed “transformation” until there is, despite a cultural identity, a national strategy aimed at attaining national unity, filtering through to all communities, promoting reconciliation through tolerance, a change of attitudes based on trust and goodwill. It appears that emotional factors do not play a role in the case of orthographic adjustments because the names basically remain the same. Reactions to standardisation – orthographic adjustments to names with incorrect spelling – are therefore minimal.⁴

6. Conclusion

The geographical names used as examples are no more than indications, reflections of the South African way of putting their experiences, activities, feelings, observations of their surroundings into words - words that are names. There is a continuity of experiences over generations of South Africans of what places mean to people who are ultimately connected by a name and a place. Being South African is being connected, being part of the historical experience reflected by the toponymic tapestry of the land. Many of the names on any map of South Africa reflect more about the beauty or harshness of the mountains, sunsets, coastline, pastures, plains, fauna and flora of the country than about the people. Yet, all South Africans have a history of hardships and political changes and shared positive or negative feelings that are coined in the names. Unlike other conventional uses

4 Jenkins (2007), Coetser (2006) and Meiring (1996) discuss the dynamics behind changing a country's names.

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of language, names do not lie, not even when they appear semantically opaque such as names derived, translated or adapted from Bushman and Khoe names.

The essential element in this article is man, who is the name giver, the inhabitant of a place and the creator of his/her personal space within a natural and cultural environment. Man, as a governing authority, is responsible for the demarcation of his/her living areas, ultimately constituting separate provinces, states, municipalities, recreational, industrial and housing areas. However, none of this is ever constant, as life, which includes man and his mobility as a cultural being, is a dynamic force that is susceptible to change. This is reflected in language shifts, political attitudes, cultural diversity and social change that influence the choice or rejection of a place name.

Finally, the view of Wiredu (1980: 21) describes the essence of being South African:

The sense of solidarity and fellowship which, as it were, spills over from the extended family to the larger community and the well-known spontaneity of our people [...] combine to infuse our life with a pervasive humanity and fullness of life which visitors to our land have always been quick to remark.

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