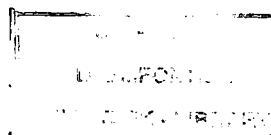


,b162 619 4X



HIERDIE EKSEMPLAAR MAG ONDER  
GEEN OMSTANDIGHEDE UIT DIE  
BIBLIOTEK VERWYDER WORD NIE

University Free State  
  
34300004921619  
Universiteit Vrystaat

# **Human and social capital formation in South Africa's arid areas**

**Mark Knightley Ingle**

**Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the PhD degree in the Faculty of  
Economic and Management Sciences Centre for Development Support at the University of  
the Free State.**

**Submitted: 1 February 2012**

**Supervised by: Prof G.E. Visser**

I, Mark Ingle, declare that this dissertation/thesis hereby handed in for the PhD qualification at the University of the Free State, is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work for a qualification at/in another university/faculty.

..... 1 February 2012

I, Mark Ingle, hereby cede the copyright on this dissertation/thesis to the University of the Free State but only insofar as copyright on the previously published portions of it has not already been ceded to the publishing houses concerned.

..... 1 February 2012

**Acknowledgements:**

Without the encouragement and faith of my supervisor, Prof. Gustav Visser, and my wife, Prof. Doreen Atkinson, this body of work would never have been undertaken or brought to completion. My heartfelt thanks also to Profs. Lucius Botes and Lochner Marais for their collegiality and support over last 10 years.

Acknowledgements and grateful thanks are also due to the National Research Foundation (NRF) for a generous bursary and to the Cluster for Sustainable Development and Poverty Alleviation at the University of the Free State for additional financial assistance.

# *Human and social capital formation in South Africa's arid areas*

## **Contents**

1. Prologue .....	4
2. Postproductivism in rural areas .....	5
3. The costs of postproductivism.....	10
4. The 'creative class'.....	12
5. The creative class, social capital and social networks .....	16
6. Urban-rural migration and the creative class in the countryside.....	22
7. Human capital and the economic impacts of the creative class .....	25
8. The creative class in the Karoo .....	28
8.1 The Karoo: from primary agriculture to postproductivism.....	29
8.2 White migration in South Africa: a neglected phenomenon.....	31
8.3 The impact of the creative class on Karoo social networks.....	33
8.4 The impact of the creative class on the economy of small Karoo towns.....	34
8.5 The impact of the creative class on the built environment .....	37
8.6 The power of the new creative class in the Karoo: resisting shale gas mining .....	40
9. The papers in this collection.....	42
9.1 Paper I: A 'Creative Class' in South Africa's arid Karoo region .....	42
9.2 Paper II: Making the most of 'nothing': Astro-tourism, the Sublime, and the Karoo as a 'space destination' .....	75
9.3 Paper III: Tarring the Road to Mecca: Dilemmas of infrastructural development in a small Karoo town.....	108
9.4 Paper IV: The Subaru Fauresmith 200km Challenge: Looking a gift-horse in the mouth? 133	
9.5 Paper V: The Copernican Shift in Space Tourism and its Implications for Tourism in the Great Karoo.....	161
10. Epilogue.....	188
11. References .....	190

## 1. Prologue

The University of the Free State's (UFS) *New Frontiers in Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development* Cluster focus area seeks, *inter alia*, to promote research with a bearing on local development in resource-poor environments. South Africa's arid zones are resource-poor by definition which entails that the remit of the *New Frontiers* focus area largely subsumes another UFS research initiative - the Centre for Development Support's (CDS) *Arid Areas Research Programme*.<sup>1</sup>

During the course of 2007, the Arid Areas Research Programme completed a series of diverse socio-economic studies with a special focus on the Karoo. The programme was provisional and exploratory in nature, and was intended to inform further arid areas studies on a par with those undertaken by Australia's Desert Knowledge Foundation, which is based in Alice Springs and which focuses on the Australian Outback.

This thesis builds on the work already done under the auspices of the Arid Areas Research Programme, by reflecting on select aspects of economic change in South Africa's arid areas where the main focus is on the Karoo. In particular, the focus is on the shift from primary agriculture to the tertiary sector, reflected in the growing number of tourism establishments, game farms and arts and craft enterprises. This type of rural transformation has been characterized as being a shift to a 'postproductivist countryside' (Ilbery, 1998). This is a form of rural re-orientation which has been the subject of academic scrutiny in Britain, Europe and the United States (Beale, 1980; Ilbery, 1998; Ilbery & Bowler, 1998; Askwith, 2008). This thesis will draw out some of the implications of postproductivism in South Africa's arid areas. In particular, the thesis will explore the social dimensions of this transformation and the urban-to-rural migration of middle-class whites (a phenomenon also known as 'counterurbanisation' or 'reverse migration'). Typically, these relatively affluent migrants from the city exhibit a

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aridareas.co.za>

propensity for creative activities, exemplified by art, crafts, boutique agriculture and niche tourism along with country lifestyle and biodiversity pursuits.

The thesis consists of five papers which explore different dimensions of the social phenomenon of a 'creative class' in South Africa's arid areas. In this overall contextualisation, the concept of the post-productivist countryside is briefly presented, followed by an elucidation of the concept of the 'creative class'. As part of this analysis the notion of 'social capital', as it is exemplified by this new rural class of sophisticates, is broached. In the five papers of the thesis, these themes are further elaborated on, with particular reference to the economic and social impacts of these in-migrants.

## **2. Postproductivism in rural areas**

Hoogendoorn and Visser (2011) in commenting on the "emerging South African postproductivist countryside" contend that the phenomenon arose concurrently with the demise and ultimate collapse of apartheid, and they point to the role of second homes in rural areas as giving impetus to postproductivist developments. For the purposes of the arguments to be presented here it is instructive to note that the years of apartheid's decline also happened to coincide with South Africa's unprecedentedly rapid adoption of a range of communications technologies, namely mobile telephony, e-mail and the internet. In the space of a very few years these technologies had become virtually ubiquitous in all but the remotest rural areas.

A major stimulus for the post-productivist movement internationally is the change of pace which many urban residents are seeking (Askwith, 2008). This is of a piece with the 'deconcentration theory' described by Lewis (1998:137) which "takes the view that long-standing preferences towards lower density locations are being less constrained by institutional and technological barriers" and that "rising standards of living, and technical improvements in transport, communication and production are leading to a convergence... in the availability of amenities that were previously accessible only in large places".

According to Honoré (2004:21), “Cities have always attracted energetic and dynamic people, but urban life itself acts as a giant particle accelerator. When people move to the city, they start to do everything faster”. Vernon (2011:121), who himself “turned to the countryside” for relief, considers “the urban social imaginary... [to be] ego-aggrandising not ego-transcending” and unsuitable “for contemplation”. The advent of mobile telecommunications has only served to make urban living in the developed world ever more frenetic (the ‘fast lane’). But advances in telecommunications simultaneously hold out the option of a bolthole from the urban frenzy. Mobile telecommunications can make urban living possible at one remove – that is to say, rural living with an urban income. This becomes a financially viable option for people not bound to a specific workplace. In the late 1980s, the New York-based Trends Research Institute identified a phenomenon known as “downshifting”, which entails “swapping a high-pressure, high-earning, high-tempo lifestyle for a more relaxed, less consumerist existence... willing to forgo money in return for time and slowness” (Honoré, 2004:41). By the late 1980s, some big corporations were already running in-house prototypes of e-mail on networked personal computers, which enabled staff to work at home, and this facilitated a measure of ‘downshifting’ in residential location.

Carlo Petrini, the Italian founder of the ‘Slow Food’ movement, rejects the notion that the Slow Movement’s ethos is anti-modern. He affirms the right of people to moderate the pace at which they choose to live: “If you are always slow then you are stupid – and that is not at all what we are aiming for... being Slow means that you control the rhythms of your own life. You decide how fast you have to go in any given context. If today I want to go fast, I go fast; if tomorrow I want to go slow, I go slow. What we are fighting for is the right to determine our own tempos” (Petrini quoted in Honoré, 2004:14). It is this ‘right to determine one’s own tempo’, and a willingness to make the requisite trade-offs (Brende, 2004), that has contributed to the migration of urban sophisticates to small towns. The new emphasis on ‘quality of life’ considerations, as typified by the slow food movement and its offshoots, is associated with this type of migration (sometimes also called ‘semigration’).

Carr (2010:219) reveals why increasing numbers of people might wish to opt for rurality: “Studies [in attention restoration theory] over the past twenty years [have] revealed that after spending time in a quiet rural setting, close to nature, people exhibit greater attentiveness,

stronger memory, and generally improved cognition”. Creative professions typically put a premium on such experiences, and this acts as an environmental inducement for people to relocate where their circumstances make such a move feasible. Additionally, in South African cities, as is the case worldwide, “traffic and gridlock have become a deadweight time cost” (Florida, 2010:8; Parker, 2011), and consequently the case for rural living has become all the more compelling.

Ilbery (1998:5) has analysed “the changing relationship between society and space in the countryside”. In rural areas, “the increasing mobility of people, goods and information has helped to erode local communities and open up the countryside to new uses [leading to new]... ‘actor networks’ which are likely to be dominated by external rather than internal linkages”. These new actor networks tend to be populated by ‘quality of life migrants’ who exert major positive impacts on small rural economies, as their influx introduces new sources of capital, skills and entrepreneurship (Beyers & Nelson, 2000; Halfacree, 2007a, 2007b).

According to Seabrook (2005:241):

Contemporary communications systems, global cultural convergence, information conglomerates and transnational providers of entertainment have made deep inroads into worlds that remained for centuries bounded, enclosed and self-reliant. These were characterised by networks of kin, work and neighbourhood, networks which have been torn apart and scarcely exist now in that particular form. They have not disappeared however, but have been reconstituted in global networks of far wider scope and reach. Relationships constituted through the new networks are based upon instant access to a whole world; careers articulated to the global economy, elective relationships, often at a distance, that give their participants the freedom to remain where they please, for they are never out of touch. If the provinces exist now, they are social rather than geographic, a class rather than a place.

Ilbery (1998:4) describes how agriculture in the developed world has been restructured in line with an accelerating rate of socio-economic, environmental and political change to the point that “rural areas are no longer dominated in employment terms by farmers and landowners”. The



countryside in Britain has moved from a predominantly agricultural productivist mode (primary agricultural production) towards tertiary sectors (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998; Taylor, 2006). Askwith (2008:274) noted that “the proportion of the UK workforce employed in agriculture had fallen to 1.7 per cent [in 2007], compared with 5 per cent in 1951. A quarter of farms had... an income of ‘less than zero’; half had an income of less than £10 000... Meanwhile, the new countryside-dwellers continued to pour in with their money. In 2007, the average rural house cost £30 000 more than the average urban house”. While South Africa’s countryside has not seen anything like this scale of ‘rural colonisation’, the papers that comprise this thesis will reveal there to have been a significant reappraisal of the value of rural properties in the country - no doubt stimulated by the demand for second homes (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2011).

The transition from agricultural to post-productivist rural areas has occurred in parallel with the consolidation of farmland and the ‘massification’ or industrialisation of large-scale agricultural production fuelled by biotechnology and genetically modified crops. This in turn has caused a backlash in favour of organic, locally-grown produce often retailed via ‘farmers’ markets’ (Brand, 2009; Brende, 2004; Kingsolver, 2008). This shift has also been identified as involving “the relocalisation of the agrofood system in which quality products and services, with real authenticity of geographical origin”, are locally produced (Ilbery, 1998:4).

The post-productivist shift also entails the generation of “new sources of income from non-agricultural activities” such as tourism (Ilbery, 1998:4). The advent of ‘niche tourism’ has seen a move away from traditional ‘mass tourism’ towards a predilection for remote, ‘authentic’ rural regions and their small towns (Butcher, 2003; Ingle, 2012). Factors such as improved transport and communications have facilitated rapid movement between rural and urban areas, and have stimulated preferences for rural lifestyles, even while those enjoying this option maintain constant access to cities. Brand (2009: 35) observes that “nothing saves a village like a good road to town and a good cellphone connection” and goes on to quote from a 2006 UN-HABITAT report to the effect that: “Cities are engines of rural development... improved infrastructure between rural areas and cities increases rural productivity”. Greater disposable incomes for urban people have not kept pace with the astronomical increases in coastal property prices occasioned by foreign purchasing power, and a combination of these factors has been associated with the

acquisition of second homes in rural areas (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2010). This in its turn stimulates demand for typically outdoor leisure pursuits in rural areas where 4x4 trails, hiking, birding, fishing, and arts and crafts 'meanders' have all been turned to commercial account. The phenomenon of agri-tourism typifies a post-productivist blend of agriculture, tourism and lifestyle. Urry (1995:228) in his discussion of social identity and the countryside concludes that "what takes place in the countryside cannot be separated off from much wider changes in economic, social and cultural life, particularly those changes which occur within what might appear to be distant towns and cities". This contention applies no less to South Africa than it does to Britain, as the ensuing sections will illustrate, and it resonates strongly with the notion of a rural creative class to be advanced in this thesis.

Post-productivism also involves "the manipulation of consumer demand" (Ilbery, 1998:4), in the direction of well-branded, select and boutique products. As Askwith (2008:251) observes, "The art of growing apples hasn't changed much over the centuries, but the art of selling them has". This has not affected all rural areas equally. Those that are favoured with a good climate, attractive landscapes and well-preserved heritage architecture tend to attract the attentions of urbanites. As Ilbery (1998:4) points out, "uneven development and increasing differentiation are now characteristic features of rural space".

In describing the sea-change in international attitudes towards the rural, Atkinson (2011b) reveals that:

Rural policies are now much more than agricultural policies, or even agrarian policies. They are truly inter-sectoral, interdisciplinary, and based on a fluid conception of regions and territories. The management skills required draw from a wide range of disciplines: agriculture, tourism, water management, soil management, development planning, heritage management, ecology, and transport. In fact, even the concept of 'rural policy' is increasingly becoming a misnomer, as we realize the manifold connections between farms, villages, towns and cities – with a sophisticated rural clientele moving effortlessly between global, city and rural pursuits.

### 3. The costs of postproductivism

In 1799, Wordsworth wrote of England's Lake District as follows:

*Far from the living and dead wilderness  
Of the thronged World, Society is here  
A true community, a genuine frame  
Of many into one incorporate*  
(quoted in Sisman, 2006:289).

Wordsworth was describing a world of close-knit local relationships. Two centuries later, rural England looks very different (Urry, 1995; Taylor, 2006; Askwith, 2008). In place of the old "true communities" there are "commuters and entrepreneurs and retirees from other parts of the country. The family names in the local graveyard are no longer the surnames of the people living in the houses" (Taylor, 2006:xv). Some people "now live in the middle of a village but seem to take no part in it. They're living urban lives in the countryside... all over the place" (Ronald Blythe quoted in Taylor, 2005:54). The poet Philip Larkin's estimation of the emerging postproductivist English countryside conveyed a similar sense of disaffection:

*And that will be England gone,  
The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,  
The guildhalls, the carved choirs.  
There'll be books; it will linger on  
In galleries; but all that remains  
For us will be concrete and tyres*  
(quoted in Dyer, 2010:136).

Other authors have also commented on the loss of traditional society: "Globalization... has begun to spawn its opposite... The dominant cultural force of the century ahead won't just be global and virtual but a powerful interweaving of opposites – globalization *and* localization, virtual *and* real, with an advance guard constantly undermining what is packaged and drawing much of society behind them" (Boyle 2003:5)

Clearly, post-productivism, especially when it takes place at scale as has been the case in the UK, can come with costs attached (Ilbery, 1998). According to Dyer (2010:136), "...every town looks exactly like every other. A journey through 'the vast bulk of England' is now a journey through the almost unrelieved ugliness of post-industrial homogenisation". Similarly, Seabrook (2005:227) contends that, "In a global economy, with instantaneous worldwide communications networks, there are no longer any outlying areas, distant settlements, remote places, since everything is brought into contact with the ubiquitous metropolis. If provincial life still exists, it does so only residually and is doomed to eventual extinction". Little wonder that the journal *Granta* (2005), when it devoted an issue to the theme "Country Life", qualified its title with "Dispatches from what's left of it".

In many respects, the British situation is dissimilar from South Africa's equivalent of the post-productivist countryside – although there are a number of 'boutique towns' (Clarens, Greyton, De Rust, Barrydale, Prince Albert) operating as weekend boltholes, within reach of South Africa's cities. Askwith's (2008) valedictory implies that there just is not enough space left in Britain for a countryside to exist much longer and that it is being crowded out above all else by vehicle traffic (also see Taylor, 2006). In England, the countryside is depicted as being essentially absorbed by the urban; in contrast, in South Africa, the distinctive 'apartness' of rural areas is constantly valorised and accentuated in the lifestyle media. In spite of its growing number of ties with the urban, rural South Africa still retains its physical integrity in the 'social imaginary'.

Given the ever growing media coverage of the Karoo in recent years, it can be argued that, far from the South African countryside vanishing, it is a countryside parts of which are increasingly coming into being. Information technology and media have been and still are hugely instrumental in (re)creating the South African countryside (Ingle, 2010a). In Britain, the technology has often been accompanied by hard infrastructure (roads, rail and housing development) but this has not happened to the same extent in South Africa where rural infrastructure is by and large still fairly antiquated. It could be argued that the countryside as a socially constructed reality (Foster, 2008) is still an *emergent* phenomenon in the South African

context. And although, as intimated above, key elements of post-productivism are taking shape in the Karoo these are thus far not such as to detract from its quintessential *rurality*.

#### 4. The 'creative class'

The 'creative class' construct is derived from the work of urban studies theorist, Richard Florida. Although it refers primarily to those people who make a living from creative pursuits, including artists, designers and knowledge-based professionals, in the present context it is also used to embrace those who have responded creatively to the touristic potential held out by the Karoo. The thesis posits the new creative class in the Karoo as a manifestation of rural postproductivism (Ingle, 2010a; 2010b) and shows how this phenomenon has served to augment and reconfigure a range of diverse 'capitals' including prevailing patterns of 'social capital'.

At the beginning of the new millennium, four works were published which all seemed, largely independently of one another, to be articulating the emergence of a new creative ethos as part of the millennial *zeitgeist*. These publications were David Brooks's *Bobos in Paradise* (2000); Ray and Anderson's *The Cultural Creatives* (2000); John Howkins's *The Creative Economy* (2001); and, most importantly for present purposes, Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002).

Brooks (2000:10-11) wrote about what he saw as "a cultural consequence of the information age" where "ideas and knowledge are at least as vital to economic success as natural resources and finance capital... so the people who thrive in this period are the ones who can turn ideas and emotions into products. These are highly educated folk who have one foot in the bohemian world of creativity and another foot in the bourgeois realm of ambition and worldly success". The people described by Brooks would serve as the prototype for the 'creative class' subsequently articulated by Florida (2002).

Howkins's (2001) focus was more on the nature of the economy which the new 'creative class' had been instrumental in bringing into being. According to Howkins the power of those who

owned 'the means of production' was being usurped by people who owned *ideas* and his book has a heavy emphasis on 'intellectual property' and what he terms 'the patent industries'.

Ray and Anderson's (2000) work embodied a markedly 'New Age' flavour and was concerned to document what the authors viewed as the emergence of a new subculture. Essentially this was about the coming to prominence of a new breed of person (the 'cultural creative') whose value system incorporated spirituality, creativity and elements of the feminine. The increasing influence of the feminine is a theme that was subsequently also taken up by Fellows (2004). Ray and Anderson (2000:4) maintained that "since the 1960s, 26 percent of the adults in the United States... have made a comprehensive shift in their worldview, values, and way of life". This new *zeitgeist* is marked by "serious ecological and planetary perspectives, emphasis on relationships and women's point of view, commitment to spirituality and psychological development, disaffection with the large institutions of modern life, including both left and right in politics, and rejection of materialism and status display". Ray and Anderson's notions of cultural transformation are of a piece with John Urry's (1995:211) observation that: "A large body of literature... suggests that over the past decade or two there has been a striking transformation in the nature of people's social identity, and that this is the consequence of massive changes in the organisation and culture of contemporary societies... different kinds of people are required by the kind of society which is emerging at the end of the century".

Once again the conceptual adumbration of Florida's 'creative class' is clearly to be discerned in Ray and Anderson's formulation. As to the characteristics of his brand of creatives, Florida provides a 'thick description' in the aggregate, consisting of observations scattered throughout the length of his main thesis. He identifies creative class values as being predicated on *individuality*, *meritocracy*, *diversity*, and *openness* or tolerance (Florida, 2002:77-80). Florida (2002:81) observes that the creative class subscribes to "a continued movement away from traditional norms to more progressive ones" before moving to overtly align the members of this class with Ray and Anderson's 'cultural creatives' who Florida states have "neither 'traditional' nor conventionally 'modern' values" but who have "eclectic tastes", enjoy "foreign and exotic" experiences, and whose values can best be described as "postmaterialist".

Although the books cited here were written from differing perspectives, all were concerned to draw attention to a hitherto unremarked social trend – the coming to prominence of a new category of person variously described as “bobos” or “bourgeois bohemians” (Brooks, 2000); “more businesslike” creative participants in the economy (Howkins, 2001:xvii); “cultural creatives” (Ray & Anderson, 2000), or collectively as the “creative class” (Florida, 2002).

Of these publications, Brooks’s journalistic satire was the less academic work, although it is not infrequently cited in the literature (see for example Florida, 2005; Zukin, 2010) and his latest publication (Brooks, 2011) is proving equally influential. But all these works were largely focused on developments within the USA, and all germinated within the ‘dot.com’ boom when it was widely believed that a ‘new economy’ was supplanting an ‘old economy’ (predominantly industrial) which was slated to share the fate of agriculturalism and decline into relative insignificance (Howkins, 2001). ‘Blue sky thinking’ was the catchphrase of the day and there was a certain euphoria about the ‘brave new world’ these books were heralding.

It is significant that the identification of the new ‘creative’ cohort coincided with the ascendancy of mobile computing, mobile telephony, and the rise of the so-called ‘knowledge economy’ analysed by Howkins (2001). At the very least, new kinds of intangible ‘capitals’ were in the air and it was the innovative contribution of the ascendant ‘creative class’ that was seen as fuelling the ‘new economy’ with the ‘intellectual capital’ it required.

Two of the abovementioned books were informed by empirical investigation to a quite extraordinary degree. Ray and Anderson (2000) for example drew upon “thirteen years of survey research studies on more than 100 000 Americans, plus more than 100 focus groups and dozens of in-depth interviews”. Florida (2002:327-379) provides two statistical appendices running to 52 pages. Christakis and Fowler (2009:195) invoke “the new era of large-scale data collection” as enabling quantitative research on a scale which would have been undreamt of not very long ago. They speak, for example, of capturing “280 000 pieces of legislation” which involved the analysis of “roughly 84-million” discrete decisions. The use of datasets on this scale has been made possible by huge advances in the processing capabilities of information technology. A potential downside to this is that researchers who want to harness this power may find

themselves having to resort to uneasy 'fits' between available datasets and whatever it is they want to measure. A consequence of this is that Florida finds himself manoeuvred by the content of the US census datasets, on which he relies so heavily for his statistical analyses, into the use of artificial, employment-based proxies for identifying the geographical and economic impacts of his creative class members (Ingle, 2010a).

This has exposed Florida to criticism and his ideas have not gone uncontested. Richards (2011:1243) says that "there has been much debate on the 'creative turn', and whether the current vogue for creativity is a hype or a valuable development strategy". Crawford (2009), in his memorably titled *The Case for Working with your Hands or Why Office Work is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good*, shows himself to be deeply sceptical of the 'creativity' literature, and in particular of Florida's contributions to the genre. Given that Crawford valorises 'blue-collar' work, this is perhaps not surprising. Florida *does* seem to want to equate creativity with the high-tech and the cerebral. This is unduly restrictive. It is not obvious why motorcycle mechanics, for instance, should be excluded from the ranks of the creative class purely by dint of their 'old economy' profession. Lanier (2010), a pioneer in high-tech creativity and virtual reality, in fact deplores the *lack* of creativity within the IT sector which he maintains has been content to coast along on 'legacy' architecture inherited from the 1970s. Surely there must be creative plumbers just as there must be uncreative computer programmers? Florida's (2010:127) later work implies that he would not really want to deny this and it is a shortcoming of Florida's initial construct that he conflated 'creativity' so readily with professional work. But had he *not* done so he could not possibly have provided the massive quantitative justifications for his arguments which the US census datasets made possible. The significance of this objection for this thesis is that the creative class can in fact assume several guises and can function within a variety of economic sectors and localities, some of which are arbitrarily deemed by Florida as not being creative. The upshot of this however is that 'scientific' measurement becomes very difficult thereby necessitating research that is more qualitatively informed.



## 5. The creative class, social capital and social networks

Florida (2005; 2008) is an enthusiastic advocate of the efficacy of social networks. This requires some theoretical consideration of the role played by the concepts of social networks and social capital in the literature on the creative class. The concept of 'social capital' has been accorded considerable attention in recent years. The term appears to have been coined in 1916 and was, significantly enough for present purposes, broached in a rural context. At issue was the notion of community involvement being a necessary condition for quality schooling. For L.J. Hanifan, "state supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia", 'social capital' involved:

... Those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit... The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself... If he comes into contact with his neighbour, and they with other neighbours, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. The community as a whole will benefit by the coöperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbours.

According to Robert Putnam (2000:19), this remarkably astute formulation "anticipated virtually all the crucial elements in later interpretations". In expanding on Hanifan's account, Putnam (2000:19) maintains:

The core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value... [and] affect the productivity of individuals and groups... social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called 'civic virtue'. The difference is that 'social capital' calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations.

Keeley (2007:116) maintains that social capital is difficult to measure directly because the concept “is still in its infancy” although Willis (2005) writes that the term was being widely used in development circles by the 1990s. It should also be interjected that whether anything as amorphous as ‘social capital’ could ever be susceptible of actual quantification is rather to be doubted. Although Willis (2005:110) avers that “social capital is a highly-contested concept”, it is not the intention here to problematise it unnecessarily. The World Bank defines social capital as “the informal rules, norms and long-term relationships that facilitate co-ordinated action and enable people to undertake co-operative ventures for mutual advantage” (Willis, 2005:111).

Putnam (2000) distinguishes between two major variants of social capital, namely *bonding* and *bridging* capital. ‘Bonding’ is typified by *exclusivity*, where the group has some kind of membership, either tacit or overt. It is the ‘one of us’ syndrome. Those “networks that are outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages” and that strive towards *inclusivity* (for example charismatic church organisations) represent the bridging type of social capital (Putnam, 2000:22; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). These two characterisations are not mutually exclusive. A social entity may exhibit strains of both variants. An internet chat group, for example, “may bridge across geography, gender, age and religion, while being tightly homogenous in education and ideology” (Putnam, 2000:23). It is of the essence, in evaluating the social capital accompanying any influx of newcomers to a town, to appreciate that social capital is value-neutral – it can be used for good or ill - and that it may occasion “‘externalities’ that affect the wider community, so that not all the costs and benefits of social connections accrue to the person making the contact” (Putnam, 2000:20).

Amartya Sen has also recognised the importance of social capital: “The recent literature... has brought out clearly enough how an identity with others in the same social community can make the lives of all go much better in that community; a sense of belonging to a community is thus seen as a resource – like capital” (Sen, 2006:2).

A further distinction that is drawn in the literature is that between ‘weak’ as opposed to ‘strong’ social ties (Florida, 2005:31; Christakis & Fowler, 2009). Florida (2005; 2008) is an avowed

advocate of the efficacy of networks consisting of many 'weak tie' interconnections. 'Weak ties' are to 'strong ties' as acquaintances are to blood relations or bosom friends. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are *par excellence* the domain of weak ties (Christakis & Fowler, 2009; Turkle, 2011) but so is the kind of physical proximity that prevails with economic 'clustering'. This distinction is of major importance for the theory of the 'creative class'. For Florida (2005:31) "Places with dense ties and high levels of traditional social capital provide advantages to insiders and thus promote stability, while places with looser networks and weaker ties are more open to newcomers, and thus promote novel combinations of resources and ideas". It is in such locales where the footloose members of the creative class tend to cluster. Florida (2008:121) avers that: "[I]t is our numerous weak ties, rather than our fewer strong ones, that really matter. The idea that proximity to total strangers is more important than connections to lifelong friends may seem strange, until you think how networks function. The beauty of weak ties is that they bring us new information... [and that they] are more numerous and take less effort to maintain". It is easy to see why Florida's mobile bearers of multiple weak ties resonate better with today's 'connected' world than does Putnam's much greater emphasis on community cohesiveness and civic-mindedness (Christakis & Fowler, 2009).

It is no accident that Florida's (2005) autobiographical introduction to *Cities and the Creative Class* evokes a tightly-knit but ultimately stultifying working class background from which he managed to free himself – precisely the sort of milieu, the decline of which, Putnam seems to regret. There is a nostalgia in Putnam for something which Florida wants to see transcended. Florida argues for the positive promise of the information era whereas Putnam downplays the importance of 'cyberspace' ties and accords far more prominence to "local personal contact" (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003:9). This is further evidenced by the fact that in the 500-odd pages of Putnam's seminal exposition of social capital decline, *Bowling Alone*, there is but a single mention of mobile telephony (Putnam, 2000:166) and no mention whatever in its sequel, *Better Together* (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003)

Generally, arguments about the respective merits of strong versus weak ties seem to be misplaced. To function effectively, people need *both* sorts of ties, but they are likely to be particularly advantaged insofar as they can skilfully marshal their 'portfolio' of weak ties

(Christakis & Fowler, 2009). Much also depends on the *quality* of these ties. The creative class concept illustrates how powerful weak ties can be. 'Creative class clusters' are not mafias, brotherhoods or 'closed shops' - and therein lies their value for regional development. Their stance is one of openness to new initiatives (that do not violate their value systems) and this serves as a magnet for further innovation. As Florida (2002:51) rightly claims, the mere fact of venture capital being available will not act as a stimulus to development. New investment is more likely to flow "to places that [have] other elements of a well-developed 'social structure of innovation'".

The prevalence of weak tie interaction has been greatly amplified by new communication technologies, which have had far-reaching social consequences and are developing with extraordinary speed (Christakis & Fowler, 2009; Kelly, 2010; Lanier, 2010; Bohler-Muller & van der Merwe, 2011; Essoungou, 2011). Turkle (2011:16, 310) for example reports that in January 2010 the 'average' American teenager was sending and receiving around 6500 text messages a month. Since 2003, the world has seen the advent of so-called web 2.0 'killer apps' - Skype, eBay, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, PayPal, Second Life and a host of others. They combine in what some commentators view as a development which will culminate in another 'singularity' (Carlson, 2010; Kelly, 2010). A 'singularity' is a convergence of processes which results in an utterly changed world which can never revert to its former state. An earlier singularity, according to Barlow (quoted, albeit not overtly endorsed, by Putnam, 2000:172) was the advent of the internet itself: "We are in the middle of the most transforming technological event since the capture of fire".

Society is changing in response to technology and so are humans, in more ways perhaps than is generally realised (Carr, 2010). The social sciences remain relatively unprepared to cope with such rapid change, and therefore find themselves perpetually having to 'catch up' in trying to understand the implications of the new 'technium' (Kelly's term for the entire technological realm). Advances in biotechnology, nanotechnology and the neurosciences are keeping pace with the information technology juggernaut, with the result that the kaleidoscopic networks that constitute the essence of social capital, and the various 'knowledges' on which these networks feed, are being constantly and profoundly reconfigured. The 'technium' really has assumed a life

of its own (Kelly, 2010), much to many observers' deep consternation (Carr, 2010; Lanier, 2010; Turkle, 2011). But it has undeniably also enabled people to use technology to create new kinds of networks, across urban and rural landscapes (Christakis & Fowler, 2009; Turkle, 2010). Indeed according to Christakis and Fowler (2009) modern people do not live in groups anymore – they now live in networks.

Rural creative class members tend unsurprisingly to exhibit certain features held in common, thereby lending them a shared sense of identity. In the case of the rural 'cultural creatives' being analysed here, shared identity is provided by the fact that they are usually 'counterurbanisers', and this can come with a decided air of exclusivity. They have bought into the same vision, thereby demonstrating a commitment to a set of amorphous 'alternative' values which are held in common (Ray & Anderson, 2000).

A potential danger lies in the fact that the 'creatives' may become a new exclusionary ('bonding') social force. As Sen (2006:2), in his study of the links between identity and violence, points out, "a sense of identity can firmly exclude many people even as it warmly embraces others". Even generalised compassion can lead to "strengthening solidarity among elites and distancing them yet further from the subordinated" (Nussbaum, 2010:38). Meagher (2010:19) observes that: "In addition to providing an informal framework for greater economic efficiency, networks can also operate as mechanisms of parochialism or collusion that disrupt economic development... under certain conditions, networks constitute social liabilities rather than social capital".

As a rule though the creative class has tended to exert a modernising stimulus which has exposed rural communities to new forms of tolerance. Florida (2010:86) claims that there are "three key attributes that make people happy in their communities and cause them to develop a solid emotional attachment to the place they live in". The first of these is environmental – the natural beauty, the aesthetic context, the authenticity of the buildings, and so forth. The second is social – "the ease with which people can meet others, make friends, and plug into social networks". And the third is the general air of open-mindedness, acceptance, and tolerance of diversity. In all

three of these respects, the creative class has tended to transform those towns it has come to occupy.

The tolerance factor is a critical part of Florida's creative class construct. Tolerance foments economic innovation and growth. Consequently, one of the elements of Florida's (2002:255-258) original thesis that rendered it controversial was his contention that the strong presence of a gay constituency in any locale was a sure indicator of that place's creative energy (see also Florida, 2005:41). Indeed, Florida found 'gayness' a stronger predictor than any other measure for an ethos of tolerance, creativity and the likelihood of economic growth. Florida collaborated with Californian academic, Gary Gates, in order to establish the 'Gay Index', which is a crucial pillar of his 'Tolerance' measure (Florida, 2005: 3-8, 40-41). In this regard, it is important to note that the 2000 US Census was the first in which people were asked specifically to "identify their sexual orientation" (Florida, 2002: 255). Prior to that, the number of gay people had had to be indirectly inferred via an interpretation of answers relating to marital status. The new practice introduced with the 2000 census has naturally enough furnished demographers with a significant new variable to supplement their analyses.

Gates has characterised gay people as being the "canaries<sup>2</sup> of the Creative Age" (Florida, 2002:256). Some of Florida's critics have objected that not all gay people are creative and, conversely, that not all creative people are gay, but this is not what Florida wants to claim. He merely resorts to the readings on his Gay Index as a litmus test with which to take a location's 'tolerance temperature' and is at pains to set his critics right on this score. Florida argues that an environment in which gays feel secure enough to congregate will have above average chances of being economically successful. It is important to clarify that Florida does not want to argue that a gay presence *precipitates* economic dynamism, but makes the lesser claim that it is a *concomitant* of a place's 'creative health'. Florida (2002:xvii) is "not suggesting that gays and bohemians literally cause regions to grow [but that]... their presence in large numbers is an indicator of an underlying culture that's open-minded and diverse". But there is every indication in the Karoo that gay couples *have* often served as catalysts igniting the economic potential of

---

<sup>2</sup> This is an analogy with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Cornish tin-miners' practice of taking a canary underground with them. If the canary happened to die, they knew the air had turned dangerously toxic and it was time to evacuate the mine.

towns that had, to all intents and purposes, been written off. In this regard it should be mentioned that Fellows (2004) takes a much stronger line and persuasively argues for gay men as catalysts of economic growth and development.

It is a commonplace that a high preponderance of people within certain creative professions are gay (Fellows, 2004). These are professions that call for an enhanced capacity for creative *vision*. What might this mean when translated into the economic 'reversioning' of a small town's hitherto neglected assets? There are many examples in South Africa of rural towns where gay newcomers have transformed sites of dereliction into hubs of entrepreneurial activity and this phenomenon has been well documented in America (Fellows, 2004; Reynolds, 2011).

Florida's argument has a great deal of resonance in the Karoo where it could easily be demonstrated that gentrifying gay couples have, time and again, helped precipitate quite dramatic economic 'turnarounds'. In the process, they have often very substantially boosted local property values - as has happened in the USA as well (Boyle *et al.*, 1998; Fellows, 2004). The phenomenon of gay couples as originators and *ongoing drivers* of economic revival in the arid areas' small towns was broached at the 2010 AGM of the South African Heritage Society held in Graaff-Reinet and certainly warrants further research.

## **6. Urban-rural migration and the creative class in the countryside**

Gareth Lewis (1998:131) writes that, "With the emergence of a world economy and the globalization of communications, migration in turn has 'exploded' at all geographical scales and become of major concern". Christakis and Fowler (2009:263) report that "while population has gone up sevenfold in two hundred years, mobility has increased over a thousandfold in the same period, further increasing the jostling".

Although urban-to-rural migration is dwarfed by the extent of international migration, and the irresistibly powerful trend of ongoing urbanisation, it has nevertheless been the subject of

academic study, most especially as the phenomenon has manifested in the developed world (Brown & Wardwell, 1980; Ilbery, 1998; Boyle, Halfacree & Robinson, 1998). In 1980 Brown and Wardwell (1980:1) reported of the USA that “for the first time in this century, population and economic growth in nonmetropolitan America is exceeding metropolitan growth. Growth is occurring in remote and completely rural counties”. They went on to say that “... in most regions the new growth is entirely due to changes in net migration. Movement of people from metropolitan to nonmetropolitan areas since 1970 has exceeded the counterflow into metropolitan centres”. Scholars have advanced many putative contributory reasons for the rise of this phenomenon but the one that seems to feature most prominently, at least in the British literature, is the simple desire “to live in a nicer area” (Boyle, *et al.*, 1998:144). For Boyle *et al.* (1998:143) urban-to-rural migration is synonymous with ‘counterurbanisation’. This they say, whereas it had tended in the past to be seen as “a job-led phenomenon”, was increasingly being regarded as a people-led “preference for rural living... actively played out [and] assisted by improved transport infrastructure and level of personal mobility”. Lewis (1998:137) touches on a number of hypotheses pertaining to counterurbanisation before adjudging the evidence to weigh in favour of the ‘deconcentration theory’ which again involves people realising “long standing preferences”. What is important to note here is that counterurbanisers are not so much perceived as being *driven* as they are seen to be giving effect to personal inclination. This is borne out by the results of a modest survey conducted amongst recent counterurbanisers in a small South African town (Ingle, 2010a).

For Florida (2010:5-6), economic systems “... do not exist in the abstract; they are embedded within the geographic fabric of the society – the way land is used, the location of homes and businesses, the infrastructure that ties people, places, and commerce together. These factors combine to shape production, consumption, and innovation, and as they change, so do the basic engines of the economy”. Florida’s usage of ‘land’ could refer equally well to skylines, vistas, landscapes, ‘viewsheds’ and other spatially denominated assets. Florida’s sentiments regarding economic systems apply just as much to small local economies as they do to national economies, and lay the groundwork for a study of the creative class in small towns.



Adam Smith paid “close attention to the role of small towns in shaping the commerce and culture” of regions. For Smith, “a small town was ‘a continual fair or market’ in which ordinary men and women were able to learn the meaning of fair prices and wages and would in time begin to appreciate more general truths about the meaning of liberty and order” (Phillipson, 2010:16). This process was facilitated by the critical role of “gentlemen... in generating economic improvement in the countryside” (Phillipson, 2010:16). According to Phillipson, “It is hard to read Smith’s thinking about the progress of society in a commercial state without thinking of... the activities of energetic and ambitious incomers” to small towns. Phillipson says that Smith derived much of the theory that went into *The Wealth of Nations* from observing the effect of ‘incomers’ on the small town of Fife in Scotland. These remarks are important in understanding the thrust of the essays in this collection. The focus of the thesis is not so much on altruistic or purposive developmentalism, as it is on the potentially beneficial spin-offs and local economic multipliers created by a class of people innovatively pursuing their enlightened self-interest. Much the same sentiments are articulated by Christakis and Fowler (2009:293) who assert that: “Public goods often arise as by-products of the actions of individuals acting with some self-interest... The social networks that humans create are themselves public goods... the network can become a resource that no one person controls but that all benefit from”.

Urban migrants to small towns function as classic emissaries from ‘the leading edge’ who understand urban and international tourists’ requirements and who can provide them with an ‘authentic rural experience’, even though this might strike some as contrived. The psycho-social dynamics of attraction and repulsion have been extensively articulated by Zukin (2010) in her study of ‘authentic’ urban spaces. *Time* magazine dubbed authenticity “one of the ten most important ideas of 2007” (Zukin, 2010:3). As Braun (2004:126) maintains, to establish a brand successfully one should “work at the leading edge of the *current Zeitgeist* - [which] is why so many innovations that are successful feel that they’ve arrived at just the right time”. The imprimatur of ‘authenticity’, when it is bestowed on a rural feature, invariably originates from the perspective of the (ex)urbanite.

## 7. Human capital and the economic impacts of the creative class

Once again, Adam Smith is illuminating. It is a commonplace that any formal business enterprise presupposes a modicum of civic order for it to function optimally. Phillipson (2010:116-117) comments on “Smith’s profound insights into the importance of security and good government in releasing that love of improvement on which the progress of civilisation depended”. For Smith, the impetus for improvement was not rooted in selfishness or benevolence. He “detected a more immediate less speculative motive at work in the behaviour of a significant number of people – an *aesthetic sensibility* [italics added], which led them to seek convenience or order because it was beautiful and satisfying for its own sake as well as for any benefit it might bring oneself or others” (Phillipson, 2010:117).

This “aesthetic sensibility” (insightfully described by Fellows, 2004) is key to understanding the creative class. The class consists of real people giving expression to their moral and aesthetic visions and preferences, and exerting a concrete economic impact in the process. Reynolds (2011:141) invokes the notion of ‘subcultural capital’ – “a concept derived from Pierre Bourdieu’s theories about taste and class, which explore how aesthetic preferences help us distinguish ourselves from others”.

The investments of gentrifiers and ‘semigrators’ in local economies are capable of generating far-reaching multiplier effects. It is very difficult accurately to gauge the economic impact of a cohort of gentrifiers on a locality, although Hoogendoorn and Visser (2010) have made some attempt to do so in the case of second-home owners in a number of small towns. What price a freshly painted wall? How much might it generate for a community? Collier (2010:111), speaking of return on investment in a low-income country, suggests that it has the potential to be substantial:

The benefits of the investment are diffused right across the economy. A new road might enable a new crop to be grown and exported; the income from those exports might increase the demand for bicycles, inducing entry of new retailers and so making the market more competitive; the lower price of bicycles might enable more families to keep

children in school. In other words the return works through such a myriad of channels that it cannot be captured by the simple techniques of cost-benefit analysis.

Although the potential for a great diversity of amenity in a rural space is limited, it is nevertheless the case that the creative class, once sufficiently 'clustered', typically transforms small towns into *boutique* towns which thrive economically on the diversity of consumerist experiences. This is in stark contrast to the depressing paucity and homogeneity of experience offered by those towns that have failed to attract creative counterurbanisers. And as Zukin (2010:236) points out: "Creative clusters mobilize the social networks that are needed at every stage of the production process: getting commissions from firms in the mainstream economy, finding workers with specific skills for different projects, getting the work done, and forging collaborations for future jobs". The creative class brings with it the potential for rural economic diversification, which tends to enhance local resilience. Scott (1998:138) extols the merits of "a richly differentiated neighbourhood with many kinds of shops, entertainment centres, services, housing options, and public spaces" as guaranteeing "a more resilient and durable neighbourhood".

It was not within the purview of this study to investigate the complexities of the social capital obtaining within the arid areas' previously disadvantaged communities. Nevertheless, some mention should be made of the impact of the creative class on such communities. This impact is largely positive in terms of economic and social development for several reasons.

An important impact of the creative class is through its embodiment of high 'human capital'. It is generally recognised that a higher level of education creates more livelihoods options (Botha, 2011; Marais, Ingle, Skinner & Sigenu, 2011). By extension, one can reasonably infer that higher aggregate levels of education in a town can lead to higher levels of wealth creation. This would apply even in the case of economically inactive but well-educated retirees who, all things being equal, are likely to receive higher pensions than the norm, thereby generating greater economic multipliers than would a pensioner living on the breadline.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines human capital as “the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being” (Keeley, 2007:29). Clearly, from this definition, there is a link between human and social capital, although any precise relationship is likely to prove multi-faceted and elusive (Keeley, 2007).

The notion that people’s “individual capabilities were a kind of *capital*” is said to have arisen, perhaps unsurprisingly, with Adam Smith. He argued that economic activity was not powered by workers as an homogenous mass, but rather by “the acquired and useful abilities of all the inhabitants or members of a society”. Once an individual had met the ‘opportunity costs’ and expended sufficient effort to acquire competencies, these were translated into “a capital fixed and realised” in their persons (Smith quoted in Keeley, 2007:28). Keeley (2007:29) also reveals that it took a very long time for Smith’s sentiments in this regard to find general acceptance. It was only in the 1960s that the concept of ‘human capital’ was ‘mainstreamed’ by economists who, rather belatedly one might think, began to concur that “a modern economy can’t grow without an educated workforce”.

At a more profound level, the creative class has an impact on local communities because of their developmental values, as well as their ability and willingness to defend those values in the face of potential obstacles. The ethicist Peter Singer has elaborated on what he terms ‘transcendent causes’ which “are concerns that reach beyond your struggle to establish your place in the world, by attending to matters that are not [necessarily] in your own interests” (Vernon, 2011:121).

Generally, the creative class works well with local government structures where this is possible and will often go out of its way to participate in public forums and to engage constructively. “‘Linking’ (vertical) social capital... includes relations and interactions between a community and its leaders and extends to wider relations between the village, the government, and the marketplace” (Dudwick, Kuehnast, Nyhan-Jones & Woolcock, 2006:12).

The gentrification which is associated with investments by the creative class is often criticised on the grounds that it may ‘crowd out’ the less affluent. Zukin (2010:242), for example, in the

contexts of Shanghai and New York, maintained that “reinventing a neighbourhood’s authenticity serves mainly to establish the market value of its buildings and location, even at the cost of preventing artists, residents and small business owners from putting down roots”. Zukin neglects to recognise the incidental benefits of such gentrification - such locations might now *have* a market value whereas previously they had none (Fellows, 2004), and this might present “residents and small business owners” with just the opportunity many of them were looking for to *pull up* their roots and cash in their newly-appreciated assets.

Gentrification is a sword which may cut both ways (Boyle *et al.*, 1998). Very many home owners on the South African *platteland* have sold their properties which previously were regarded as unsaleable, and they have moved on to locales more to their liking. Alternatively, they have moved to similar environments, but where the property market is still moribund, and they can live off the capital differential their ‘downshifting’ yielded. Living in the countryside can be a mixed blessing. In Ronald Blythe’s (1969) seminal study of the English countryside, *Akenfield*, villagers spoke of “the brutality of country life and of their hopes to escape the village. Their lives were a complex mix of wide-open spaces and limited opportunities” (Taylor 2006:xiii). One should be wary then of over-romanticising the situation of those displaced by gentrification. As a number of playwright Athol Fugard’s dramas set in the Karoo make clear, for every person wanting to ‘escape’ to small town South Africa, there are many wanting to escape *from* it (Ingle, 2012) – and the concomitants of gentrification may provide the means to raise the capital to enable such choices.

## 8. The creative class in the Karoo

This thesis utilises the concepts of ‘post-productivism’, the ‘creative class’ and ‘social networks’ to examine the phenomenon of urban-rural migration to South Africa’s rural arid areas. While the extent to which the international literature can be usefully transposed onto South Africa, and onto the Karoo, remains an open question, this contextualisation argues that there are key parallels between international trends and the evolution of certain Karoo towns. This migration lays the groundwork for profound social and economic transformation in the receiving regions.

## 8.1 The Karoo: from primary agriculture to postproductivism

Karoo towns have, over the last century, experienced a marked decline in their economic fortunes (Nel & Hill, 2008), but this decline has been arrested, if not altogether reversed, in the last two decades by the arrival of a post-productivist cohort of migrants from the cities.

A number of studies of the Karoo, published by Rhodes University's Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) and the University of the Free State in the 1970s analysed the decline of Karoo towns. Economic development in the Karoo had been boosted by the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley in 1867 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886. Most routes to the new mining fields passed through the Karoo towns. But by the 1920s, the homogenous social structure of white Karoo communities began to change. The most important direct consequence was an out-migration of whites from platteland towns. By the 1930s, the depopulation of the Karoo was well advanced. The smaller Karoo towns were severely affected by the exodus of whites. The two key middle-order towns of Beaufort West and Graaff-Reinet showed a net loss of whites between 1936 and 1960, although the *rate* of this decline had slowed down by the 1950s (Vrey, 1974).

Because only whites were allowed to own businesses, the magnitude of the white population was a crucial indicator of local economic dynamism. As Blumenfeld (1971:50) observed: "Since the Whites are the main generators of employment opportunities in the urban areas, no less than in the rural areas, the question arises whether the region's towns are able to carry the additional burden arising from the rapid increase of the non-White population whilst the White population is all but stagnant". As black and coloured people migrated to the Karoo towns, whites, as a proportion of the total population in Karoo towns, fell steadily. In Graaff-Reinet, the white population fell from 30 percent of the population in 1960 (Cook, 1971) to 15 percent in 2001 (Camdeboo Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan, 2008), mainly due to the rapid in-migration of coloured people (especially from the farms) and black people (from the Eastern Cape's erstwhile homelands). Given the legal restrictions on black and coloured businesses before 1994, this has entailed a very narrow economic base from which to support a burgeoning local population (Atkinson & Ingle, 2010).

The dynamics in the farming sector also changed, with a considerable loss of agricultural jobs. The people who left the farms either moved to nearby towns, or left the area altogether:

As various factors, such as changing cultural and social attitudes and values, the high risk factor inherent in farming enterprise, improved agricultural techniques, low income elasticity of demand (as well as unstable demand) for agricultural products, and the unceasing battle against the elements, have combined to create, and drive out, a surplus rural population, the region's inability to re-absorb this displaced population in other occupations and sectors – but particularly in manufacturing industry – has resulted in the loss of this population to other areas. Similarly, in times of agricultural hardships, the region has lacked a non-agricultural 'base' of sufficient depth and diversity to enable it to cushion the impact. Again, it has been unable to keep pace with the growth of population in the towns, it has lacked the means for accumulating the necessary development capital (Blumenfeld, 1971:107).

This then was the economic scenario (Nel & Hill, 2008) before the revitalization of the Karoo which is the subject of this thesis. Although the period since 1994 has seen the Karoo's social structure undergoing profound change, these dynamics are not well understood, and the area is still treated by government as being of marginal economic importance (Atkinson & Marais, 2007; Nel & Hill, 2008). The University of the Free State's Arid Areas Programme aims to reignite the interest that informed the 1970s Midlands-Karoo reports. Significantly, the term 'Karoo' has seen an extraordinary resurgence in prominence and is even being appropriated by enterprises outside the Karoo and as far afield as the USA and the UK (Ingle, 2008a). In other words, the asset value of this arid space may be at odds with the National Spatial Development Perspective's (NSDP) characterization of it as a region that is lacking in potential (The Presidency, 2006; Nel & Hill, 2008). But this asset value remains largely unarticulated and unexplored.

It was the purpose of the series of papers in this thesis to draw out dimensions of the spontaneous forms of local development that are taking place in this resource-deprived region. The studies uncover new dimensions of capital formation in the region and attempt to describe some of the

socio-economic impacts of post-1994 counterurbanisation and 'white displacement' in South Africa (Visser, 2003b). All three spheres of government in South Africa, as well as parastatal development agencies, could avail themselves of the findings for planning purposes.

It is hoped that these enquiries might also lead to the identification of strategic measures to promote capital investment in the arid areas. The germ of such an initiative is already in place in the form of the Karoo Development Foundation (KDF), a not-for profit Trust dedicated to economic development in the Karoo. It is no accident that the KDF had its origins in a move to protect the 'Karoo Lamb' brand from being appropriated by non-Karoo enterprises. 'Branding' is the protection and packaging of an asset to heighten its attraction for consumption and is a motif which runs through all the essays presented here.

## **8.2 White migration in South Africa: a neglected phenomenon**

In an article that outlined a number of "prospects for South African gentrification studies", Visser (2003a:95) observed that, "One of the ironies of desegregation research in this context has been the eerie silence concerning the destination of 'displaced' whites". In this instance he was primarily referring to the "white working and lower-middle classes" of the inner cities. This issue was moved centre-stage in a complementary study where Visser (2003b:220) contended that "the 'white' geographies of the apartheid era have merely been replaced by 'black' geographies" to the detriment of "the development of truly post-apartheid geographies".

Although Visser situated his argument largely within the ambit of "poverty research", the concerns he raised are equally applicable to white communities across the economic spectrum. But white migration patterns tend to be under-researched and poorly understood. Where the 'academic gaze' is directed by the priorities of foreign donors and the dictates of state-funded research agencies (Visser, 2003b:228-9), it is perhaps inevitable that intellectual blind spots will tend to develop. Visser implied that South African whites seemed to have fallen off the radar screen in local geographical research and developmental discourse. Illustrative of this oversight is that, in 2004, the Free State Youth Commission (FSYC) published the findings of a study



which compared 1996 and 2001 census figures to determine changes in the Free State's youth profile and to track these against national trends (FSYC, 2004). The report found that whereas the number of youth for all race groups in the Free State had shown a moderate increase, there was "a considerable decline in the population figures for the Free State White youth population, from 109 075 in 1996 to 78 356 in 2001", a decline of 28 percent (FSYC, 2004:14-15). This is an astonishing outcome. The report speculated that the decline was "probably an indication of... Free State youth not finding economic opportunities in the Free State and leaving the Free State in search of such opportunities", but the anomaly received no deeper analysis.

The phenomenon of accelerated white migration has been highlighted elsewhere. In 2007 it was reported that "800 000 or more white South Africans", mainly economically active young males, forsook the country of their birth between 1995 and 2005 (SAIRR, 2007:7). A 2008 study claimed that rampant crime was cited by 80 percent of migrants as the main reason for their exodus, with economic betterment only featuring as one amongst many lesser factors (SAIRR, 2008:57). Such dramatic figures need further exploration. People migrating because of crime betokens a loss of trust in a society and its institutions. A World Values Study completed in 1996 found that only 18 percent of South Africans responded affirmatively to the proposition "Most people can be trusted". The equivalent figure for Norway was 65% and for the United States 36% (Keeley, 2007:117). This marks South Africa as a society low in trust, and one of the manifestations of this may be a heightened propensity to migrate to more congenial locations. This sets the stage for new migration patterns, including the phenomenon of 'semigration', or relocation to rural areas within the same country.

The migration of whites may well cause social networks and social capital to decline – at least in certain South African localities. Social capital is the glue which is supposed to hold a society together, and it is partially predicated on trust. As Jane Jacobs observed: "Underlying any float of population must be a continuity of people who have forged neighbourhood networks. These networks are a city's irreplaceable social capital. Whenever the capital is lost... the social income from it disappears never to return until and unless new capital is *slowly* and *chancily* accumulated" [emphasis added] (quoted in Scott, 1998:144). This entails a poverty of a different sort from the material kind, but one which in time also comes to impact on general material

wellbeing and on public goods such as education and health (the catalysts for human capital formation).

However, while the emigration of whites may impact on social capital, the 'semigration' of middle-class white people to rural areas results in new forms of social capital in those areas. Many older, middle-class white South Africans have quit the cities. These are the "gentrifiers" and "semigrators" identified by Donaldson (2007:317-319) who have moved to small towns in South Africa's more marginal arid areas. The collection of articles introduced here goes some way towards retrieving this small but economically significant cohort from scholarly obscurity.

### **8.3 The impact of the creative class on Karoo social networks**

The rash of urban 'incomers' to small Karoo towns resonates with Florida's 'weak tie' creative class. This cohort's strong ties are generally with relatives still in the cities or overseas and they do not partake of the close bondedness that used to inform society in South Africa's small towns. They are *in* the countryside but not *of* it. They do normally tend to cluster, ('birds of a feather'), but these are weak bonds. As Urry (1995:221) remarks: "New sociations involve high levels of working for each other through a complex system of mutual aid reinforced by 'norms of reciprocity'". This is however nothing like the Masonic type of solidarity that was often a feature of small town life up until the advent of email and the internet. The very nature of this new society is to be open to 'diversity', to new influences, and to be accommodating of difference. These are just some of the determinants of an ethos of creativity, of bringing a new perspective to the old and taken-for-granted assets of small towns.

Buying property in the Karoo (there is virtually no rental market) is a classic instance of identifying with a certain ethos. Furthermore this is a constituency that is overwhelmingly white (see Boyle *et al.*, 1998:146) which leads to a fair degree of racial solidarity, even though members of this cohort tend to be, broadly speaking, politically urbane, and 'liberal' without being necessarily 'left-wing'.

The new in-migrants have brought with them a significant degree of social capital, in the sense of social networks, experience, skills and innovation. The case of Smithfield, in the southern Free State, well illustrates this trend. In 1995, Smithfield was the archetypal deteriorating Karoo town, in which a neglected mansion could be acquired for as little as R20 000. The only venue where meals and accommodation could be had was at a decaying one-star hotel. A gay couple who ran a successful restaurant in Mpumalanga saw the potential in the town, bought a number of derelict properties at firesale prices, and set up shop in 1996.

Fifteen years later and the May 2011 issue of the local paper, the *Smiffie*, contains a number of short features which reveal the extraordinary degree of creative influx into the town, as well as new forms of social capital. A team of runners from the town has participated in the Two Oceans Half-Marathon; a “Smithfield Goes Green” project is being launched; an eco-school is to be established; a local craftswoman has won awards at the Bloemfontein Show; a prominent South African artist visiting a gallery-owner friend in Smithfield is contemplating opening a studio there himself; the ‘bizhub BibberChill Festival’ committee has announced new competitions for the next event; an erstwhile gallery owner and art promoter from Durban has held an exhibition of locally produced works in his new Fresh Paint Gallery; Rusties Pub & Grub has opened its doors for business; the Garden Club is thriving; and Luigi’s, a restaurant, has been taken over by its new owners. It would have been unthinkable 15 years previously that anything on this scale could emanate from Smithfield - not to mention the existence of the *Smiffie* publication itself. This level of social dynamism is all the more noteworthy when one considers that it has occurred within the context of one of the most dysfunctional municipalities in the country.

#### **8.4 The impact of the creative class on the economy of small Karoo towns**

Creative small enterprises in South Africa’s desert Karoo region are growing in number and variety. The Karoo has come to acquire considerable cachet in recent years, and is also being rebranded as a desirable tourist destination. The papers in this thesis will illustrate, *inter alia*, how the creative class in Karoo towns have leveraged their ‘weak tie’ networks to transform local economies.

Several towns in the Karoo region are undergoing a profound transformation with the influx of 'creatives' from the urban areas (Atkinson & Ingle, 2010; Ingle, 2010a, 2010b). Some idea of the diversity and extent of the postproductivist inroads being made in the Karoo is provided by Ingle (2008a) in a report entitled *Economic potential in South Africa's arid areas: A selection of niche products and services* and by the results of a business survey presented in the first of the suite of articles comprising this thesis (Ingle, 2010a). Significantly, where it was possible to discern whether the owners of the businesses captured by the survey were newcomers to the Karoo or not, it was found that two-thirds were in-migrants. This suggests a fairly robust degree of new enterprise creation in the fields of arts, crafts, tourism, and other lifestyle-related fields. Ingle (2010b) extrapolates from these findings in a subsequent article which dwells on the way the Karoo's defining quality of 'nothingness' has been capitalised on to create a burgeoning 'astro-tourism' market segment. This is a classic instance of rural assets being leveraged for post-productivist purposes and it is not surprising to find that the notion of 'creative tourism' has been introduced into academic tourism discourse (Richards, 2011).

The growing popularity of 'Karoo lamb' (and its recent establishment as a formally registered brand) also typifies this trend, and the Karoo is constantly presented in the lifestyle media as a site of 'authentic' cuisine, landscapes, and cultures. Here again the creative class has harnessed the lifestyle media to reinvigorate and repackage the Karoo's assets (Ingle, 2010a, 2010b).

An important element of human capital is its role in constituting other forms of capital, by means of human creativity. One need only consider the difference it makes when phenomena such as *emptiness* and *nothingness* come to be leveraged as an asset. It requires creativity to reverse popular perceptions of barrenness and, then to market a desert as a positive asset; to toy with the concept of 'space' and turn it into a saleable entity (Ingle, 2010b; 2011).

Secondly, there are numerous examples of overt philanthropy where the creative class has drawn on its urban expertise and been instrumental in initiating a wide variety of projects aimed at benefitting previously disadvantaged communities. The Karoo Development Foundation (KDF),

the Middelburg Foundation, the Richmond Foundation and the Nama Karoo Foundation are just some examples of this.

Thirdly, the creative class in the Karoo has had indirect impacts on municipalities and on their Local Economic Development (LED) mandates. This engagement is sometimes regrettably sporadic, subject to the vagaries of political processes, and it can in any event only happen where municipalities are reasonably functional. In South Africa, municipalities may be straightforwardly dysfunctional (for example, Mohokare) or municipal officials may go out of their way to undermine and avoid engagement with civil society (Mbeleni, 2011) - possibly because they feel out of their depth, intimidated, or are simply not interested in economic development.

There are however many exceptions to the depressing scenarios outlined above. In a study of the impact of the FIFA 2010 World Cup on a range of small Karoo towns, Atkinson (2012) cites several instances of constructive engagement on the part of municipalities, for example Umsobomvu (Colesberg), and “a new generation of city residents who have moved to the Karoo”, to promote tourism effectively.

Fourth, the creative class typically functions as a champion for the protection of ecosystems and cultural heritage both of which are vital for tourism’s sustainability. Because it is so articulate (and vocal), it serves to keep the importance of “seldom acknowledged” ecosystem services (Shackleton *et al.*, 2010:124) firmly in the public eye via the national media, the lifestyle media, a variety of scholarly outlets, and the internet (see for example Dugmore & van Wyk, 2008; Ingle, 2008a; Milton & Dean, 2010; Atkinson, 2011a; Karoo Space, 2011). In this way, it can be inferred that the advocacy function which is such a mark of the social capital of the creative class has beneficial collateral impacts for the social capital of less articulate constituencies. The preservation of the environment can have important indirect benefits for the poor. Shackleton *et al.* (2010) demonstrate the often underestimated importance of ecosystem factors such as soil fertility, water resources, eco-tourism, biodiversity, and a range of ‘cultural services’ for the spiritual and material wellbeing of the poor.

The creative class is also involved in a never-ending tussle with telecommunications providers to provide better connectivity, and this is of course a public good which can benefit the economy and all sectors of the community.

## 8.5 The impact of the creative class on the built environment

The level of amenity in a town (shops, schools, restaurants, post office) and professional services (doctors, vets, computer technicians) conveys a sense of diversity, vibrancy and resilience. A visual comparison between Nieu-Bethesda and Edenburg illustrates the level of creative class investment that has taken place.



Figure 1: Nieu-Bethesda shopfront

The shopfront in Nieu Bethesda depicted above (Figure 1) is not only calculated to draw clientele into the building but, especially when in combination with similar sites, also serves to set the tone for a town. It instils confidence in prospective investors. It suggests a town replete with stimuli, variety, nuance, points of departure. It represents an *enriched* environment, evident in both its surfaces and its depths. Given its attractiveness to people who embody high levels of human capital, and who are by implication moderately affluent, it is productive of economic opportunity for *all*. There is no set of statistical data that will emit so persuasive a signal. It is no accident that the proprietor of this establishment is also the organiser of Nieu-Bethesda's highly successful ABSA Fugard Festival.

By way of contrast, the dilapidated 'welcome' sign shown in Figure 2 (overleaf) will repel investment. This is the entrance to the potentially attractive town of Edenburg, in the southern Free State municipality of Kopanong, and it is emblematic of a locale that has seen no creative class influx. And yet Edenburg, a mere 80km south of Bloemfontein on the N1 highway, ought to serve as an ideal 'dormitory town', especially for those self-employed who do not need to commute on a daily basis.

Ironically, the decaying entrance to Edenburg is arguably *more* authentic than the 'cutesy' shop frontage of Nieu-Bethesda, as it captures a certain rural reality prior to any significant urban influx. But it is not the kind of authenticity calculated to persuade visitors to part with their money and stimulate local economic development. As Zukin (2010:2-3) has it: "Authenticity has taken on a different meaning that has little to do with origins and a lot to do with *style*. The concept has migrated from a quality of people to a quality of things, and most recently to a quality of experiences".

The creative class can *empathise* with the requirements of their clientele, and therefore they succeed in invigorating small rural economies, whereas so many state-sponsored projects fail. They *know* their market because they themselves were once (and usually still are) consumers in that very marketplace (Urry, 1995).



**Figure 2: Entrance to Edenburg from the N1 highway**

Catering intelligently for the passing trade, by providing visible evidence of ‘pride of place’, is critical to small town survival. Richmond, on the N1 highway and reinvented as a ‘booktown’, embodies this. As Appleton put it: “It is not so much that we have an ethic of consumption, but that - by default - it remains one of the few meaningful experiences in our lives. There is a tangibility and satisfaction to buying... that means that shopping remains for individuals a



confirmation of their power to make things happen in the world” (quoted in Crawford, 2009:216). Towns that cannot ‘read’ this affluent segment of the market are, as is the case with Edenburg, doomed to supply it with little more than petrol and cooldrinks. This is an opportunity lost. Unfortunately the South African *platteland* still features many such cases (see for example Ingle, 2008b).

## **8.6 The power of the new creative class in the Karoo: resisting shale gas mining**

The proposed mining of shale gas in the Karoo has highlighted the extraordinary social power and political influence which can be mobilised by the new creative class. Although the terrain earmarked for shale gas exploration extends well beyond the confines of the Karoo (it encompasses almost all of the Free State as well as much of western Kwa-Zulu Natal) it was only in the Karoo that any cohesive activist opposition arose.

The first indications that something was afoot in the Karoo regarding the mining of shale gas (using the technology of ‘hydraulic fracturing’ or ‘fracking’) began to appear in the media in July 2010 (*TimesLive*, 2010). Early in 2011, notices were placed in the local media about a public participation process led by Shell Oil & Gas (*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2011). The disturbing evasiveness that marked the participation process resulted in the formation of an anti-fracking network, the Treasure the Karoo Action Group (TKAG). The TKAG is a special-purpose vehicle, but with national and international membership. This movement was initiated and led almost exclusively by the Karoo’s creative class. Since January 2011, civil society in and around the Karoo has mobilized with incredible speed, assisted by the latest technologies of social networking – blogging, Facebook, Twitter and e-mail. According to Atkinson, (2011b):

A network of journalists, authors, photographers, scientists, academics and T-shirt producers are now working full-time to rustle up opposition to hydraulic fracturing ... These groups, who function in loosely affiliated virtual networks, have also linked up with anti-fracking groups overseas. The movement is now truly global – across provincial and national boundaries... The scale of mobilisation is unheard of in any rural area in South Africa... We are truly in the era of ‘Version 2’ people – the people with cell phones,

internet and social networking – the same kind of people who are bringing down a series of dictatorships in the Middle East. This is a new form of politics, and we will need new sociological categories to make sense of it.

The nature of the TKAG illustrates a number of points made in the series of articles which follow and furnishes an instructive example of ‘weak tie’ social capital being put to work. The TKAG originated with a small group of alarmed and concerned Karoo residents, most of whom had never met one another before. All they had at their disposal was considerable media experience and formidably powerful, personal networks. There was no formal institutional support and no funding. The TKAG executive committee met only once (Du Toit & Dugmore, 2011), but it managed to initiate what has been one of the most cohesive, and effective civil advocacy campaigns ever conducted in the country. Of the eight founding members, only one (an attorney) was a long-standing Karoo resident. Significantly, the remaining seven members had all moved to the Karoo after 1994. By profession, they encompassed university professor, photo-journalist, professional photographer, game farm owner, Public Relations expert, freelance researcher, author, guest farm owner, and logistics company owner. While all regularly visited the cities on business, all were permanently resident in the Karoo and all save one could be classed as ‘self-employed’. As Stephens (2011) reports:

Imagine: You’re a small activist group, just a few months old and relatively unknown. You’re up against a multinational oil company with limitless resources and a formidable spin machine. What to do? Turn to a diverse, irreverent group of advertising students switched on to the power of social media for advice, of course. Treasure the Karoo Action Group (TKAG) did just this as one aspect of the fight against Shell’s plans to use hydraulic fracturing or ‘fracking’ to uncover natural gas deposits in the pristine Karoo. Post-graduate students at Cape Town’s Red & Yellow School of Logic & Magic were given a clear brief: create awareness of the threat, build support for and knowledge of the TKAG as a middle of the road, factual, socially responsible activist organisation and get the public involved – fast, with a minimal budget.

Within hours of the ‘launch’ meeting on a remote Karoo farm, the TKAG had succeeded in mobilising influential networks consisting of celebrities, scientists, environmental activists, and

well-wishers from all across the world and had 'gone viral' with its Facebook support group. Numerous action plans were initiated, R10-million in funds were raised and it became publicly apparent that Shell was up against tenacious opposition. This would have been unthinkable without the presence of the creative class in the Karoo, and their valuable personal 'weak-tie' networks, telecommunications capacity, intellectual coherence and fervour about the value of rural preservation. As the political theorist Joseph Nye (2011:122) has it, "Power based on information resources is not new; cyberpower is". The TKAG has shown that the Karoo is no longer an agglomeration of 'sleepy outposts' but is very much a part of the global world.

The TKAG's signal successes to date in forestalling fracking in the Karoo (*Mail & Guardian*, 2011; *Business Day*, 2012) lend weight to Christakis and Fowler's (2009:202-203) contention that "the most successful lobbyists will be those who have the most weak ties, that is, the most friends of friends walking the halls of power. Strong ties help, but weak ties help more because they greatly expand the total number of potential connections... searching for influence is easier with a broad network... the number of strong ties has almost no impact on whether a lobbyist will be given access". This is of course a vindication of Florida's stance on the much greater efficacy of weak ties.

## **9. The papers in this collection**

### **9.1 Paper I: A 'Creative Class' in South Africa's arid Karoo region**

The first article in the collection (*A 'Creative Class' in South Africa's arid Karoo region*) documents the 'rise' of a creative class in the arid Karoo. This paper examines the phenomenon through a lens informed by Richard Florida's influential work, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. It draws on mainstream 'lifestyle media' and other publications to describe recent trends in the Karoo. As already outlined, Florida's concept of the 'creative class' refers to those people who make a living from creative pursuits, including artists, designers and knowledge-based professionals. The paper analyses a sample of entrepreneurs in the Karoo, and speculates on what informs the recent re-visioning of the region. It suggests that the new rural 'creative class' is a

form of social capital, and it explores its implications for the socio-economic upliftment of the Karoo.

The paper argues that the social capital embodied by this Karoo cohort was the outcome of an initially almost imperceptible social movement ('under the radar screen') whereby people 'voted with their feet' for a new lifestyle. This phenomenon prefigured a related process, namely the Italian-inspired 'Slow Movement', a process of "deceleration", which Honoré (2004:242) suggested might revolutionise the world and which has now found expression in many different guises (Slow Tourism Network, 2012).

It could be asked why the advent of a creative class in the Karoo appears to have escaped official notice. The Karoo straddles four provinces, hence it disappears from view as an entity in its own right. Virtually all official data is municipally- and provincially-denominated. In his exposition of bureaucratic frames of reference, Scott (1998:76-77) observes that: "Officials of the modern state... assess the life of their society by a series of typifications that are always some distance from the full reality these abstractions are meant to capture... The functionary of any large organization 'sees' the human activity that is of interest to him largely through the simplified approximation of documents and statistics". These simplifications represent a huge advance in governance that is essential to modern statecraft, but it is unavoidable that the process will "reduce an infinite array of detail to a set of categories that will facilitate summary descriptions, comparisons and aggregation". The article uses a small subset of this 'drowned out' detail in the South African context, and analyses it as a coherent phenomenon.

## *A 'Creative Class' in South Africa's Arid Karoo Region<sup>3</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Although South Africa's arid Karoo interior has always been largely given over to extensive rangeland pastoralism, recent years have seen a strong move away from conventional agriculture into a variety of new niche tourism and agricultural sectors. This has been achieved in tandem with a renewed appreciation for the latent potentials suggested by the Karoo's wide open spaces, and the pristine qualities conveyed by its air of silent timelessness.

Many erstwhile city-dwellers have opted for a 'Karoo-lifestyle' as offered by the region's many farms and small towns. This has resulted in a marked escalation in land and property values where towns have been 'rediscovered'. Some villages, which only a decade ago exuded an air of dereliction and hopelessness, have been transformed almost beyond recognition into trendy 'boutique towns'.

These developments are very much in line with what has been theorised as the onset of a 'post-productivist' countryside in South Africa (Visser and Kotze 2008: 2588-2589; Hoogendoorn, Visser and Marais 2009: 75-76), where 'the relationship between space and identity has become a key research focus' (Visser 2008: 1344). Post-productivism refers to rural livelihoods which have moved beyond conventional agriculture, to incorporate lifestyle services and tourism. Although difficult to discern in its early stages, the process in South Africa has now gathered sufficient momentum to warrant scholarly attention. A 'new wave' of arid areas-based research has accordingly been initiated, under the auspices of a variety of institutions and after several decades of comparative neglect.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ingle, M.K. 2010. A 'Creative Class' in South Africa's Arid Karoo Region, *Urban Forum* 21(4):405-423.

This paper attempts to understand something of the changes that have taken place in attitudes towards the arid Karoo by using the work of Richard Florida, a prominent American urban theorist and professor of economic development, as a point of departure. Florida's theory about the dynamics governing regional economic growth, and the preferences informing contemporary individuals' locational decisions, were articulated in his *The Rise of the Creative Class* published in 2002. This work was both acclaimed and criticized (Lees, Slater and Wyly 2008; Montgomery 2005; Trip 2007) and has generated considerable scholarly and popular interest. Florida has responded by publishing further elaborations on his thesis in subsequent years. His ideas have come to inform discourses that transcend the confines of urban America and have also been developed into the notion of the 'creative rural economy'. This paper also draws on a number of insights, with a bearing on small town economic development, that have been derived in recent years by South African scholars such as Atkinson (2009; 2010), Donaldson (2007), Kotze (2003), Marais (2004), Nel and Hill (2008), Van Niekerk and Marais (2008) and Visser (2003).

The discussion commences with an account of how the mainstream 'lifestyle media' have enthusiastically embraced Karoo-denominated themes. It then describes some of the characteristics of the Karoo's putative 'creative class', and how this cohort is creating viable livelihood options consequent upon its adoption of country living. This is followed by a brief description of Florida's creative class construct along with some comments on its applicability to a rural African context. Some criticisms of Florida's empirical justifications for his findings are also advanced.

The paper then proceeds to a brief analysis of a database of 175 Karoo-based enterprises, extracted using a selection of relevant periodicals, and reflects on what the advent of an overwhelmingly white, 'creative', middle-class might entail for the socio-economic upliftment of the Karoo's poor. Certain of the article's claims are argued for by drawing on the results of a survey, conducted in 2008, of a near universal sample of 38 individuals who had relocated to the small town of Philippolis, in the southern Free State, since the early 1990s. This data serves as a baseline for a longitudinal study that is still in progress and has for this reason not been published yet.

## Who's your Karoo?

As Lawrence Green (1955: 11) points out in his seminal *Karoo*, 'there are, in fact, many karooos in South Africa'. There is indeed no consensus about the precise demarcation of the Karoo (see for example Atkinson and Marais 2007a: 6; Deal 2007: 13; Green 1955: 11-12; Karoo Space 2010; Naude-Moseley and Moseley 2008: 10-12; and Nell 2008: 14-6, all of whom delineate it somewhat differently). These geographic variances are only aggravated by the existence of the 'False Karoo' (also dubbed the 'Grassy Karoo'); the geologists' 'Karoo Supergroup'; the Nama-Karoo biome; the ecologists' 'succulent Karoo'; and the regions popularly known as the 'Great Karoo', 'Little Karoo' and 'Tanqua Karoo'. Many of these designations are themselves not too cogently demarcated. For the purposes of this paper, however, the inclusivity of Deal's 'roughly 400 000 square km' spanning four provinces in the interior of South Africa, will suffice (see also Nel and Hill 2008). The Karoo is arid and sparsely populated, and it encompasses about 80 small towns a few of which, such as Graaf-Reinet (see Atkinson 2010), can be described as regional centres or 'middle-order' towns.

In recent years, the Karoo has seen the statistically negligible, but economically significant, 'counterurbanisation' of professionals from the metropolitan centres to its small towns. This phenomenon has breathed new life into many of these towns. It has also led to latent entrepreneurial talent been reawakened as local residents have re-assessed their farms' or their towns' assets and developed new livelihood options stimulated by the fresh perspective brought by the erstwhile city-dwellers. For example, Olive Grove Guest Farm near Beaufort West has augmented sheep farming with intensive olive production, farm holidays, small conferences, agri-tourism, astro-tourism and palaeo-tourism (Olive Grove Guest Farm 2010).

This trend is nowhere more evident than in the contents pages of South Africa's premier lifestyle magazines such as *Village Life*, *Getaway*, *Weg* and *Country Life*, and to a less overt extent in the more agriculturally orientated publications, *Landbouweekblad* and the *Farmers' Weekly*. A database of entrepreneurs, derived from a scan of these journals, revealed a variety of interesting small enterprises. These entrepreneurs represent a phenomenon sometimes referred to as the 'post-productivist countryside', a term which refers to the ousting of conventional agriculture by

lifestyle pursuits, or by niche crops and tourism activities (Evans, Morris and Winter 2002; Hoogendoorn, *et al.* 2009; Ilbery 1998; Ilbery and Kneafsey 1998; Slee 2005; Walthew 2007).

The 'Karoo journalism' trend suggests that the Karoo 'brand', and its associations, are proving increasingly saleable. Every second edition of the main lifestyle magazines invariably announces some or other feature touching on the Karoo. Significantly, many of these articles are written by journalists and academics who have themselves embraced rural living (see for instance Du Toit 2008; Friis 2007; Maguire 2007; Marais 2008a, 2008b; Moseley 2006; Mouton, A. 2006a, 2006b; Mouton, M. 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d; Naude-Moseley 2008; Rickard 2008; Roux 2007; von Ahlefeldt 2008). This is indicative of the intellectual capital which a 'creative class' (Florida 2002) can bring to bear on a region, and of the desire on the part of these individuals to proclaim the merits of their newly-adopted environments. The Karoo Space (2010) and Smiffie News (2010) websites well illustrate this phenomenon.

The effect of all this attention has been to make a 'country lifestyle' a desirable, saleable commodity (Halfacree 2007a; Lichtman 2006) and this perception is strongly reinforced by the rapid and unprecedented entry of some of the country's leading estate agents into the Karoo property market. News reports with headlines such as 'Buyers go wild over Karoo land' (Hayward 2008) reflect the excitement the demand has created in property circles. Such reports should however also alert one to the fact that the purveyors of 'lifestyle media' features frequently have a vested interest in 'talking up' their newfound enthusiasms and one must make due allowance for a degree of bias. As Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson (1998: 142) observe: 'the rural idyll may be an urban perspective on the countryside, refracted through various media and not based on direct experience, but it nevertheless can be a strong force guiding migration' (also see Halfacree 2007: 126).

The 'intellectualism' of this new cohort is further borne out by the establishment of Richmond as South Africa's first 'booktown' (David 2008) and by the number of publications that have appeared redolent of 'literary tourism' (see for example Bryant 2007; David 2007; Ingle 2010; Karoo Space 2010; Prince Albert Writers' Guild 2005). Galgut's (2008) recent work only goes to cement this perception and there are no fewer than three towns in the Karoo (De Aar, Hanover



and Cradock) laying claim to a literary pedigree with an 'Olive Schreiner House'. The Van der Post House in Philippolis is another case in point (David 2007) as is the Fugard Cottage in Nieu-Bethesda and the poet Van Wyk Louw's house in Sutherland. All of these are regularly invoked as lending weight to the Karoo's rediscovered literary and artistic heritage.

### **Under the radar screen**

In 2003 Gustav Visser published a paper which addressed 'the transparency of white South Africans in post-apartheid geographical discourse'. Visser's paper reflects on 'ways in which "white South African lives" may be reintroduced to the research practices of South African geographers'. Visser remarked on the emergence of an attenuated geographical discourse in which whites 'appear transparent before the scholarly gaze' (Visser 2003: 230-1). This is no less lop-sided than the bias which prevailed when apartheid was at its height. White flight from the inner-city precincts seems to have occurred in tandem with the large scale retrenchments of whites that accompanied 'affirmative action' in the state bureaucracies and parastatals since 1994. 'What has happened to these white people; where are they, and what are they doing to survive?' (Visser 2003: 233). Visser raises questions about post-apartheid phenomena such as the effect of the escalating levels of urban crime (Altbeker 2007; Donaldson and Ferreira 2009) on whites' post-apartheid '(re)definition of identity' and how this influences the establishment of 'new and separate "life-worlds"' (Visser 2003: 234-5). He wonders how the new 'spatialities', produced by the demise of apartheid, have influenced whites' locational choices and he raises the possibility that many white South Africans have found themselves 'doomed to... peripheral spaces'.

Seven years on, in 2010, although the research challenge Visser posed remains by and large unmet, the contours of the outcomes he sketches are slowly becoming more discernible. At least part of whites' response, to themselves being the objects of workplace exclusion and discrimination, has indeed been a retreat to 'peripheral spaces' accompanied by a redefinition of identity (see for example Dobson and Mowszowski 2004 on the 'new pioneers... moving to the Karoo'). Of the 38 respondents polled in Philippolis, 34 were permanent residents (four were

'second-home' owners), and eight (24%) of these cited retrenchment or unemployment as having been instrumental in their relocating.

The following extract, from South African author and popular historian Roger Webster (2008), captures a social phenomenon that has manifested itself throughout the South African platteland over the past 15 years. Perhaps because it is a 'white' movement, it has gone largely unremarked by academics and social commentators in South Africa. As Boyle, *et al.* (1998: 146) point out: 'Counterurbanisation is... very much a white phenomenon. This can partly be explained by class-profile differences between the white and black populations of developed countries, possibly enhanced by cultural preferences'.

Writing of the small Karoo town of Aberdeen, 50km south of Graaff-Reinet, Webster observes that:

A marvellous renaissance is taking hold of this pretty little hamlet as people who are sick and tired of the rat race and the crime of our cities start looking for alternative life styles in their later years. Remarkable people have started moving into this little town, revitalising it, refurbishing it, restoring the homes which can still be bought at very reasonable prices... Being there is witnessing the remake of a town. Mavericks and intellectuals, vibrant people who refuse to take the old trodden route of old age homes and... friends are now banding together in this little town, creating their own future... amply prov[ing] that it is not where you stay but really who you are as a person that matters.

People from all over the country, Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town, you name it, are moving in, taking over, getting involved and what you are actually witnessing is a magnificent rebirth of a once sleepy hollow.

Potters, painters, retired business executives, artists, are not only renovating these beautiful period homes, but becoming actively involved in remaking what they term "their town"... An awe inspiring situation to witness, it just goes to show that the pioneering spirit for creating something out of very little is still... active and alive in South Africans.

What Webster describes is well borne out by Atkinson's (2009) study of the business sector in Aberdeen, and is equally applicable to any number of small Karoo towns. One indication of this is the number of 'emerging' small building contractors - mainly from the local black and coloured communities - that Atkinson reports have sprung up to take advantage of the new opportunities created by the wave of gentrification (see also Hoogendoorn, *et al.* 2009: 79-80).

Another tell-tale sign of this 'movement', as with the articles in the periodicals detailed above, is the steady stream of books with which its members document the history and conditions of their new environs (see for example Clemence and MacGregor 2003; Gerrits 1998; Lange 2007; Marais and du Toit 2009; Prince Albert Writers' Guild 2005; Snyman 2008; van Schalkwyk 2007; Westby-Nunn 2004; Willis 2008; and Walthew 2007 for a foreign perspective). Aberdeen represents the emergence of a distinctively South African, rural version of Richard Florida's (2002) 'creative class' phenomenon - one which draws on migrations ("leakage") from the urban conurbations (Florida 2005: 18).

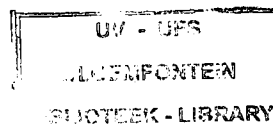
But there are a number of significant differences between the cohorts described by Webster and Florida. For one thing, Aberdeen's is significantly older. This is partially because Florida populates his 'creative class' with reference to the industry sectors in which people are employed (Florida 2002: 327-8; Florida 2005: 32-5; McGranahan and Wojan 2007) and *not* primarily in terms of people's educational attributes or skills. In the case of the new creative class in the Karoo, the protagonists are not necessarily located in economic sectors deemed by Florida to be 'creative'. Their common characteristic is a high level of tertiary education or urban skills, and an enthusiasm for becoming involved in small-town development in a variety of self-employed activities. This resonates well with Hoogendoorn *et al.*'s (2009: 79) finding that 45% of second-home owners in Rhodes had postgraduate qualifications. There is considerable overlap between the second-home cohort and the newly ruralised creative class. Firstly, a number of second-home owners intend to make their second-home their primary home in due course (the 'retiring to the coast' phenomenon) and they thus make up a 'creative class cohort' in waiting; and secondly, a number of the new permanent residents in the Karoo are second-home owners by dint of their retaining their *urban* residence as a 'second home'. As with the second-home set, this class is characterised by its plethora of *options* which in turn find expression in its *mobility*. Many, if not

most, of these people are in their late middle age or early retirement years. In contrast, Florida focuses primarily on the formally employed, who tend to be younger, or in the prime of their careers.

A breakdown by age group of the Philippolis survey cohort is instructive in this regard. It must be borne in mind that where local schooling is seen to be deficient, as is the case with Philippolis (van Niekerk and Marais 2008: 375), this often serves as a disincentive for investment by younger people with school-going children. In Philippolis only two of the 38 respondents were younger than 30 years of age when they moved to the town. Sixteen percent were aged between 30 and 40; 26% between 40 and 50; 34% between 50 and 60; and 18% were over 60. Interestingly enough only one individual cited retirement as the reason for their having moved. This age profile would probably differ from that of a centre like Graaff-Reinet (where there are still highly regarded schools) but is typical of the smaller towns where middle-class families consider themselves faced with a choice between home-schooling or boarding school, each of which may entail unacceptable collateral 'transaction costs'.

Florida also inclines to view his creative class through an urban lens which tends to incorporate a substantial element of 'yuppiedom', or what he and other analysts have described as the children of 1960s 'bobos' or 'bourgeoisie-bohemians' (Florida 2002: 197-9; Brooks 2000). In contradistinction to Florida's subject population, those urbanites relocating to the Karoo are frequently well educated, experienced people whose children have already left home (Atkinson 2010). These individuals are then prompted by their altered circumstances to take advantage of the considerable differential in housing prices between city and rural locations – a factor hinted at by Webster above. With cash in hand, many are tempted to give effect to lifelong dreams of a career change that embraces a more autonomous lifestyle. These rural newcomers may be academics, artists or journalists, who have taken early retirement, or who, given uncompetitive salary scales, have opted for a freelance livelihood, as consultants or researchers (Atkinson 2009: 284).

In Aberdeen, for example, the town's first commercial art gallery was established in 2006 by an erstwhile Professor of Fine Arts at an Eastern Cape university and his wife, a Public Relations



practitioner. Subsequently, they were joined by a British couple, who ran a bookshop and bookbinding business for three years in Johannesburg, and then relocated their operations to Aberdeen. The proprietor is an ex-Financial Director of a large parastatal and his wife is a qualified mathematics teacher. Apart from the bookshop, they planned to offer courses in creative writing and 'scrapbooking' (*Karoo Advertiser* 1 Aug 2008). This phenomenon is echoed in an article concerning a landmark touristic feature in Uniondale: 'An architect who didn't want to design filling stations anymore, and his graphic designer wife discovered the disused old watermill in Uniondale nine years ago. They changed it into a restaurant and art gallery and no, they are not longing for their former city lives at all' (Mouton 2006c: 30). These examples can be multiplied many times over throughout the Karoo as even the most cursory survey of the relevant media will show.

The tourist trade has created many new opportunities for talented, artistic and entrepreneurial 'creative class' migrants (Atkinson 2010; Ingle 2010). These touristic endeavours are unevenly spread through the Karoo however, with some towns becoming tourist 'boutique towns', while others have remained 'undiscovered'. But virtually all Karoo towns now have at least one good guesthouse or B&B, and many towns have at least a few tourist outlets, such as craft shops. Prince Albert provides a further instance where internationally recognised South African scientists have established themselves in business as tourist operators and freelance consultants (Ingle 2008). Many migrants have availed themselves of retrenchment packages and relocated to rural towns to secure an alternative livelihood and a better quality of life. Telecommunications advances have made rural lifestyles more viable, in comparison with the situation just 15 years ago (Taylor, Ffowcs-Williams and Crowe 2008).

To some degree then, at least where rather more affluent individuals are concerned, answers to the questions raised by Visser are in the process of revealing themselves in the form of a new social movement characterised by counterurbanisation in favour of the platteland (Atkinson 2009). This is radically revising general perceptions of the Karoo – a region which was once almost universally regarded as a desolate wasteland fit for nothing but sheep (Dobson and Mowszowski 2004; Nel and Hill 2008; Wright 1929: 135). As this social movement has gained momentum, the Karoo has come to acquire a certain cachet. This has resulted in the 'Karoo'

brandname being appropriated by enterprises as disparate as coffee houses in Pretoria, and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the United Kingdom (Ingle 2008). As Galgut (2008: 7) expresses it, 'having a little place in the Karoo' has become 'trendy'. Although some of this activity undoubtedly consists of the 'second homes' sector (Hoogendoorn, Mellett and Visser 2007; Hoogendoorn, *et al.* 2009), the more especially where a town is within striking distance of a large urban centre, it is significant that a sizeable proportion of migrants have chosen to live permanently in the Karoo.

Other than that many of these rural in-migrants happened to come to maturity during the years of the "hippie era", identified by Hoogendoorn, *et al.* (2009: 78) as a marker for the onset of post-productivism in South Africa, there is very little that is *pointedly* counter-cultural about this group, in Halfacree's (2006; 2007) 'radical rural', back-to-the-land sense, apart perhaps from an occasional whiff of 'alternative' bohemianism. As the Philippiolis survey revealed these are, for the most part, moderately talented middle-class people who feel they have made a rational economic move in pursuit of a better quality of life, and not people whose primary motivation was to make any kind of 'lifestyle statement' as such. The journalists and writers amongst this cohort may sometimes vaunt their new lifestyle but that is how they make their living.

The coupling of creativity with the countryside can be dated back to at least the 1870s. Under the influence of John Ruskin, who 'in suitable minds... produced a disaffection for almost the whole fabric of life in the nineteenth century' (Hilton 2002: 748), members of what was loosely known as the Arts and Crafts Movement gave expression to their abhorrence of industrialisation by attempting to create 'a new rural society' in the English countryside based on the ideal of autarkic rural collectives (Blakesley 2006: 24; Triggs 1902). This is the spiritual ancestor of Halfacree's (2007: 132) 'radical rurality'. A pivotal figure in the Arts and Crafts Movement was William Morris - 'often viewed as the high priest of the countryside' - who was said to have 'a sense of place so acute as to be almost a disability' (MacCarthy 1994: viii, xv). The hugely influential socialist writer and bohemian, Edward Carpenter, carried this rurally-denominated ethos of 'individual self-expression and alternative lifestyles' (Rowbotham 2008: 445) through into the next century. By the mid-1970s the concept of 'counterurbanisation' had entered the migration discourse (Boyle *et al.* 1998:13) and the countryside was seen by some as providing a

'refuge from modernity' (Short quoted in Boyle, *et al.* 1998: 141). Although the urban-to-rural dimension of migration has been dwarfed by the vast urbanisation literature (see for example UN-Habitat 2003), and that devoted to international migration consequent upon globalisation (UNDP 2009), there has been a renewed focus on aspects of 'first world' rural identities (not least on the part of Keith Halfacree) complemented by studies of the rural-urban interface in both developed and developing countries (see for example Lynch 2005; Titus and Hinderink 1998). Given that the 'creative class' movement being discussed here is a phenomenon in a developing country, but with its roots in a Europeanised sensibility, the genealogy and substance of these literatures is not without relevance, as already indicated.

As already intimated, the counterurbanisation trend does not affect all Karoo towns equally, and this has important economic consequences. It also raises questions about the mechanisms informing the destinal choices of the newcomers. Florida (2005: 68) maintains that 'a key dimension of regional advantage turns on the ability of a place to capture the imagination, dreams and desires of young creative workers who are making location decisions'. This gives rise to questions surrounding the nature of the 'push – pull' dynamics governing decisions to remove to the Karoo. What are these factors? Should the Karoo be trying to attract these people? What are the dangers that such an influx would destroy precisely those qualities which attract so-called 'semigrants' to the area in the first place?

While crime is often 'fingered', quite correctly, as a major 'push' factor encouraging counterurbanisation, it is salutary to note that, in the Philippiolis survey, only 24% mentioned crime as their reason for moving versus 47% who cited the stresses of city life (traffic/noise/crowds). Granted that multiple responses were permitted it is nonetheless significant that specific stress factors other than crime garnered twice as many mentions than crime itself. This is something urban planners (18 respondents hailed from Gauteng and only two from Cape Town) might want to look into a little more closely.

Florida (2005: 69) observes that 'a region's ability to attract talent... depends in large part on its quality of place'. This concept needs to be 'unpacked' to derive a clearer understanding of the components of this 'pull' factor in the Karoo. Florida (2005: 82) supplies a number of 'visual

cues' that he claims indicate to prospective migrants whether 'a region is "with it"'. What is the 'it' that simultaneously attracts people to the Karoo and repels others. What precisely are those visual cues which attract creative people to a locale in the first place? Is it the style of architecture, or is it an appearance of rural authenticity? And, if so, what counts as 'authentic' (Boyle 2003; Trip 2007) - a rash of boutique coffee shops and small home industries? Why, for example, might prospective migrants find Willowmore, the western gateway to the Baviaanskloof, attractive as opposed to, say, a town like De Aar? De Aar, all things being equal, ought to offer better opportunities for creative livelihoods, on account of its geographical centrality, political prominence and size, but it has thus far failed to fire the 'creative' imagination in the way that other centres, such as Graaff-Reinet (Atkinson 2010; Mouton and Whitlock 2006), have done. While towns like Philippolis and Nieu-Bethesda seem to attract a steady flow of media attention, coverage of De Aar is all but non-existent.

### **Is the 'Creative Class' replicable in rural Africa?**

Richard Florida's (2002) 'creative class' refers to people who are paid to do creative work – amongst them scientists, engineers, artists, musicians, designers and knowledge-based professionals. According to Florida, the 'creative' element does not reside in the *person* of the creative worker (although obviously it may just happen to) but must be present in the *nature* of the work performed and this work must be livelihood-related.

This distinction is problematic. By this yardstick, a celebrated artist who has elected to work as a barman, say, is *not* a member of the creative class, despite his creativity in concocting his drinks, whereas an unschooled ex-barman who has become a tattoo artist to make a living, *is* a member of the creative class, even though he may be quite uncreative in his approach to 'body art'. Florida is entitled to define his categories as he pleases, but the legitimacy of the way he populates them is far from self-evident. It is also tendentious, in that Florida draws on occupation-related census data to buttress his findings. It therefore suits him to locate 'creativity' in the type of work performed, as opposed to the 'human capital' approach of locating it in the *performing agent*. It also serves Florida's purposes to define his categories so that he can support



them statistically with datasets other than those resorted to by his rivals, in an attempt to highlight the uniqueness of his approach.

When Florida marshals his statistical evidence to buttress his arguments, he finds himself constrained by having to align his categories with those used by the US Census Bureau to disaggregate the populace. This inevitably results in a measure of artificiality, of square pegs in round holes. Florida's desire to lend quantitative empirical weight to his analyses proves to be both a strength and a weakness. A strength because this is the only way he can pit his construct against competing theories. Chief amongst these is Robert Putnam's 'social capital' research which Florida (2002: 267-282) is most anxious to disavow as it flies in the face of everything *The Rise of the Creative Class* is intended to demonstrate. But this comes at a cost. Because Florida's 'definition' of the creative class takes its cues from the US Census, and is predicated on occupational categories, it is accordingly in thrall to a considerable degree of arbitrariness at source. This means that his categorisations lack nuance and emerge as excessively coarse grained. Again this is something he is keenly aware of: 'The historical data are messy and hard to compare. The existing occupational categories do not necessarily align themselves along class lines...' (Florida 2002: 327). It must be noted that these qualifying remarks appear in the 'small print' in the appendices and Florida expends a lot of energy throughout his book colouring in the patterns the numbers make with impressionistic anecdotes.

The result is that the creative class, as a statistically presented construct, is a highly massaged entity. So formidable is the computing power available to the protagonists in this tussle that one comes to suspect that, working back from a desired outcome, the statistics could be massaged to arrive at virtually any outcome one pleased. Yet the *intuitive* force of Florida's arguments remains undeniable. Even though his delineation of his categories is problematic, it must be granted that his argument - that creativity has become the driving force of economies - has considerable impressionistic appeal. He seems to say as much himself when he writes: 'In retrospect, I probably could have written this book [*The Rise of the Creative Class*] using no statistics at all. The main story that I've tried to convey... is an intensely human one that transcends numbers' (Florida 2002: 327). It is through just such a qualitative lens that the Karoo 'creative class' phenomenon must be appraised. A quantitative analysis of the 'creative class' in

the Karoo would, in any event, be almost impossible at this stage, due to the lack of comparable datasets in the South African context.

The 'creative class' started out as a quintessentially urban American phenomenon. In the intervening years, as the 'creative class' notion has acquired greater currency with Florida's (2005; 2007; 2008) subsequent publications, the construct has increasingly been applied to other urban settings thereby coming to acquire a degree of universality (see for example Rogerson 2007; Trip 2007). Florida's *The Flight of the Creative Class* (2007) is explicitly contextualised within a global setting. But, more importantly for this paper, the creative class concept has also seen a limited measure of transmutation into the 'Creative Rural Economy' (Brock 2009; McGranahan and Wojan 2007). Prince Edward County in Ontario, for instance, bills itself as being 'Canada's First Creative Rural Economy' (Queen's University 2008).

Urban America is of course a very far cry from rural South Africa, and the creative class paradigm must be 'indigenised' in order for it to be rendered serviceable in this environment (see McGranahan and Wojan 2007 for an allied 'recasting'). As Visser (2007: 142) has pointed out, the 'requirements of human geography in a South African context are out of step with the theoretical requirements of geography's Anglo-American heartland... much of [which] has little practical relevance for South African realities'. And yet, as illustrated above, there *is* something similar occurring (see also Donaldson 2007; Kotze 2003; Marais 2004), which *can* be usefully studied with the help of a locally ground 'creative class' lens.

In order to throw those pockets of the 'creative rural economy' in the Karoo into greater relief, the better to discern their features, it may be helpful to contrast these with situations where there has manifestly not been any infusion of creative entrepreneurship, and where the prevailing ethos is one of a sterile fatalism and passivity. The Karoo creative class is not statistically significant in the sense that its demographic impact is sufficiently marked to be noticeable in official data-gathering surveys. Rather, in the words of Ray and Anderson (2000: 3), describing the advent of their values-driven 'Cultural Creatives' in America, its presence 'takes shape silently and almost invisibly, as if flown in under radar in the dark of night'. Their understated presence is more *inferred* than it is proclaimed, and is most effectively shown by the visual transformation of

towns. There is a stark contrast between depressed towns like Klipplaat or Venterstad (Ballantine, Rousseau and Venter 2008), and the boutique towns of Barrydale or De Rust. The difference in ambience between these settlements is palpable but it is an intangible which is apprehended impressionistically (cf. Florida 2005: 82 on 'visual cues') and not statistically.

Ultimately, Florida proffers no hard-and-fast definition of the creative class, but resorts instead to what amounts to a 'work in progress' characterisation, or a 'thick description'. 'A "thick description" ... presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. .. [and] the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard' (Denzin quoted in Mouton 2001: 188n2). Just as Trip (2007: 514), in his Creative Class-based discussion of 'quality of place', finds 'intangible elements' that are 'in the air' and that defy objective measurement, just so there is a considerable degree of subjective 'feel' about what or who constitutes the creative class – and arguably nowhere more so than in South Africa's arid Karoo.

### **A database of Karoo enterprises**

In order to compile a database of Karoo entrepreneurs, a range of periodicals from 2002 to 2008, was scanned with a view to identifying stories that featured entrepreneurial enterprise in the Karoo. One hundred and seventy five such cases were identified. Information was collected on:

- the town or area in which the business was based
- a categorisation of the undertaking - Crafts, Hospitality, Agriculture etc.
- the main two products or services
- membership of an organisation or professional body
- the gender and race of the owners/managers
- the location of the enterprise as on-farm or off-farm
- the status of the entrepreneurs as in-migrants or long-term residents;
- where the undertaking's inputs were sourced from

- the nature of the primary market, for example whether local, national, or international
- the number of employees.

Tourism-related enterprises, most especially those providing accommodation, featured strongly. The survey uncovered a considerable array of products, including the manufacture of down duvets and woollen blankets; leather goods; cosmetics; medicinal products; jewellery; 'Scottish' caps; trays; foodstuffs (jam, pickles, fudge, preserves, biltong, dried fruits); clothing; candles; picture frames; mohair products; tablecloths; hides; slippers; footwear; hats; beer; knitted goods; wire goods; hand-made mats; stained glass; metalwork; textiles; cheese; tents; furniture; and a wide variety of arts and crafts. Services ranged from interior decorating; photography; hair-dressing; consultancies; security services; house restoration; picture framing; traditional healing; and commercial land rehabilitation through to pottery lessons and knitting courses. Several accommodation establishments provide features for tourists such as historical walkabouts; astronomical observation; 4x4 routes; functions and hot springs. Outlets such as book shops; coffee shops; art galleries; antique shops; and restaurants feature prominently. The growing and processing of 'new' agricultural crops such as aloes; organic vegetables; olives; pomegranates; agave; lavender; cut flowers; honeybush; herbs and garlic were mentioned in addition to the more traditional activities associated with livestock and ostrich farming.

Interestingly, gender representation was split almost exactly (F- 80; M-82) between the enterprises. In the 55 cases where it was possible to deduce whether the owner was a newcomer to the area or not, two-thirds proved to be in-migrants. This would seem to point to a fair degree of new enterprise creation. The businesses' primary market outlet was local 'passing trade'. Seven undertakings had secured overseas markets for their goods, which suggests some entrepreneurial initiative.

In only 31 cases was any explicit mention made of the number of employees. The only enterprises that employed significant numbers of people (over 100) were those which employed seasonal or part-time workers. However, it was significant that several entrepreneurs stated their intention to employ more workers in the future. The majority of businesses employed fewer than 35 workers with the average number of workers (excluding the distorting effect of the few large

employers) being about five. This of course only pertains in those cases where employee numbers were actually given and seems in keeping with the nature of businesses in the Karoo. These tend to be small, and also incline, understandably, to want to fight shy of any necessity for engaging with the regulatory complexities bigger enterprises find themselves having to grapple with.

The enterprises are overwhelmingly white owned. Black-owned enterprises (other than taverns) are still relatively rare in rural towns, particularly in middle-class enterprises such as tourism. This is perhaps a reflection of the fact that most black entrepreneurs tend to migrate to the cities. Nevertheless, the database did yield some interesting black-owned enterprises, including an aloe farmer, an art gallery proprietor, a medicinal herb producer, and a manager of a community-based tourism enterprise.

Very little mention was made of entrepreneurs' experience or educational qualifications and similarly the extent of employee training was hardly ever volunteered. It would be hazardous to venture any conclusions on the grounds of such scanty evidence.

### **The arrival of the creative class and the creation of local economic multipliers**

The slow but steady emergence of a creative class in the Karoo has, thus far, elicited little attention from government or from the academic fraternity. The South African migration literature is largely mute on the topic of white counterurbanisation (Kok, O'Donovan, Bouare and van Zyl 2003; Kok, Gelderblom, Oucho and van Zyl 2006). Pieter Kok is quoted by Statistics South Africa (2006: 24) as having said that 'the (short-lived?) urban-rural turnaround experienced in most industrial countries "seems to have been selective of the more affluent population in the countries where it has been observed"... and concluded that "the prospects of a significant urban-rural turnaround among white South Africans are very slim"'. Kok's observations were made in 1990 since when South Africa has experienced huge change but, as of 2006, Stats SA was still of the opinion that Kok's prognosis had been valid – 'no evidence that has since been produced suggests anything different'. In view of this, and the fact that South

Africa's National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) has not identified the Karoo as a terrain with any significant economic potential (Atkinson and Marais 2007b), it is perhaps unsurprising that what white counterurbanisation there has been, has gone unremarked. But it seems undeniable that the trend makes a difference to the people who live there (Atkinson 2009; Visser and Kotze 2008: 2588). The question is: How big a difference is this, and what potentials does the advent of this class hold out for the general socio-economic upliftment of the region?

This new social phenomenon has a particular race and class profile. The new migrants and investors tend almost invariably to be middle class whites. Although many of these migrants are retirees, some have established small craft industries that are creating employment in local workshops. These crafts are often of a very high standard, and some of these entrepreneurs have secured international markets. In isolated instances, the involvement of new creative class migrants has led to local craftsmen launching their own activities. In Nieu Bethesda, for example, where considerable gentrification has taken place, partly due to the presence of the sculptress Helen Martins's historic Owl House, coloured craftsmen have begun creating their own sculptures, which they sell to tourists. In Aberdeen, a manufacturer of decouped ostrich eggs sells his products for around US\$150 apiece, to customers worldwide, and employs seven workers to whom he is imparting his skills (Carlos Garcez 2010). In Jagersfontein, an enterprise manufacturing wire and glass bead objects regularly supplies both government and international purchasers. In the small Karoo towns, these enterprises are often the only new forms of investment, employment and training, in a context of endemic unemployment.

The arrival of new human and financial capital often exerts a marked change in the local economic outlook and sets in motion a series of psycho-social consequences (Visser and Kotze 2008: 2588-2589). An analogy with a listed company's market capitalisation may serve to illustrate the power of optimism in determining the value of an economic entity.

The market capitalisation of a company listed on a stock exchange is determined by multiplying the number of its shares in issue by the price that is currently being paid for them. If the number of shares in issue is fixed, therefore it must follow that the value of a company can only be boosted by an increase in the price at which its shares are being traded. Where there is no interest

in purchasing the shares of a company their value will decline in the direction of worthlessness and generally come to rest at the point where they reflect the realisable asset value of the stock they represent – that is to say the physical residue of a company that has been stripped of all its ‘good will’, market penetration, human capital and all other forms of intangible quality. Conversely, where the share price is increasing, the company is perceived as accumulating intangible capital valued often far in excess of anything its actual winding up as a going concern would be likely to realise. A major part of this intangible capital is the great expectations (indicated by the Price/Earnings (P/E) ratio) shareholders entertain for the future prospects of the company. Sometimes these hopes are revealed to be unrealistic and then the bubble bursts, but sometimes they prove to be justified and shareholders find themselves greatly enriched by participating in the wealth of a blockbuster company.

Something similar happens with small towns, even those whose stock has sunk so low that half its houses are standing empty. If the housing stock be likened to buying shares in a town, then any activity in a hitherto stagnant market attracts attention. A house changes hands and, depending on the value of the transaction, be it ever so modest, this fans the embers of dormant interest. A few more such transactions and interest increases exponentially. The question that exercises potentially interested buyers is what these actual buyers know that they themselves do not know. Something is ‘in the air’ and, depending on circumstances, what started as a flicker of interest bursts into a flame. Soon the slack is removed from the market, and on account of the fact that the housing stock is still finite (the low values mean that it would cost very much more to build new houses as opposed to buying existing houses), the prices realized begin to escalate. If this process continues long enough, competition between prospective buyers becomes so fierce, that they contend to purchase structures that just a few years before had been considered fit only for use as cow-sheds. At some point, in such a scenario, it may become more cost-effective to build new dwellings and, ironically enough, these will often be constructed so as to mimic the old houses which once had no value beyond the functional one of shelter.

The parallel between the worth of a listed company, and the rising (or falling) stock of a small town is the *concomitant rise in intangible capitals* which typically shadows any surge in property market activity. The removal of the slack from the market is a process which attracts speculators.

Until the market has settled at realistic levels, a flurry of buying and selling may occur, where a house that has changed hands once in 40 years suddenly does so half a dozen times within the space of two years. Initially, many buildings may remain unoccupied. But as values rise, and the cost of holding unoccupied property rises commensurately, gradually the speculative element fades away as the houses come to be secured by actual residents. There are parallels between these dynamics and both 'production-side' and 'consumption-side' (Visser and Kotze 2008) gentrification paradigms (cf. Lees, *et al.* 2008 for a detailed treatment of Smith's 'rent gap theory' for instance) but one should be very circumspect about transposing conclusions informed by the mechanisms of the formal American urban property market to less formalised African rural environments where the unarticulated "rules of the game", notwithstanding some likenesses, may also be very different indeed. This last is something requires more extensive treatment than can be provided here.

If human capital can be measured by educational attainment, which in its turn tends to function as a predictor of future personal wealth, then it follows that the higher the prices realized for housing in a town, the more likely it is that the new occupants embody elevated levels of human capital. A small town may therefore experience a rapid increase in its aggregate of human capital. One of the attributes of creative human capital is that it tends to generate new social interactions. As any social historian or evolutionary biologist well knows, interactions produce *new forms* (Elliott 2003: 365; Florida 2005: 34). The product of the intercourse between complex composites very soon tends towards an infinity of outcomes. Granted that these will not necessarily all be 'positive', the fact is that a vortex of human interactions is whipped up which exercises a *centrifugal* pull of interest on like-minded outsiders. The cauldron of new social interactions acquires *critical mass* as it grows, and the gravitational pull of this exerts a *clustering effect* on those already pre-disposed to augment the critical mass. In time, the apparent homogeneity of this critical mass will splinter into more specialised *cliques* which nevertheless all have a significantly high degree of human capital, thereby allowing for the formation of additional new types of *social capital*.

The foregoing sketches the genesis of 'intangible capitals' and is an account of how the 'creative class' comes to 'colonize' a rural niche. It is important to note that, by doing so, this class cannot



help but foment an atmosphere of creativity. In this way, certain towns will come to find themselves 'ahead of the curve'. These will experience an exponential influx of human creative capital which is often manifested in the phenomenon of the 'boutique town' – a picture-postcard rendition of the vision of bucolic tranquillity which drew those first pioneering buyers to what had been written off as a lost cause 'with no economic potential'.

Needless to say, the nexus of productivity engendered by the innovations of the creative class attracts not only kindred creative souls, but also a wide variety of 'hangers on'. These include the itinerant desperately poor, thereby reinforcing perceptions of economic inequality and charges of 'elitism'. Atkinson (2009: 284) for example cautions that, 'gentrification could promote economic growth and employment while simultaneously increasing class inequality' (see also Visser and Kotze 2008: 2589 on 'displacement').

The social clustering of human capital that marks the rise of the creative class in Karoo towns, has economic ramifications that affect the entire community (Hoogendoorn, *et al.* 2009). There is an influx of financial capital and spending power along with more opportunities for paid employment, and more organisational resources. Local economic multipliers proliferate and strengthen the towns' more long-established businesses.

## **Conclusion**

This article has attempted to situate the mini-renaissance which a number of small Karoo towns have experienced, over the past decade, within the broad ambit of socio-economic tendencies identified and analysed in Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class*. While Florida's main tenets are generated almost entirely from within the urban American context, his construct does make provision for the migration of creative talent from cities that have ceased to offer the quality of life, or levels of intangible amenity, demanded by an increasingly mobile and autonomous workforce. For a significant number of these skilled individuals, small rural towns are offering an outlet for their creativity.

In South Africa, the so-called 'flight' of the creative class from endemic city crime and deteriorating urban environments, has seen a resurgence of interest, largely on the part of whites, in embracing the less materialistic values implied by a country lifestyle. This in turn has infused many small towns with a new sense of entrepreneurial optimism and vigour which is beginning to act as a catalyst for economic endeavour amongst the previously disadvantaged sectors of these towns. These findings are congruent with those arising from the 'second-homes' phenomenon as investigated by Hoogendoorn, *et al.* (2009), and go some way to addressing issues first raised by Visser (2003) as to the whereabouts and livelihood strategies of those whites whose "comfort zones" have been disrupted by post-apartheid developments and dispensations.

In keeping with the creative ethos, the economic challenge is not simply the promotion of 'trickle-down' job creation. Rather, what is needed is that those locked into the culture of poverty that typifies so many small Karoo towns can be exposed to the entrepreneurial values that animate so many of the region's newcomers. What this entails is the opening up of creative niches for those who want to better their life's circumstances. The advent of a creative class in the Karoo would seem to provide a 'window of opportunity' for some measure of socio-economic upliftment, and the creation of new kinds of rural livelihoods.

**Acknowledgment** An early version of this paper was presented at the Desert Knowledge Symposium held in Alice Springs, Australia in November 2008. The author gratefully acknowledges financial support from AusAID and from the University of the Free State to attend this event.

## References

Altbeker, A. (2007). *A Country at War with Itself*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball.

Atkinson, D. (2009). Economic decline and gentrification in a small town: the business sector in Aberdeen, Eastern Cape. *Development Southern Africa*, 26(2), 271-288.

Atkinson, D. (2010). A multidimensional analysis of local economic development in Graaff-Reinet, Eastern Cape. *Journal for New Generation Sciences*, 8(1), (forthcoming).

Atkinson, D., & Marais, L. (2007a). District Socio-economic Profile and Development Plans. The Arid Areas Programme Vol. 1. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Centre for Development Support. Also available at <http://www.aridareas.co.za>.

Atkinson, D., & Marais, L. (2007b). Provincial Development Policies and Plans. The Arid Areas Programme Vol. 2. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Centre for Development Support. Also available at <http://www.aridareas.co.za>.

Ballantine, N., Rousseau, G. G., & Venter, D. J. L. (2008). Purchasing behaviour as a determinant of food insecurity in Klipplaat. *Journal of Family Ecology and Consumer Sciences*, 36, 1-8.

Blakesley, R. P. (2006). *The Arts and Crafts Movement*. London: Phaidon Press.

Boyle, D. (2003). *Authenticity: Brands, fakes, spin and the lust for real life*. London: Harper.

Boyle, P., Halfacree, K., & Robinson, V. (1998). *Exploring Contemporary Migration*. Harlow, England: Prentice Hall.

Brock, D. M. (2009). Remote and rural Canada? Far out. *Policy Options* October, 69-72.

Brooks, D. (2000). *Bobos in Paradise: The new upper class and how they got there*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Bryant, J. (2007). A literary refuge in the Hantam. *Village Life*, 27, 45-48.

Carlos Garcez. (2010). <http://www.carlosgarcez.com>. [Accessed 30 April, 2010].

Clemence, B., & MacGregor, K. (2003). *Karoo Characters: Portraits in a South African town*. Hanover: Coffee & Books.

David, D. E. (2007). A great little town: Philippolis. *Village Life* 22, 32-35.

David, D. E. (2008). SA gets its first book town. *Village Life* 30, 34-37.

Deal, J. (2007). *Timeless Karoo*. Cape Town: Struik.

Dobson, R. M., & Mowszowski, R. (2004). *Karoo Moons: A photographic journey*. Cape Town: Struik.

Donaldson, R. (2007). Tourism in small town South Africa. In C. M. Rogerson, & G. Visser (Eds), *Urban tourism in the developing world: The South African experience* (pp. 307-326). New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Donaldson, R., & Ferreira, S. (2009). (Re-)creating Urban Destination Image: Opinions of Foreign Visitors to South Africa on Safety and Security? *Urban Forum*, 20, 1-18.

Du Toit, J. (2008). Restoring the Karoo. *Country Life*, 138, 38-45.

Elliott, P. (2003). The origins of the 'creative class': provincial urban society, scientific culture and socio-political marginality in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Social History* 28(3), 361-387.

Evans, N., Morris, C., & Winter, M. (2002). Conceptualizing agriculture: a critique of post-productivism as the new orthodoxy. *Progress in Human Geography*, 26(3), 313-332.

Florida, R. (2002). *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. (2005). *Cities and the Creative Class*. New York: Routledge.

Florida, R. (2007). *The Flight of the Creative Class*. New York: Collins.

Florida, R. (2008). *Who's Your City?* New York: Basic Books.

Friis, J. (2007). A vision that died. *Village Life*, 24, 34-35.

Galgut, D. (2008). *The Impostor*. Johannesburg: Penguin.

Gerryts, E. (1998). *Myths and Fables of Nieu-Bethesda*. Nieu-Bethesda: Village Inn Publishers.

Green, L. (1955). *Karoo*. Cape Town: Howard Timmins.

Halfacree, K. (2006). From dropping out to leading on? British counter-cultural back-to-the-land in a changing rurality. *Progress in Human Geography*, 30(3), 309-336.

Halfacree, K. (2007a). Back-to-the-land in the twenty-first century – making connections with rurality. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 98(1), 3-8.

Halfacree, K. (2007b). Trial by space for a 'radical rural': Introducing alternative localities, representations and lives. *Journal of Rural Studies* 23, 125-141.

Hayward, B. (2008). Buyers go wild over Karoo land. <http://www.eprop.co.za/news/article.aspx?idArticle=9797>. [Accessed 29 April, 2010].

Hilton, T. (2002). *John Ruskin*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hoogendoorn, G., Mellett, R., & Visser, G. (2007). Second Homes Tourism in Africa: Reflections on the South African Experience. In C. M. Rogerson & G. Visser (Eds), *Urban Tourism in the Developing World: The South African experience* (pp. 127-166). New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Hoogendoorn, G., Visser, G., & Marais, L. (2009). Changing countrysides, changing villages: Second homes in Rhodes, South Africa. *South African Geographical Journal*, 91(2), 75-83.

Ilbery, B. (Ed) (1998). *The Geography of Rural Change*. Harlow: Longman.

Ilbery, B. & Kneafsey, M. (1998). Product and Place: Promoting quality products and services in the lagging rural regions of the European Union. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 5(4), 329-341.

Ingle, M. K. (2008). Economic Potential in South Africa's Arid Areas: A selection of niche products and services. The Arid Areas Programme Vol. 7. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Centre for Development Support. Also available at <http://www.aridareas.co.za>.

Ingle, M. K. (2010). Making the most of 'Nothing': Astro-tourism, the Sublime, and the Karoo as a 'space destination'. *Transformation*.

*Karoo Advertiser*. (2008). Aberdeen books and crafts. 1 Aug., 9.

Karoo Space. (2010) <http://www.karoospace.co.za>. [Accessed 18 April, 2010].

Kok, P., O'Donovan, M., Bouare, O., & van Zyl, J. (2003). *Post-apartheid Patterns of Internal Migration in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Publishers.

Kok, P., Gelderblom, D., Oucho, J. O., & van Zyl, J. (2006). *Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants*. Cape Town: HSRC Publishers.

Kotze, N. (2003). Changing economic bases: Orania as a case study of small-town development in South Africa. *Acta Academica Supplementum* 2003(1), 159-172.

Lange, W. (2007). *From Sea to SALT*. Cape Town: Lupus Press.

- Lees, L., Slater, T., & Wyly, E. (2008). *Gentrification*. New York: Routledge.
- Lichtman, S. (2006). Country Dreaming. *Country Life*, 119, 56-61.
- Lynch, K. (2005). *Rural-Urban Interaction in the Developing World*. London: Routledge.
- MacCarthy, W. (1994). *William Morris: A life for our time*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Maguire, J. (2007). Nieuweveld farms that tell a story. *Village Life*, 22, 38-41.
- Marais, C. (2008a). Karoo culture vultures. *Country Life*, 143, 46-51.
- Marais, C. (2008b). Mother churches of the Karoo. *Country Life*, 145, 56-61.
- Marais, C., & Du Toit, J. (2009) *Karoo Keepsakes*. Cradock: MLM Publishers
- Marais, L. (2004). From Small Town to Tourism Mecca: the Clarens Fairy Tale. In C. M. Rogerson, & G. Visser (Eds), *Tourism and Development Issues in Contemporary South Africa* (pp. 420-435). Pretoria: Africa Institute.
- McGranahan, D., & Wojan, T. (2007). Recasting the creative class to examine growth processes in rural and urban counties. *Regional Studies*, 41(2), 197-216.
- Montgomery, J. (2005). Beware 'the Creative Class': Creativity and wealth creation revisited. *Local Economy* 20(4), 337-343.
- Moseley, S. (2006). The stone houses of the Karoo. *Village Life*, 20, 18-21.
- Mouton, J. (2001). *How to Succeed in your Master's & Doctoral Studies: a South African Guide and Resource Book*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

- Mouton, A. (2006a). Prof George van der Spuy – Music maestro from Uniondale. *Village Life*, 17, 10-15.
- Mouton, A. (2006b). Beaufort West and its legacy of trees. *Village Life*, 18, 16-19.
- Mouton, A., & Whitlock, T. (2006). Graaff-Reinet preserves its heritage. *Village Life*, 16, 21-24.
- Mouton, M. (2006a). A village vigneron. *Village Life*, 16, 12-13.
- Mouton, M. (2006b). Forgotten temples in the Karoo. *Village Life*, 16, 26-30.
- Mouton, M. (2006c). Art, food and books in the old Uniondale mill. *Village Life*, 19, 30-31.
- Mouton, M. (2006d). Karoostyle. *Village Life*, 21, 38-42.
- Naude-Moseley, B. (2008). Loxton – the land of the stoep. *Village Life*, 28, 20-24.
- Naude-Moseley, B., & Moseley, S. (2008). *Getaway guide to Karoo, Namaqualand & Kalahari*. Roggebaai: Sunbird Publishers.
- Nel, E., & Hill, T. (2008). Marginalisation and demographic change in the semi-arid Karoo, South Africa. *Journal of Arid Environments*, 72(12), 2264-2274.
- Nell, L. (2008). *The Great Karoo*. Cape Town: Struik.
- Olive Grove Guest Farm. (2010). Activities. <http://www.olivegrove.co.za/activities.php> [Accessed 28 April, 2010].



Prince Albert Writers Guild. (2005). *Prince Albert (Kweekvallei): landmark events, colourful characters and the lifestyle of an historic Karoo town*. Cape Town: Formsexpress.

Queen's University. (2008). Growing the Creative-Rural Economy in Prince Edward County. Report prepared by the Geography Department for the P.E.L.A. Institute for Rural Development. [http://www.pecounty.on.ca/government/corporate\\_services/economic\\_development/creative\\_economy/index.php](http://www.pecounty.on.ca/government/corporate_services/economic_development/creative_economy/index.php) [Accessed 18 April, 2010].

Ray, P. H., & Anderson, S. R. (2000). *The Cultural Creatives: How 50 million people are changing the world*. New York: Harmony Books.

Rickard, C. (2008). A cock and bull story. *Without Prejudice* 8(6), 46-47.

Rogerson, C. M. & Visser, G. (Eds) (2004). *Tourism and Development Issues in Contemporary South Africa*. Pretoria: Africa Institute.

Rogerson, C. M. (2007). Creative Industries and Urban Tourism: South African Perspectives. In C. M. Rogerson, & G. Visser (Eds), *Urban Tourism in the Developing World: The South African experience* (pp. 167-184). New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Rogerson, C. M., & Visser, G. (Eds) (2007). *Urban Tourism in the Developing World: The South African experience*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Roux, M. (2007). Calitzdorp: Growth through hardship. *Village Life*, 23, 17-20.

Rowbotham, S. (2008). *Edward Carpenter: A life of liberty and love*. London: Verso.

Slee, R. W. (2005). From countrysides of production to countrysides of consumption? *Journal of Agricultural Science*, 143, 255-265.

*Smiffie News*. (2010). <http://www.smiffienews.co.za>. [Accessed 30 April 2010].

Snyman, D. (2008). *On the Back Roads*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

Statistics South Africa. (2006). *Migration and Urbanisation in South Africa*. Report no. 03-04-02. Pretoria: Stats SA.

Taylor, J., Ffowcs-Williams, I., & Crowe, M. (2008). Linking desert businesses: the impetus, the practicalities, the emerging pay-offs, and building on the experiences. *The Rangeland Journal*, 30(1), 187-195.

Titus, M. & Hinderink, J. (Eds) (1998). *Town and Hinterland in Developing Countries*. Amsterdam: Thela Thesis.

Triggs, O. L. (1902). *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement*. Chicago: The Bohemia Guild of the Industrial Art League.

Trip, J. J. (2007). Assessing quality of place: a comparative analysis of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 29(5), 501-18.

UN-Habitat. (2003). *The Challenge of Slums*. London: Earthscan.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2009. *Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming barriers: human mobility and development*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Van Niekerk, J, & Marais, L. (2008). Public policy and small towns in arid South Africa: The case of Philippolis. *Urban Forum* 19, 363-380.

Van Schalkwyk, W. (2007). *Aberdeen of the Cape: A retreat of the future*. Cape Town: Westby-Nunn Publishers.

Visser, G. (2003). Unvoiced and invisible: on the transparency of white South Africans in post-apartheid geographical discourse. *Acta Academica Supplementum*, 2003(1), 220-244.

Visser, G. (2007). On Citations, Rating Games and Other Pesky Animals: Which Zoo for South African Human Geography? *South African Geographical Journal*, 89(2), 135-144.

Visser, G. (2008). The homonormalisation of white heterosexual leisure spaces in Bloemfontein, South Africa. *Geoforum*, 39, 1344-1358.

Visser, G., & Kotze, N. (2008). The State and New-build Gentrification in Central Cape Town, South Africa. *Urban Studies*, 45(12), 2565-2593.

Von Ahlefeldt, J. (2008). Lakeland paradise. *Country Life*, 143, 82-85.

Walthev, I. (2007). *A Place in my Country: in search of a rural dream*. London: Phoenix.

Webster, R. (2008). Little hamlet in reality an absolute gem. *Advertiser en Karoo-nuus*. 11 July, 5.

Westby-Nunn, T. (2004). *Graaff-Reinet: an illustrated historical guide to the town*. Capricorn Square: Elephant Head Publications.

Willis, R. (2008). *The Karoo Cookbook*. Cape Town: Struik.

Wright, N. (1929). *Glimpses of South Africa*. London: A. & C. Black, Ltd.

## 9.2 Paper II: Making the most of 'nothing': Astro-tourism, the Sublime, and the Karoo as a 'space destination'

In recent years, perceptions of South Africa's arid Karoo have been radically transformed. Whereas the Karoo was once regarded as a desolate wasteland, it is now being advertised as a fashionable region, both to live in and to explore. Many enterprising niche tourism operators have positioned themselves to profit from this phenomenon. This article briefly articulates the concept of 'the Sublime' and shows how the nexus of cognitive associations suggested by 'space' and 'nothingness' is being harnessed to rebrand the Karoo as a dynamic and desirable destination. The paper also reflects on how these developments might benefit local communities, and it flags some of the tensions occasioned by the intrusion of tourism into a relatively undeveloped region.

The paper shows the creative class *being creative* in actuating potential capitals. The exploitation of one such cluster of capitals (natural, intellectual, technological and social) has resulted in the emergence of a vibrant 'astro-tourism' sector, especially in the vicinity of Sutherland, in the Northern Cape, stimulated by the important astronomical facilities located and being planned for in the region.

It is easy to see why tourism might benefit from people seeking out 'space, silence and solitude'. This, after all, is how many people relax and refresh themselves. But it is arguably less obvious why anyone would want to seek these attributes out as part of a permanent lifestyle change. Not everyone in the Karoo makes their living from tourism. One would expect creatively inclined people to gravitate towards the conurbations. But, as already indicated, a major advantage of the 'new rural' is that one can opt in and out of city-denominated hubs of creativity at will – via recourse to improved transport links and telecommunications. The provision of 'hard' infrastructure, however, always raises the spectre of a type of development which ultimately destroys that which it is designed to provide access to. This poses the conundrum of when does

'more' turn out to be 'less'? Will the enthusiastic advocacy of the Karoo prove to be the region's undoing in the long run?

When the exercising of lifestyle options enters into the picture, the fact of *personal preference*, earlier seen to inform the counterurbanisation literature, comes into play. Reynolds (2011:128) for example, in discussing the philosophy that 'less is more', writes about a "literary tradition of utopias that are about seclusion and serenity: withdrawal from the promiscuous bustle and hyperstimulation of the city in favour of pastoral stasis. A utopia that is not about wanting *for* nothing, but about wanting *nothing*" [italics in original]. This article also briefly details some of literary associations generated by the Karoo and implies that the subliminal utopianism entailed by Romanticism has played a role in the revisioning of the region.

## *Making the Most of 'Nothing': Astro-tourism, the Sublime, and the Karoo as a 'space destination'<sup>4</sup>*

### **Introduction**

This article records how the quality of nothingness, which characterises South Africa's arid Karoo in the public mind, has been transformed in recent times from a perceived liability into a touristic asset. It seeks to show how this metamorphosis is being facilitated by creative tourism entrepreneurship, and speculates on what the impact of niche tourism, and specifically 'astro-tourism', might be for the local inhabitants.

The discussion commences with an analysis of how open spaces came to be venerated as integral to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic movement, and introduces the concept of 'the Sublime' in nature. The early history of astronomy at the Cape is briefly summarised to contextualise current astronomical developments taking place in the Karoo. It is shown how neatly these initiatives dovetail with current government policies intended to secure South Africa's participation in the global knowledge economy.

The paper then turns to a discussion of niche tourism which leads into an account of the recent rise in prominence of 'space tourism'. It is argued that this phenomenon opens the way for the Karoo to capitalise on 'astro-tourism', conceived of as an earthbound form of space tourism. Astro-tourism, if used as a lead sector, has the potential to activate a range of other niche tourism possibilities in the Karoo. The planned-for upgrading of roads could have the effect of establishing Sutherland as a portal to draw tourists from the Western Cape up onto the escarpment and into the interior.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ingle, M.K. 2010. Making the Most of 'Nothing': Astro-tourism, the Sublime, and the Karoo as a 'space destination', *Transformation* 74:87-111.

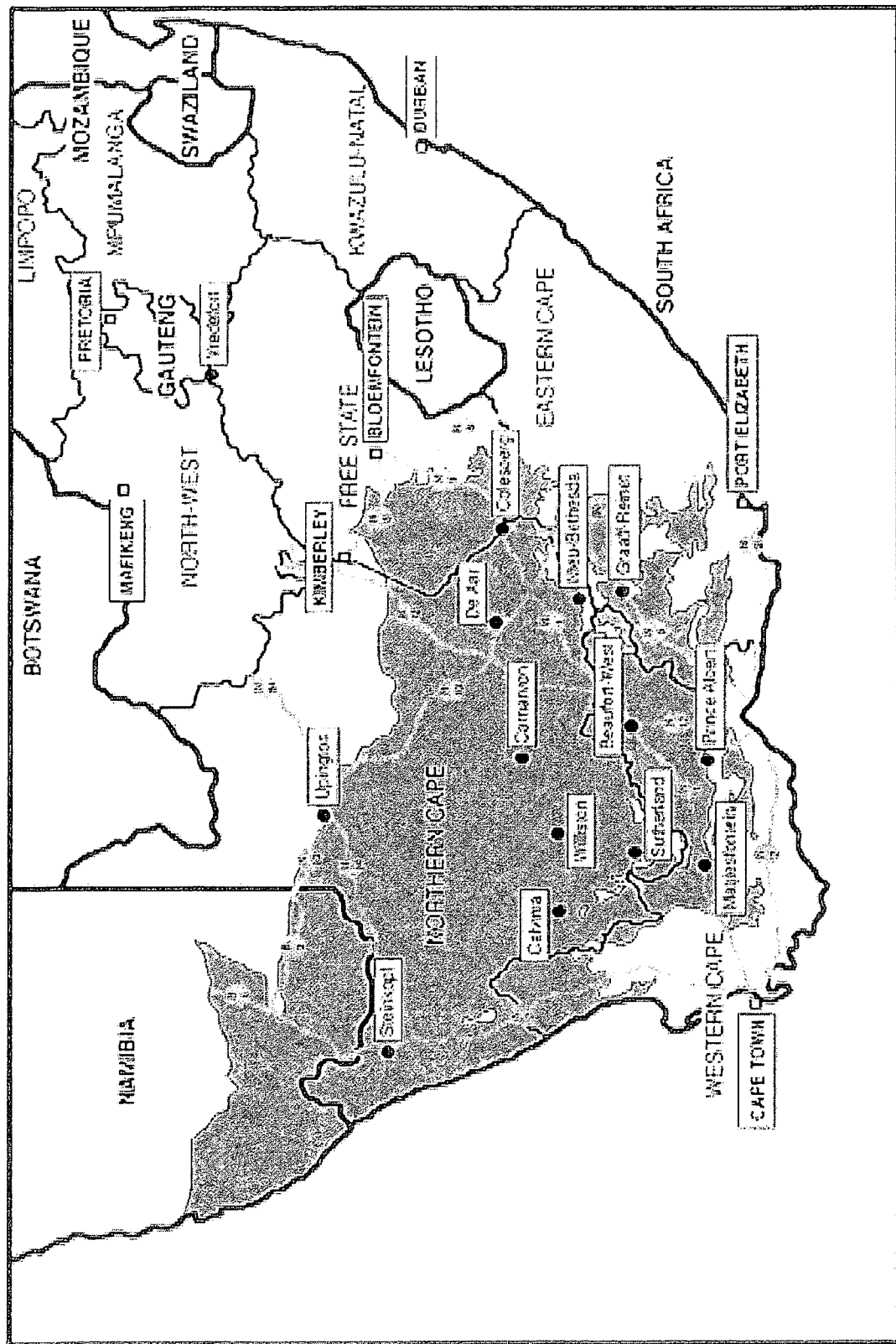
Tourism entrepreneurs have shown themselves to be alive to the marketing possibilities held out by the motifs of 'nothingness' and 'space' and the article provides selective illustrations of this. The concept of 'Karoo space' is revealed as itself being multi-faceted in that it marries externals with thoughts and feelings evoked by the experience of the Sublime.

The article concludes with a short assessment of how astro-tourism might contribute towards the socio-economic upliftment of the Karoo communities affected by it. This is not so much an account of the usual benefits believed to flow from tourism (although these are not necessarily discounted), as it is an exploration of the more indirect means by which tourism may precipitate the creation of the human capital so essential to South Africa's participation in the knowledge economy.

### **The plenitude of 'nothingness'**

The Karoo, given its marginal status, is well-served by a disproportionately large body of travel and fictional writing. The accounts of early travellers such as Campbell, Thunberg, Thompson, Farini and Lichtenstein (then, as now, often traversing the Karoo en route to somewhere else) are supplemented by scores of others still readily available in the Van Riebeeck Society series or in Struik's *Africana Collectanea*. While the ideological presuppositions supposedly contained within this body of writing have been subjected to stringent critique by Pratt (2008), there are scholars who bring an altogether different set of critical faculties to the genre (see for example Belich 2009; Sachs 2006:51; Schama 1995:9; Schoeman 2003). Suffice it to say of the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Gere 2009:170) that the interpretation and 'writing of history is largely a matter of what filters you use' (Porter 2009:8). Insofar as Karoo-based fiction is concerned, recent works by Galgut (2008) and Rosenthal (2004) have served to confirm Heywood's (2004:107) observation that 'numerous South African writers have found inspiration in the Karoo'. These include Olive Schreiner, Pauline Smith and Guy Butler, to mention but a few.

Figure 1: Southern Africa with the Nama and Succulent Karoo biomes merged





In recent years South Africa's Karoo has come to acquire a definite cachet (see for example Deal 2007; Marais and du Toit 2009; Naude-Moseley and Moseley 2008; Rogers 2008). Increasingly, the Karoo is regarded as having, in Richard Florida's words, an 'authenticity of place' (Florida 2002:231,308). This stands in stark contrast with the view of earlier travelers to the Karoo. Charles Darwin, after an excursion to the edge of the Karoo in 1836 (James 2009:5), said that 'he had never seen such an uninteresting country' (Browne 1995:328) while a century later a contemporary tourist described the Karoo as 'one of the most forsaken and depressing spots on this earth' and as '... one of the most desolate places in the world' (Wright 1929:135). But since then, it is this very sense of *verlatenheid* (desolation), in an increasingly noisome and crowded world, that has come to feature as an attraction.

Throughout the world, open spaces now command a premium (Jamie 2008; Macfarlane 2007; UNEP 2006). While Europe's remote places become increasingly congested (Ousby 2002), the apparent emptiness of the Karoo semi-desert is becoming a significant attraction. As Peter Myles of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University's Tourism Research Unit has remarked:

Whenever I think of the Karoo and its body, mind and soul healing properties of silence, solitude and space (the three "S's") then I am reminded of the hit song from *Porgy and Bess*, 'I got plenty of nothing and nothing is plenty for me'. There will come a time, if it is not here and now, when 'nothingness' will become a valuable commodity (Karoo Space 2008).

Any celebration of space, even if it does not pointedly articulate it, draws on the *leitmotif* of 'the Sublime'. As Johnson (1991:158) explains: 'The connection between visual astonishment and the emotions – indeed between sight and spirit – had been perceived even in antiquity. Longinus defined it as a lifting up of the soul to ecstasy so that it took part in the splendours of divinity. Sheer size was clearly a major element in this process'.

John Ruskin said, 'Anything which elevates the mind is sublime, and elevation of mind is produced by the contemplation of greatness of any kind... [including] space' (quoted in Johnson 1991:158). In this regard it is important to note Marjorie Nicolson's observation in her seminal environmental text, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: the development of the aesthetics of*

*the infinite*, that we tend to 'see in Nature what we have been taught to look for' and to 'feel what we have been prepared to feel' (Nicolson 1997:1). The implication of this is that the apprehension of the Sublime, *qua* sublime, is a determined construct. Similarly, while the Karoo's expansiveness and aridity are natural facts, its demographic profile is rather less so. This point will be returned to below.

The Romantic movement, with its origins in the late 1700s, saw the quest for 'the Sublime' being venerated, one might almost say fetishised, in a way that was quite new. Until then, areas such as the Alps, for example, had typically been experienced as fearsome, if not downright repellant (Nicolson 1977:18; Ousby 2002:101; Uglow 2002:138; Urry 2002:147). The Romantic poets, however, exalted the spiritual qualities of lofty mountain peaks. As Nicolson (1977:25) puts it, 'Imagination was learning to "feel through the eyes".' Poets such as Coleridge and Wordsworth, in their compulsive ramblings across the English countryside, are described by Holmes (1989:328) as 'in effect inventing a new kind of Romantic tourism' – one which was instrumental in making 'the cult of mountain-tops, of spiritual communing with nature in her remotest places... a characteristic of Romanticism as a whole' (Holmes 1989:324n). This new approach to unspoilt nature reads very much like the precursor to modern day backpacking (for which see Rogerson 2008): 'Young men from the universities dressed as tramps and wandered over the countryside, staying at local inns, talking enthusiastically with "the common people", hill-climbing, swimming, star-gazing and communing with nature' (Holmes 1989:60).

JM Coetzee (1988:51) in a consummate analysis of the sublime in the South African context poses the question, 'Why, at a time when the notion of the sublime had not exhausted its potency, was it not applied to the vast "empty" spaces of the hinterland?' He corroborates the general perception, cited earlier, of the interior as a sterile, brown waste land (1988:52-53) and writes that, 'the reclamation of this nameless wilderness... in the name of the sublime' never occurred. Although this essay cannot hope to do justice to the many nuances of Coetzee's argument, his claim that 'in European art the sublime is far more often associated with the vertical than the horizontal' (1988:54) is suggestive. Coetzee is primarily concerned with tracing the development of an aesthetic sublime as mediated by landscape, and as apprehended by the 'botanical gaze' (172) of poets and artists conditioned by European ways of seeing and who are

repelled by the 'paucity of greens' (44) displayed by flat, rocky landscapes. He is according little exercised by the possibility of a 'scientific sublime', discussed later in this paper, that is engendered by the immense upward sweep, and depth, of the astronomer's gaze.

According to Urry (2002:141-161) 'photography is central within the modern tourist gaze' which gaze had its genesis in the 'romantic gaze' – sight being 'viewed as the noblest of the senses'. Spatiality thus came to be packaged and 'consumed', in the touristic sense, and spatial novelties have ever since been experienced with delight (Johnson 1991:154-8), and photographed with enthusiasm, by modernising sensibilities (Robinson and Picard 2009). The element of *interiority*, stimulated by the apprehension of vastness, is important in understanding the new-found appeal of the Karoo. As Du Toit (Karoo Space 2009) so aptly expresses it, 'All that space allows *you* space'. Humankind has always stood in awe of the celestial, from the ancient Egyptians' worship of the sun disc to the reverence with which the self-professed atheist and renowned cosmologist, the late Carl Sagan, invested the universe. In 1802 William Paley in his *Natural Theology* wrote that astronomy: 'raises to sublimer views of the Deity than any other subject affords' and 'shows, beyond all other sciences, the magnificence of his operations' (Goodman 2008:191). This upwelling of religious feeling, of whatever form, in the face of immensity is well attested to and need not be elaborated on here.

Furthermore, the concept of 'space' provides a unique instantiation of a concept, namely infinity, which cannot be comprehended in thought (Kaplan 1999:218-9), but which can be visually appreciated. Never-ending space gives us a glimpse into infinite time (Chown 2007:148-9). We can experientially apprehend infinity, from within our subjectivity, without being able to 'fix' or circumscribe it in thought in the same way that we can with other visible objects. Thus it is that, in apprehending the cosmos, the infinite made manifest, we internalise it as the Sublime within our finite understanding.

This ability of the finite to represent the infinite to itself is the very wellspring of awe and wonder. As Chown (2007:258) remarks, it raises that most puzzling question of all: 'Why has the Universe given rise to matter that contemplates its surroundings and asks "why"?'. Consonant with Myles's sentiments expressed earlier, profound questions of this nature are readily

suggested by the spatial depths of a region such as South Africa's arid Karoo. What is the immanence, the hidden 'palimpsest' (Hauser 2008:88; Schama 1995:16), that awaits decoding within this ostensible 'nothingness'?

The Karoo has increasingly come to serve as a *tabula rasa* onto which authors, artists and journalists inscribe the products of their creative imaginations. While this is surely an inevitable development, it is one of the aims of this article to show that the *tabula rasa* is in fact a palimpsest, and that the apparent 'emptiness' of the Karoo is an imaginative blind-spot. Brooks (2000:64) has cautioned against just such a misrepresentation in the context of game reserves being construed as 'natural' spaces stripped of their 'human historical context'. Since at least 180-million years ago, during the Early Jurassic period when what is now the Karoo was swampland teeming with pre-historic life (Rubidge 2009), through to the legendary migrations of the *trekbokken* (Roche 2005), so graphically described by Fraser (1922:14-15), the Karoo has never been 'empty' in the sense of the existentialist Neant. Even though it has usually been experienced in modern times as relatively thinly populated on account of its aridity (Coetzee 1988:182) there is abundant evidence of human settlement stretching back to the Stone Age more than a million years ago, with climatically-induced 'boom and bust' cycles sometimes resulting in periods of 'extensive settlement' by San hunter gatherers (Parkington, Morris and Rusch 2008:83-101). In what has been characterised as 'a guerrilla war stretching over generations', by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century these original inhabitants of the Karoo were 'slowly and surely being dispossessed' and eliminated by *trekboers* (nomadic pastoralists) and colonists advancing north from the Cape (Schoeman 1998). They have bequeathed to posterity their rock art and engravings as a valuable source of national heritage (Morris 2003). These then are but a few dimensions of the adumbrated palimpsest that on closer inspection displaces the *tabula rasa* of the Karoo.

### **Astronomy at the Cape and the Karoo**

The early history of astronomy in South Africa is dominated by the figure of John Herschel. Herschel was one of the most eminent scientists of his day – this to the extent of his being buried

alongside Isaac Newton in Westminster Abbey (Buttmann 1970:12; Clark 2007; Holmes 2008). Herschel set out to complement his father's mapping of the northern hemisphere's skies by doing the same for the southern hemisphere. His observations at the Cape were conducted between 1834 and 1838 but took almost a decade to write up for publication, so voluminous was the data he collected.

Unlike the northern hemisphere, only a fifth of the path traced by the 30<sup>th</sup> degree of latitude in the south consists of land mass, the remainder being ocean (Evans, Deeming, Evans and Goldfarb 1969:xxiv). In an interesting anticipation of the current competition between South Africa and Australia for the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) bid, which is described later in this article, Herschel had to choose between Australia and South Africa to establish his observatory. He fortunately (for South Africa) decided on the Cape, because of its better amenities (a Royal Observatory had been established in 1820) and his presence there served as a drawcard for many distinguished travelers (Warner 2009). By word of mouth, the reputation of Cape Town, as a scientific destination, grew steadily (see for example Browne 1995:328-330 and Goodman 2008).

Herschel was fulsome in his praise of observation conditions at the Cape: 'The tranquility of the images and sharpness of vision is such that hardly any limit is set to magnifying power' (Buttmann 1970:90). Consequently, he presented the world with a number of 'masterpieces of celestial topography' (Buttmann 1970:98). It helped that Herschel truly loved the Cape and wrote well of it to his many connections (Evans *et al* 1969) and by the time his magisterial research was published in 1847, Cape Town was on its way to becoming a significant scientific destination.

This momentum was not lost and many major observatories were erected throughout South Africa over the years. Numerous foreign institutions (Yale, Harvard, Leiden, Radcliffe, Michigan) came to maintain stations in the country (ASSA 2005:99). South Africa became a 'space destination' of note.

The scientific heritage bequeathed by John Herschel lives on in South Africa's Astronomical Observatory (SAAO). Its purpose is to conduct fundamental research in astronomy and astrophysics by providing a world-class facility and by promoting astronomy and astrophysics in southern Africa (SAAO nd.). This function is integral to the 'Ten-Year Plan' adopted by South Africa's Department of Science and Technology (DST 2007) and which is outlined in more detail below. Although the SAAO's administrative and computing facilities are still based in Cape Town, the increasing problem of light pollution in urban areas necessitated the relocation of SAAO's observational functions to a clearer, darker site. The Karoo town of Sutherland, situated at an altitude of 1759m, was selected as the site for the new observatory. Sutherland's unique combination of topographical and meteorological attributes makes it one of the best astronomical sites in the world. The main telescope was installed at Sutherland in 1976. Initially, the effect on the commerce of the town itself was limited, since the observatory was never intended as a tourist attraction. But with the advent of the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) in 2000 all this was set to change.

SALT, the largest single optical telescope in the southern hemisphere, gathers 25 times as much light as the previous largest African telescopes. It not only allows astronomers to probe the depths and origins of the universe, but also to explore various 'extreme environments' (SALT nd.). This is strategic in the light of the South African Government's research focus on climate change (DST 2007). Construction of the telescope was started in 2000 and completed in 2005, at a total cost of some US\$32-million, including instruments. Foreign universities participating in SALT-based research are drawn from Germany, New Zealand, Poland, the USA, and the UK. Sutherland also has a 'twinning' arrangement with Fort Davis in Texas.

Recent investments in astronomy are expected to promote a range of developmental goals. Consequently, the 'SALT Collateral Benefits Plan' focuses on:

- Ensuring the advancement of the economy, technology and society
- Providing educational and training opportunities
- Enhancing science education and awareness throughout South Africa
- Developing technology infrastructure, edu-tourism and educational facilities and,

- Extending the benefits of astronomy and space science to the rest of Africa

In addition to SALT, a new initiative is the creation of a Square Kilometre Array (SKA) facility, which will monitor cosmic background radiation. SKA is a truly international initiative involving 24 institutions representing 12 countries from the developed world. In an intriguing echo of John Herschel's choice of a South African facility, the SKA project bid will be decided between Australia and South Africa in 2012, and is scheduled for completion by 2020. This project will involve the erection of some 4000 satellite dish antennae. It is envisaged that data from these dishes will be processed at a central site in Cape Town. In the meantime, until the bid has been adjudicated, the MeerKAT (Karoo Array Telescope) will function as a precursor phase of SKA.

A site 95km north-west of the Karoo town of Carnarvon has been selected for MeerKAT. The site was identified precisely because of its remoteness, in the very middle of the huge Central Astronomy Advantage Area. MeerKAT will involve 80 dishes of 12-metre height and is an integral component of the preparation phase (PrepSKA) for the awarding of the bid. In the event of South Africa winning the SKA contract, MeerKAT will be incorporated into SKA but it could also function as a stand-alone installation in its own right (Brits 2008).

As is the case with SALT, MeerKAT is also expected to promote local developmental goals. In 2007, the Free State University's Centre for Development Support (CDS) conducted a socio-economic baseline study in the towns of Carnarvon and Williston, in order to gauge the degree to which SKA could be instrumental in uplifting local communities.

One of the substantial 'collateral benefits' that SKA will confer on Williston and Carnarvon is that residents will reportedly be able to 'piggy-back' onto a state-of-the-art wireless telecommunications system transmitting data from the satellite dishes to Cape Town. These towns will become more attractive to entrepreneurs and investors, and will enable the farming community to access international markets more effectively by means of internet connectivity. This eventuality has already begun to be factored into local property prices. Another effect will be the promotion of sorely needed computer literacy in the schools of Carnarvon and Williston.

The Karoo is becoming an increasingly important 'space science destination'. The Department of Science and Technology (DST 2007) has released a blueprint for accelerating progress towards a 'knowledge economy' in South Africa. The document, entitled *Innovation towards a Knowledge-based Economy – Ten Year Plan for South Africa 2008-2018*, highlights five 'grand challenges'. These are focus areas that the country must address in order to participate meaningfully in the global knowledge economy. One of these challenges is 'space science and technology' (DST 2007:11). (The others are: the bio-economy; energy security; climate change; and 'human and social dynamics'). The Department claims that progress in these areas will be based on three foundations: technology development and innovation; human capital; and knowledge infrastructure.

From this it follows that the human capital the country so vitally needs might ideally be nurtured within those schools fortunate enough to be situated in the neighbourhood of these world-class astronomical facilities. It is the stated intention of the institutions involved with SALT's Collateral Benefits Plan, and SKA, to strengthen local communities by contributing in this regard. As Kahn, Vlotman, Steyn and van der Schyff (2007:185-6) point out, not only has the higher education system in South Africa remained 'essentially stuck' since 1991 in terms of research publications, but 'the school system is also "stuck"', with respect to mathematical proficiency. To enable South Africa to hold its own in the knowledge economy, the Karoo's SALT and SKA programmes present a golden opportunity to revive scientific literacy.

### **Astro-tourism as a form of niche tourism**

In addition to scientific education, scientific 'niche tourism' is also likely to follow in the wake of SALT and SKA. Such tourism can play a significant role in the DST's (2007:23) stated desire 'to support the public understanding of and engagement with science'.

In the American mid-West, during the tornado season, 'storm-chasers' equipped with sophisticated meteorological tracking devices, criss-cross the heartland in search of 'twisters' (Hancock 2008). A week's 'twister hunt' costs the tourist around US\$ 3500 a head. When one



such enthusiast was asked what his motivations were for signing up for such an activity he replied, 'The experience – I've seen everything else.' Duval (2005:214) cites the cathartic attraction of 'the risk element' so often sought by tourists. To fly so close to these tempestuous cauldrons of chthonic fury is to apprehend nature at its most terribly majestic – at source so to speak. And whether this source be conceived of as secular, pagan or divine, it too is evocative of 'the Sublime'.

'Twister chasing' is a prime example of a novel form of 'niche', or 'alternative', tourism. This is a field which has attracted much scholarly attention in recent years (Novelli 2005). In South Africa too, a number of variants such as 'casino tourism', 'festival tourism', 'second homes tourism', 'gay tourism' and 'township tourism' are coming into prominence (Rogerson and Visser 2004; 2007). According to Robinson and Novelli (2007:1), 'The concept of "niche tourism" has emerged... in counter-point to what is commonly referred to as "mass tourism"'. The word 'niche', as used in this context, has its origins in the field of ecology. Robinson and Novelli (2007:4) explain that it 'refers to an optimum location, which an organism can exploit in terms of resources in the presence of its competitors'. This chimes well with the Karoo's astral assets, and describes a competitive advantage over the light-polluted Cape Town metropolis, from which the Karoo primarily draws its tourist clientele. This development is echoed by Duval (2005:217) who cites 'substantial rates of visitation to specific tourist attractions centred upon astronomically-related educational themes'.

Niche tourism usually offers a degree of specialisation, and this often requires on-site experts, such as shark specialists, botanists, astronomers, gurus, game rangers, or authors-in-residence. These specialists *mediate* the niche to the tourist. This naturally creates a gap for innovative individuals to carve out a 'livelihood niche' for themselves within the tourism industry. This is now happening in relatively remote areas such as the Karoo where the scope for self-employment has hitherto been very limited.

For those who wish to participate in the burgeoning interest in space, astro-tourism provides the answer. This is a 'lead' niche that the Karoo is ideally poised to exploit, and which it can leverage to promote a number of other synergistic niches within its regional 'portfolio'. These

include geotourism (Hose 2005); transport or railway tourism (Hall 2005); research tourism (Benson 2005); volunteer tourism (Callanan and Thomas 2005); palaeo-tourism (Rubidge 2009); botanical tourism, eco-tourism, genealogical tourism, birding, literary tourism (Ousby 2002; Ingle 2008); 'wellness tourism' (du Toit 2008); festival tourism (Visser 2007:110-117); heritage tourism (Donaldson 2007); and very many more.

For star-gazing, the best practice is to go where there is as little artificial light as possible. According to Fairall (2006:5), the vast expanse of the Karoo offers ideal opportunities: 'That is where we astronomers migrate to when we want to study the stars nowadays'. Van Rooyen (2007) also finds that increasing numbers of star-gazers are making their way to the Karoo, especially the Sutherland area. With increasing numbers of tourists gravitating to the Karoo, astute entrepreneurs have relocated there to offer them what they want. As Novelli and Benson (2005:249) have recognised:

Private entrepreneurship seems to be a key player in niche tourism, with the establishment of SMEs based on the local resources available, often responding to the interests of an identified market segment... [and] aspiring to local development in a sustainable manner.

Nowhere has this phenomenon been better exemplified than in Sutherland during the last decade.

Astro-tourism offers a sort of 'draw-down space' and funnels the cosmos into a peephole to be 'consumed' by the tourist gaze (at a price). Barriers to entry can be fairly high (as befits the *niche* concept) with the result that it is not so easy for competitors to jump on the bandwagon. Location is critical and although the night skies can of course be observed with the naked eye, the whole point of the astronomical quest is to see ever deeper into space. To this end, the better one's equipment the pricier, and the less portable, it is likely to be. The range of telescopes and other accessories such as pointers, eyepieces, filters, and collimators is formidable (ASSA 2007) and it is apparent that some specialist expertise and guidance is critical to any astro-tourism product. This knowledge must also be commensurate with the power of the guide's equipment, so that the guide can interpret what is viewed. The escalating expense of this magnifying power serves as a very effective bar to keep less-committed operators on the sidelines.

Van Rooyen (2007:13) reports that 85 percent of visitors to Sutherland 'travel from the Western Cape for a breakaway'. The road between Sutherland and Matjiesfontein, which is located on the N1 highway that links Cape Town with the interior, is tarred. But other roads radiating from Sutherland are gravel roads of variable and uncertain quality, and this is a serious disincentive to travelers to penetrate further into the Northern Cape. Fortunately, the Namakwa District Council plans to address this deficiency in the near future. A tar road between Sutherland and Calvinia would encourage tourists to venture further north in the direction of Williston and Carnarvon, both of which are expected to benefit from the SKA installation to their north, even if not quite to the degree that Sutherland benefits from SALT.

The establishment of such an 'astro' route is eagerly anticipated by tourist operators within the SKA 'footprint'. The space motif has already been taken up with the inception of the *Vlieënde Piering* [Flying Saucer] Guesthouse in Williston (see Deal 2007:146-7). An obvious ploy for the provincial tourism authorities to resort to, in collaboration with the neighbouring provinces, would be to encourage astronomically inclined visitors to wend their way further inland, either to the Vredefort Dome in the northern Free State, or, in time, to a NASA facility that is being contemplated in the vicinity of Steinkopf in northern Namaqualand. Again, the establishment of a 'meteorite trail' might be an option with Graaff-Reinet's 640m wide Kalkkop Impact Crater, formed 200 000 years ago, serving as just one of the more salient ports of call.

The role of Sutherland as a portal to draw tourists from the Cape tourism mecca should facilitate the simultaneous promotion of the many other forms of niche Karoo tourism mentioned earlier. This would also address the problem of 'the uneven tourism space economy' (Visser 2003) – an issue which was highlighted for South Africa as far back as 1936 with the undue concentration of tourists in the Cape Peninsula (Norval 1936:130).

On a much more ambitious scale, the Karoo is also well suited to the construction of a 'spaceport' in order for it to participate in sub-orbital space flight - a new trend in space tourism which will be launched commercially by Virgin Galactic in 2010. The company's founder, Richard Branson, is pioneering the world's first custom-built spaceport in the arid, thinly-

populated, and relatively poor American state of New Mexico (Branson 2007:200-215; Kemp 2007:148-163). If one considers that the main requirements for a spaceport are:

- Restricted airspace from the ground to infinity, to create a natural pathway into orbit
- High elevation which lowers the financial costs for vertical rockets and increases payload capacity
- Sparsely populated surroundings to minimise insurance and risks
- Clear bright sunny days
- Dry air to minimise corrosion, and
- Securing an anchor tenant.

one wonders whether the Northern Cape provincial government might not be well advised to sound out the possibilities for a spaceport north of Sutherland.

The provision and upgrading of transport infrastructure presents a conundrum, however, which is central to development discourse and it would be a mistake to think that such tourism-friendly developments are necessarily regarded by local inhabitants as an unalloyed blessing. Some welcome improved access as precipitating economic growth, others see it functioning as a Trojan Horse that will destroy the social fabric. As experience with World Heritage Sites has shown, fragile environments can be ruined by dramatic increases in tourist numbers (Parkington *et al.* 2008:123-4). Rubidge (2009) also records a number of closely related such dilemmas occasioned by the rise of palaeo- and ecotourism in the Karoo. Plainly put – at what point does ‘development’ (and here one must include the promotion of tourism) harm precisely those in whose ostensible interests it is being given effect to? And where it is the environment that is at stake, at what point does development, like mustard gas when the wind blows, turn upon itself and irrevocably damage its ‘capital base’ (Porter 2000:315-9)?

Robertson (2005) has posited an ethos of Epicurean materialism (i.e. a lifestyle of refined, sensuous pleasure-seeking directed at happiness) as having been “the midwife of [the] political economy” that stimulated the Enlightenment. Is it too fanciful to detect a version of the same principle at work informing tourist development in arid South Africa? Just as Cock (2008) has

argued that the proliferation of 'apparently harmless' golf courses in South Africa is fomenting a class-based 'social polarisation', it could be objected that the poor of the Karoo are being 'fixed' in their social stratum by dint of their unwitting recruitment to a picturesque, rural *mise en scene* that commodifies poverty as something to be 'consumed' for the voyeuristic delectation, if not the actual *schadenfreude*, of a more privileged class (Cohen and Manspeizer 2009). This is an issue that has haunted the touristic sensibility since the heyday of the Grand European Tour when British travellers were confronted with hitherto unimagined levels of human misery in sublime Switzerland (Hilton 2002:139-41).

The challenge facing development in the Karoo is successfully to negotiate the above dichotomies. These may lie coiled, like Blake's 'invisible worm', at the heart of development initiatives and tourism is especially prone to exhibiting a crass lack of concern for the 'collateral damage' it can leave in its wake.

### **Nothingness, emptiness and space as a marketing motif**

The negotiation of spatiality is so intimate a part of human beings' sensory apparatus that marketing 'space' might at first sight seem as redundant as marketing 'gravity'. But recent years have seen considerable sums invested in creating three-dimensional virtual experiences. There are now many computer applications that require a 'virtual reality' environment, and rise of the the computer games industry has been meteoric. Indeed, 'virtual tourism' (Arnold 2005) capitalises on advances in virtual reality technology by bringing images and 3-D simulations, into armchair tourists' homes (Hall 2005:92). The supply of pay-per-view, real-time, webcam telescopic images of the night skies is an obvious candidate for commercial exploitation in the present context.

The hospitality industry in the vicinity of Sutherland has not been slow to capitalise on the region's associations with astronomy. Van Rooyen (2007:14) finds that in 2006 an average of 865 people visited the SALT site every month, even though telescopic viewing using the SALT facility itself is not available to the public. Several restaurants and guesthouses have resorted to

stellar imagery in naming their establishments – this includes *Skitterland* B&B, Jupiter Restaurant, *Sterreland* camping site, and Southern Cross B&B. The latter advertises its 10-inch telescope as an attraction (ASSA 2007). The *Kambro Kind* guesthouse offers very sophisticated observation facilities and hosts parties of up to 200 stargazers at a time. At the last count, Sutherland had more than 25 accommodation establishments, a very far cry from the situation in the late 1990s. The town is now in a position to host major conferences such as that of the Arid Zone Ecology Forum (AZEF) in September 2007. This would have been unthinkable just a few years previously.

Stargazing is however by no means restricted to Sutherland (Fairall 2007). The Prince Albert Observatory caters for accommodation and hosts star-gazing evenings (ASSA 2005:104) and a number of guest farms maintain their own equipment or operate in partnership with private ‘Starmasters’. These star guides cater for everything from telescope sales to formal lectures and ‘astronomical events’. Many farms offer ‘astrophotography’ as a niche activity. The economic multipliers attached to such packaged attractions are manifold, including the knitting of ‘beanies’ to guard against the cold, the provision of meals, and the design and maintenance of webpages. This offers opportunities for a host of diverse entrepreneurs.

Palaeontology, which resonates so well with ‘deep time’ (Rubidge 2009), is an obvious adjunct to astronomy and several Karoo establishments now offer lectures and excursions conducted by professionals in the field.

The images, puns and metaphors offered by the associations triggered by ‘space’ and ‘stars’ are a copywriter’s dream come true, with endless latitude for wordplay. This is understandable because spatiality is so intimate a dimension of human experience that language is thoroughly imbued with metaphorical allusions to it. Western culture with its ongoing fascination for celebrities similarly provides for puns on ‘star’. Marketers in the Karoo can have a field day with celestial themes - from ‘reaching for the stars’, to ‘the sky is the limit’. Sales slogans such as ‘sleep with the stars tonight’ or ‘experience a bit of heaven on earth’ have become commonplace.

The figurative interplay between windy spaciousness, and celestial space as symbolised by the satellite dish, is brilliantly captured, in its visual aspect, in Figure 2 (below). The perspective of the photograph allows the windmills to mimic the air of open, expectant, poised listening suggested by antennae dishes.

**Figure 2: Karoo farm windmills** (photo: Chris Marais <http://www.karoospace.co.za>)



Space is infinitely plastic and malleable (Chown 2007; Massey 2005) and can be configured to yield myriads of possibilities. There are three dimensions to the concept of ‘Karoo Space’ – the exterior; the stellar; but also the *interior* as mediated by the notion of what Neeley (2001:38-43) refers to as ‘the scientific sublime’ – a ‘blend of aesthetic, religious and scientific elements’. In some sense, niche tourists are also exploring *themselves* – there is an interiority to the extending of one’s personal horizons (cf. also Sachs 2006:32; Sennett 2008:209). This is a phenomenon

which is characteristic of niche tourism, and that is not necessarily implicit in the mass tourism experience.

Unlike some other parts of the world which can also boast of vast open spaces, the Karoo is fortunate in that it has very many good guest farms, and many pleasant small towns that are within easy driving distance of one another. These serve to furnish the tourist with a nodal network of comfortable overnight destinations. Mongolia, by way of contrast, is singularly ill-endowed to offer any such comforts outside of its capital (Carr 2006), and the Australian Outback (which boasts of the 'longest short-cut in the world' linking Perth with Brisbane) presents much more formidable distances between towns.

Although the Karoo is still sparsely populated it is no 'empty meeting ground', to adapt a trope from MacCannell (1992), and scarcely a month goes by without a Karoo feature in one or other of South Africa's many 'lifestyle' magazines. During the last decade, very many new books on the Karoo have been published ranging from the scholarly (Beinart 2003) to the anecdotal (Biggs 2004), from the metaphysical (Osler 2008) to the decorative and the practical (Fagan 2008; Willis 2008). Many of the more tourism-directed publications still draw on Lawrence Green's influential *Karoo*, published in 1955. The impact of this work, as Deal makes clear in his personal homage to Green (Deal 2007:10), has been profound, and the Karoo tourism trade is fortunate in having such a perennial work with which it can promote the region.

### **Potential benefits of astro-tourism for local communities**

The challenge of extending the economic benefits of creative entrepreneurship to the poor is not met by simply providing people with jobs. As Florida (2002:321) has it: 'Employing millions of people merely to do rote work like pushing brooms... is a monstrous waste of human capabilities'. Human capital needs to be developed to realise its potential and part of this process must be a drive towards personal fulfillment. Creative work adds value, pays well and is rewarding.



This is a daunting challenge, but it is where the educative aspects of tourism, and of the collateral astronomical programmes alluded to earlier, could play a major role. It is a commonplace that the Latin etymological root of the word 'education' means 'to draw out'. One way to achieve this is through example, inspiration and the exposure to new ideas. As John Stuart Mill recognised, over 150 years ago, new remedies need to be sought for people living in poverty:

It is hardly possible to overrate the value, in the present low state of human improvement, of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar. Commerce is now what war once was, the principal source of this contact... (quoted in Reeves 2007:208).

It might not be too much of a liberty to adapt this to say that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the tourism industry has become what commerce once was.

The construction of transport networks is a major factor in promoting all manner of economic sectors, tourism included. This has been repeatedly demonstrated in history. Johnson (1991:182-4) shows how the advance of modernity in Wales was greatly accelerated by its much improved links with England, brought about through the Holyhead-London road built by the engineer Thomas Telford. Similarly, the contemplated upgrading of the roads in the Sutherland-Carnarvon area should have a stimulatory effect on tourism and Local Economic Development (LED), and this could profoundly affect the development of the local populace.

Quite apart from the educational programmes for schoolchildren envisaged by those agencies involved with SALT and SKA, the productive potential of the kind of social contact these initiatives will entail, in terms of project personnel and increased tourist numbers, should not be underestimated. Sentiments similar to those of John Stuart Mill are expressed by contemporary tourism analysts. Shaw and Williams (2000:28-29), for instance, point to the benefits of 'host-guest interactions which potentially bring cultures face to face', and add that, 'even if the effects are moderated by the existence of tourism enclaves... [tourism] implies transfers of consumption

patterns, values, and lifestyles across international boundaries'. To these transfers one might add aspirations, expertise, and modern skills. Tourism can help break down social insularity and foment the sort of eclecticism, and tolerance of difference, that Florida (2002) finds animates his 'creative class' set.

Although the Northern Cape lacks a university, it has recently established a National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE) brought about by a programme of restructuring of university education (Atkinson 2007:34). The NIHE is a collaborative institution involving the University of the Free State, the University of the Western Cape, the University of South Africa, and the Vaal University of Technology.

The presence of NIHE, together with the SALT and SKA projects, may precipitate the formation of a Silicon Valley-type cluster of high-tech scientific energies (Florida 2002) focused on the province's extreme south. This, in turn, could assist the NIHE in ultimately securing a regional university for the Northern Cape.

The natural environment of the Karoo could become much more productive if it were supported by the economic and social multiplier effects of a vibrant 'space research tourism' sector. To this end, it is encouraging that the Northern Cape Member of the Executive Council responsible for tourism announced funding for the 'development of a science visitor centre in the Karoo to create a niche tourism offering' (Saaiman 2008). The tender for this project has since been awarded to a local engineering company.

The space industry is regarded by many as the next 'new-generation' sector on the cusp of 'lift-off' (Diamandis 2007; DST 2007; Musk 2009) and it is believed that its cost structure will shadow that of the Information Technology (IT) industry where the mainframe equivalent of a standard laptop would have cost several million Rand just 30 years ago. Given the rise in profile of activities related to space exploration, in combination with the major developments associated with SALT and SKA outlined above, the people of the Karoo could hardly wish themselves better placed to benefit.

## Conclusion

The Karoo is increasingly being valued as providing a bolthole from the noise and clamour of modern day life. This article has explored some of the fertile ambiguities of 'space' insofar as these find expression in promoting tourism in South Africa's sparsely populated Karoo. It has looked at how landscape and wilderness came to fire the romantic imagination with intimations of 'the Sublime' and at how spatial perspectives became integral to the modern tourism industry.

The Karoo *zeitgeist* has been fundamentally informed by spatial and astronomical themes. The remote Northern Cape Karoo was shown to be heir to a proud astronomical heritage which is continuing in prestigious international collaborations such as SALT and SKA. These initiatives are seen as being eminently compatible with government efforts to imbue society with a culture of scientific literacy. Furthermore, the innovativeness with which tourism operators have positioned themselves, in the slipstream of these projects, has led to an astro-tourism niche, which could, in turn, serve as a catalyst for a whole range of subsidiary niche tourism enterprises in the Karoo.

Paradoxically enough, it is for the very reason that 'nothing *happens*' (Kaplan 1999:175-89) in the pristine Karoo that a great deal by way of scientific investigation of the universe is happening there now. This has brought in its train a burgeoning niche tourism industry that revels in the metaphorical allusions associated with space, wilderness and with stargazing. Quite apart from the need for these developments to alleviate the poverty and social dysfunction that prevail in so many small Karoo towns, the challenge is now the age-old one of ensuring that the Karoo does not become a victim of its own success. Somehow in the midst of its having been 'discovered' (or should that read 'invented'?), that which attracts space agencies and tourists to the Karoo in the first instance has to be preserved.

## References

- Arnold, D (2005) 'Virtual tourism – A niche in cultural heritage', in Novelli, M (ed), *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- ASSA (Astronomical Society of Southern Africa) (2005) *Sky Guide Africa South 2007*. Observatory: ASSA.
- ASSA (Astronomical Society of Southern Africa) (2007) *Sky Guide Africa South 2008*. Observatory: ASSA.
- Atkinson, D (2007) 'Arid Areas Workshop, Sutherland', 13 September 2007. Bloemfontein: UFS Centre for Development Support Arid Areas Programme.
- Beinart, W (2003) *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, livestock, and the environment 1770-1950*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Belich, J (2009) *Replenishing the Earth: The settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-world, 1783-1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Benson, A (2005) 'Research tourism – Professional travel for useful discoveries', in Novelli, M (ed), *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Biggs, D (2004) *Karoo Ramblings: Short stories & tall tales*. Cape Town: Struik.
- Branson, R (2007) *Screw it, Let's Do it Again*. London: Virgin Books.
- Brits, E (2008) 'SA "veg" vir radio-astronomieprojek', *Volksblad*, April 6.

Brooks, S. (2000) 'Re-reading the Hluhluwe-Umfolosi game reserve: constructions of a "natural" space'. *Transformation* 44.

Browne, J (1995) *Charles Darwin: Voyaging*. London: Pimlico.

Buttmann, G (1970) *The Shadow of the Telescope: A biography of John Herschel*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Callanan, M and Thomas, S (2005) 'Volunteer tourism – Deconstructing volunteer activities within a dynamic environment', in Novelli, M (ed), *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Carr, A (2006) *The Singing Bowl: Journeys through Inner Asia*. n.p.: The Long Riders' Guild Press.

Chown, M (2007) *The Never-ending Days of being Dead: Dispatches from the frontline of science*. London: Faber & Faber.

Clark, S (2007) *The Sun Kings: The unexpected tragedy of Richard Carrington and the tale of how modern astronomy began*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cock, J (2008) 'Caddies and "Cronies": Golf and changing patterns of exclusion and inclusion in post-apartheid South Africa', *South African Review of Sociology* 39(2).

Coetzee, JM (1988) *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*. Braamfontein: Pentz Publishers (republished 2007).

Cohen, B and Manspeizer, I (2009) 'The Accidental Tourist: NGOs, photography and the idea of Africa' in Robinson, M and Picard, D (eds), *The Framed World: Tourism, tourists and photography*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Deal, J (2007) *Timeless Karoo*. Cape Town: Struik.

Diamandis, P (2007) 'The next space race', in *The Economist, The World in 2008*. London: The Economist.

Donaldson, R (2007) 'Tourism in small town South Africa', in Rogerson CM and Visser G (eds), *Urban tourism in the developing world: The South African experience*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

DST (Department of Science and Technology) (2007) 'Innovation towards a knowledge-based economy: Ten-year plan for South Africa (2008-2018)'. [http://www.esastap.org.za/esastap/pdfs/ten\\_year\\_plan.pdf](http://www.esastap.org.za/esastap/pdfs/ten_year_plan.pdf)

Du Toit, J (2008) 'The quiet heart', *Mail & Guardian*, February 22.

Duval, DT (2005) 'Space tourism – Small steps, giant leaps: space as the destination of the future', in Novelli, M (ed), *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Evans, DS, Deeming, TJ, Evans, BH and Goldfarb, S (1969) *Herschel at the Cape*. Cape Town: A.A. Balkema.

Fagan, G (2008) Brakdak: *Flatroofs in the Karoo*. Cape Town: Breestraat Publikasies.

Fairall, A (2006) *Stargazing from game reserves in Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Struik.

Florida, R (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.

Fraser, JG (1922) *Episodes in My Life*. Cape Town: Juta & Co.

Galgut, D (2008) *The Impostor*. Johannesburg: Penguin Books.

Gere, C (2009) *Knossos & the Prophets of Modernism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Goodman, M (2008) *The Sun and the Moon*. New York: Basic Books.

Green, L (1955) *Karoo*. Cape Town: Howard Timmins.

Hall, D (2005) 'Transport tourism – Travelling through heritage and contemporary recreation', in Novelli, M (ed), *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Hancock, S (2008) 'Diary from the eye of the storm', *BBC News*.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/fr/-/2/hi/science/nature/7426385.stm>

Hauser, K (2008) *Bloody Old Britain: O.G.S. Crawford and the Archaeology of Modern Life*. London: Granta Books.

Heywood, C (2004) *A History of South African Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hilton, T (2002) *John Ruskin*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Holmes, R (1989) *Coleridge: Early visions, 1772-1804*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Holmes, R (2008) *The Age of Wonder: How the romantic generation discovered the beauty and terror of science*. London: Harper Press.

Hose, TA (2005) 'Geotourism – Appreciating the deep time of landscapes', in Novelli, M (ed), *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Ingle, MK (2008) 'Economic potential in South Africa's arid areas: A selection of niche products and services', Bloemfontein: UFS Centre for Development Support Arid Areas Programme.

James, W (2009) 'Charles Darwin at the Cape', *Quest* 5(3).

Jamie, K (2008) 'A Lone Enraptured Male', *London Review of Books* 30(5). March 6.

Johnson, P (1991) *The Birth of the Modern*. London: Phoenix.

Kahn, K, Vlotman, N, Steyn, C and van der Schyff, M (2007) 'Innovation policy and higher education in South Africa: Addressing the challenge', *South African Review of Sociology* 38(2).

Kaplan, R (1999) *The Nothing that Is*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Karoo Space (2009) <http://www.karoospace.co.za>

Kemp, K (2007) *Destination Space: How space tourism is making science fiction a reality*. London: Virgin Books.

MacCannell, D (1992) *Empty Meeting Grounds: The tourist papers*. London: Routledge.

MacFarlane, R (2007) *The Wild Places*. New York: Penguin.

Marais, C and Du Toit, J (2009) *Karoo Keepsakes*. Cradock: MLM Publishers.

Massey, D (2005) *For Space*. London: SAGE Publications.

Morris, D (2003) 'Rock Art as Source and Resource: Research and responsibility towards education, heritage and tourism'. *South African Historical Journal* 49.



Musk, E (2009) 'Space, the fiscal frontier', in *The Economist*, *The World in 2010*. London: The Economist.

Naude-Moseley, B and Moseley, S (2008) *Getaway guide to Karoo, Namaqualand & Kalahari*. Roggebaai: Sunbird Publishers.

Neeley, KA (2001) *Mary Somerville: Science, illumination, and the female mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nicolson, MH (1977) *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The development of the aesthetics of the infinite* (1959). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Norval, AJ (1936) *The tourist industry: A national and international survey*. London: Isaac Pitman & Sons.

Novelli, M (Ed) (2005) *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Novelli, M and Benson, A (2005) 'Niche tourism: A way forward to sustainability?', in Novelli, M (ed), *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Osler, A (2008) *Stoep Zen*. Johannesburg: Jacana.

Ousby, I (2002) *The Englishman's England: Taste, travel and the rise of tourism*. London: Pimlico.

Parkington, J, Morris, D and Rusch, N (2008) *Karoo Rock Engravings*. Cape Town: Krakadouw Trust.

Porter, B (2009) 'Giant vegetables', *Times Literary Supplement*, September 25.

Porter, R (2000) *The Creation of the Modern World*. New York: WW Norton & Co.

Pratt, ML (2008) *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and transculturation 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* New York: Routledge.

Reeves, R (2007) *John Stuart Mill: Victorian firebrand*. London: Atlantic Books.

Robertson, J (2005) *The Case for the Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, M and Novelli, M (2005) 'Niche tourism: An introduction', in Novelli, M (ed), *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Robinson, M and Picard, D (Eds) (2009) *The Framed World: Tourism, tourists and photography*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Roche, C (2005) "'The Springbok... Drink the Rain's Blood": Indigenous knowledge and its use in environmental history – the case of the /Xam and an understanding of springbok treks'. *South African Historical Journal* 53.

Rogers, D (2008) 'Why the Karoo is the place to be', *Telegraph.co.uk*. October 7. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/africaandindianocean/southafrica/3128084/South-Africa-Why-the-Karoo-is-the-place-to-be.html>

Rogerson, CM (2008) 'Backpacker Tourism: Policy lessons for South Africa from international experience', *Africa Insight* 37(4).

Rogerson, CM and Visser, G (Eds) (2004) *Tourism and Development Issues in Contemporary South Africa*. Pretoria: AISA.

Rogerson, CM and Visser, G (Eds) (2007) *Urban tourism in the developing world: The South African experience*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Rosenthal, J (2004) *Souvenir*. The Crag: Bromponie Press.

Rubidge, B (2009) 'The Karoo, a geological and palaeontological superlative: economic potential of deep history'. Paper presented at the *Greater Karoo Development Conference*, Graaff-Reinet, March 26-27.

SAAO (South African Astronomical Observatory) (n.d.) Brochure. Observatory: SAAO.

Saaiman, PW (2008) Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation, MEC Budget Speech address in the Northern Cape Legislature.  
<http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2008/08062712451001.htm>

Sachs, A (2006) *The Humboldt Current*. New York: Penguin.

SALT (South African Large Telescope) n.d. Brochure. Observatory: SALT.

Schama, S (1995) *Landscape and Memory*. New York: Vintage Books.

Schoeman, K (1998) "'Fort ende Thuijn": The years of Dutch colonization', in Judin, H and Vladislavic, I (eds), *blank \_\_\_ Architecture, apartheid and after*. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers.

Schoeman, K (2003) *Early White Travellers in the Transgariep 1819-1840*. Pretoria: Protea Book House.

Sennett, R (2008) *The Craftsman*. London: Penguin.

Shaw, G and Williams, AM (2000) *Critical Issues in Tourism: a geographical perspective*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Uglow, J (2002) *The Lunar Men*. London: Faber & Faber.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2006) *Tourism and Deserts*. Paris: UNEP.

Urry, J (2002) *The Tourist Gaze*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) London: Sage.

Van Rooyen, D (2007) 'Sutherland Case Study', Bloemfontein: UFS Centre for Development Support Arid Areas Programme.

Visser, G (2003) 'South African tourism and its role in the perpetuation of an uneven tourism space economy', *Africa Insight* 33(1/2).

Visser, G (2007) 'Festival tourism in urban Africa: the case of South Africa', in Rogerson CM and Visser, G (eds), *Urban tourism in the developing world: The South African experience*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Warner, B. (2009) 'Charles Darwin and John Herschel', *South African Journal of Science* 105(11/12).

Willis, R (2008) *The Karoo Cookbook*. Cape Town: Struik.

Wright, N (1929) *Glimpses of South Africa*. London: A. & C. Black, Ltd.

### 9.3 Paper III: Tarring the Road to Mecca: Dilemmas of infrastructural development in a small Karoo town

The small town of Nieu-Bethesda in the Eastern Cape has seen a huge increase in tourist visitation in recent years, and property prices have soared. The settlement is famous for its Owl House (based on the esoteric sculptures of Helen Martens) and for having provided the setting for Athol Fugard's celebrated play *The Road to Mecca*. The idyllic ambience of this South African 'Shangri-la' is often attributed to its relative inaccessibility. Until very recently, it was connected with the outside world only by three fairly hazardous gravel roads. Many investors bought property in the town precisely because it was so relatively undeveloped. The gravel road that links Nieu-Bethesda with Graaff-Reinet has now been tarred. On the face of it, this should be a positive development, but there was an influential body of opinion – mainly the 'creative class' that had moved to Nieu-Bethesda in recent years - that was opposed to the road. This article analyses the anxieties of some of the Nieu-Bethesda business community when the tarring of the road was first mooted.

These concerns are mapped onto an 'ethical tourism' typology articulated by Jim Butcher (2003). The paper argues that these misgivings were informed by a quasi-utopian resistance to bureaucratic control, as well as an uneasiness with the inroads of modernity occasioned by the possibility of 'mass tourism'. The discussion shows how a small, white 'creative class', while sometimes functioning as the catalysts for processes of modernity, may simultaneously seek to frustrate certain forms of development in the interests of preserving 'authenticity' and protecting its investment in an 'alternative lifestyle'. This is part of a broader debate about the desirability of different *kinds* of development - some of which, even though well-meant, could ultimately serve to subtract value from a local economy.

For the creative class, long term sustainability typically outweighs considerations related to short-term services and conveniences. The creative class will normally treat with extreme circumspection anything they perceive as threatening 'authenticity'. This may involve lobbying

for the preservation of cultural capital (heritage) and natural capital (the environment), and will even extend to issues of noise and light pollution. In Nieu-Bethesda for example, vested tourism interests have also opposed the introduction of streetlights in 'the Village', so as not to sully people's view of the star-studded Karoo night sky. The article provides a case study of the "preserved countryside" which "is characterised by antidevelopment and preservationist attitudes. These concerns are expressed especially by the middle-class... who will use their power through the local political system to preserve their rural idyll" (Ilbery, 1998:6).

# *Tarring the Road to Mecca: Dilemmas of infrastructural development in a small Karoo town<sup>5</sup>*

## **Introduction**

Nieu-Bethesda in the Eastern Cape Karoo is known internationally for its Owl House and the Kitching Fossil Centre. It also provided the setting for six dramas published by renowned playwright Athol Fugard (*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2009b), foremost of which is *The Road to Mecca* (Fugard, 1985). The idyllic ambience of this bucolic South African ‘Shangri-la’ is often attributed to its relative inaccessibility - until very recently, it was connected with the outside world only by three fairly hazardous gravel roads. Nestled in the Sneeuwberg mountain range and presided over by the jagged tooth of the Kompasberg, Nieu-Bethesda has seen a huge increase in tourism in recent years, and property prices have sky-rocketed (Kruger, 2007; *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2008a). Many investors purchased property in the town precisely because it is so ‘old world’ and undeveloped.

In late 2010, the tarring of the 22km gravel road that links Nieu-Bethesda with the N9 highway to Graaff-Reinet was completed at a cost of R24.5 million (Knott-Craig, 2010; Nieu-Bethesda, 2011). In the municipal 2006/7 Integrated Development Plan (IDP), this road was pointedly described as the “Wellwood/Nieu-Bethesda *tourist road*” (Kruger, 2007:3). On the face of it, this should be a positive development for the town. However, there was a significant body of local opinion that was initially opposed to the tarring of the road for a variety of reasons. This ambivalence mirrors a conundrum that goes to the heart of many infrastructural developmental projects: how to ‘develop’ a small town without negating precisely those assets which constitute its identity and attraction.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ingle, M.K. 2012. Tarring the Road to Mecca: Dilemmas of infrastructural development for a small Karoo town. In: R. Donaldson & L. Marais (eds), *Small Town Geographies in Africa*, New York: Nova Publishers (in press).

In *The Birth of the Modern* (1991:177), the historian Paul Johnson identifies the invention of the *macadamised* road in the 1820s as “one of the magic keys to modernity”. The following chapter analyses the fears of some of the Nieu-Bethesda business community when the tarring of the road was first proposed, and maps these concerns onto a tourism typology articulated by Jim Butcher (2003). The chapter argues that the misgivings were due to a quasi-utopian resistance to bureaucratic control and an uneasiness with the inroads of modernity and the possibility of ‘mass tourism’.

The discussion seeks to show how a small, white, ‘creative class’ (Ingle, 2010a), while sometimes functioning as the catalyst for processes of modernity (Ingle, 2008a; 2010b), may simultaneously seek to inhibit certain forms of development in the interests of preserving ‘authenticity’ and protecting its investment in an ‘alternative lifestyle’. This conversation is part of a broader debate about the desirability of different *kinds* of development - some of which, even though well-meant, could ultimately serve to subtract value from a local economy. It is not always clear what ‘value’ is comprised of, with different segments of the population often championing different forms of development, particularly when ‘hard’ infrastructure competes with intangible social goods.

The aim of this analysis is to uncover the psychosocial dynamics of the contending parties’ standpoints. The intention is not to adjudicate these vested interests and associated fears, but to show how they illustrate much broader developmental dilemmas currently confronting the Karoo (Atkinson, 2011; *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2011; Wild, 2011) and small towns elsewhere in the country (CDS, 2010; Jordan, 2010).

### **The village of Nieu-Bethesda**

Nieu-Bethesda was founded in 1878 and prospered until the great depression of the early 1930s when it went into decline (Westby-Nunn, 2004). It is said that by the 1950s, Nieu-Bethesda had become so depopulated, and traffic so rare, that people started converting the streets into



vegetable patches (Vorster, 2003:6). According to Idil Sheard, the organiser of the annual ABSA Fugard Festival:

In the eighties the village of Nieu-Bethesda was a dusty little place where very little was going on apart from a few services for the convenience of the farmers of the area. There was no place where a cup of tea, a cold-drink or a meal could be had. There was no guesthouse or place to stay over for the night. And then Fugard wrote *The Road to Mecca* in 1985 and tourists from other countries and from South Africa [began] to travel the dusty road to Nieu-Bethesda to get a glimpse of the Owl House (*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2010b).

What came to be known as 'The Owl House' was the home of the reclusive and eccentric Helen Martins who, with the help of her assistant Koos Malgas, created a fantastic assemblage of sculptures in her backyard before her eyesight began to fail and she committed suicide. Martins and Malgas bequeathed a distinctive artistic *leitmotif* to Nieu-Bethesda, reproduced via the townfolks' creation of owl artefacts and recognised as an iconic brand throughout the world (Malgas & Couzyn, 2008; Emslie, 1991; 1997).

The Camdeboo Local Municipality consists of the regional centre of Graaff-Reinet and the small towns of Aberdeen and Nieu-Bethesda. In 2009, Camdeboo was rated as the best-run municipality in South Africa (Brett-Rite, 2009). The population of Nieu Bethesda is quite small. In 2006, the town had 1074 inhabitants: 730 in the coloured township of Pienaarsig, 230 in the black Kloof Road settlement and 114 in 'the Village', which is mainly white (Knott-Craig, 2010). Impressionistic evidence is that the population has increased quite considerably since then due to in-migration, new housing construction and a rash of gentrification whereby derelict structures have been rendered habitable.

The town's economy depends on tourism and agriculture, but 42 percent of Camdeboo's population receives welfare grants, and much of Nieu-Bethesda's population is desperately poor (Kruger, 2007; de Wit, 2009). The municipality and the commercial tourism sector have gone to some lengths to try and integrate the poorer sector of the populace into the small but vibrant tourism economy (Malgas & Couzyn, 2008; *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2009c).

In the 2010/11 municipal budget, over one third of the municipality's R27-million capital works programme was allocated to Nieu-Bethesda, mostly for an R8 million bulk water supply scheme (Knott-Craig, 2010). If Nieu-Bethesda was unjustly neglected in the past (Langmead, 2009), it appears that it is now getting more than its fair share of attention. The main developmental needs identified in 2007 were a shortage of housing and the poor state of the road linking the town to Graaff-Reinet (Kruger, 2007).

The municipality announced in 2009 that 150 new houses would be built in Nieu-Bethesda (Brett-Rite, 2009; *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2009c). Many social services were only available in Graaff-Reinet, and the transport providers serving poorer members of the Nieu Bethesda community were charging high fares due to the poor condition of the road. According to the World Bank: "Local road improvement ... should bring benefits to surrounding communities; for example through lower transport costs, better access to markets, goods, jobs or services such as health and education" (Tsunokawa & Hoban, 1997:114).

When Athol Fugard first happened upon Nieu-Bethesda in the mid-1970s, he found "a small village in what turned out to be an absolutely magnificent setting... I was struck by its isolation and thought to myself, hell, this would be quite a nice place to have a house, and escape from the city if ever I felt like getting away from the world" (Fugard, 1985:9). De Botton's (2002:214) contention that: "we tend to seek out corners of the world only once they have been painted and written about by artists" has special salience for Nieu-Bethesda.

The Fugard connection was first overtly capitalised on in 1995, when a weekend workshop for aspiring writers was held that surprised the organisers by drawing visitors from far and wide. The first Fugard Festival was held in 2009, and this event has since established itself as a major drawcard. It is the means by which the Nieu-Bethesda Art Festival Association aims to promote the town and to provide the community with opportunities for social upliftment. Proceeds from the Festival are awarded to upliftment projects that are determined in consultation with the disadvantaged (*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2009a).

## Nieu-Bethesda and 'sense of place'

There are few towns in South Africa with as profound a sense of place as Nieu-Bethesda. Its other-worldliness is evocatively conveyed by Fugard (1997:36):

My days usually end with a muffled-up late-night walk through the village... everyone is asleep at that hour. But not the trees, the magnificent pines and cypresses, poplars and bluegums, acacias and wild pear that line the dusty roads of the village. The sense of them alive and awake, their huge black presences magnified still further by the night, is quite awesome.

'Mecca' as a site of pilgrimage is key to appreciating how Nieu-Bethesda seeks to brand itself. It is a place one goes *to* and not *through*. In a similar vein, the slight pretentiousness of 'Nieu' having replaced 'New' in the town's promotional literature is no accident (Nieu-Bethesda, 2011).

In *The Road to Mecca*, Helen Martins, the 'owl lady', cries out: "It's taken me my whole life to get here" (Fugard, 1985:73; and see Ross, 1997). Many of the inhabitants of the village, in particular the newcomers, feel privileged to live in Nieu-Bethesda, and they exhibit a correspondingly marked sense of the *proprietary*. This is something that even Fugard (1996:63-64) himself expresses in *Valley Song*: "How could I pass up the chance to own a piece of my native Karoo earth that would allow me to brag and boast about 'my own pumpkins', 'my own beetroot', 'my own potatoes'... The land was mine! Or was it?"

Given this strong element of custodianship in Nieu-Bethesda, the prospect of a change in the small town's ambience – caused by improved road access – was experienced as an imminent assault on some local residents' sense of self. This is not surprising, as: "Approaches to 'place' have suggested the vital importance of a sense of belonging to human beings. The basic geography of life is not encapsulated in a series of map grid references. It extends beyond the idea of location... Crucially, people do not simply locate themselves, *they define themselves through a sense of place*" [author's italics] (Crang quoted in Anderson, 2010:40-41). Fugard powerfully endorsed his presence in Nieu-Bethesda by saying that: "My sense of belonging

there, of 'belonging to' it, is of an order I have never experienced anywhere else in my life" (1997: 14). This sentiment most likely resonates deeply with the newcomers to the town and echoes Casey's contention that: "We can no longer distinguish neatly between physical and personal identity... place is regarded as constitutive of one's sense of self... The relation between self and place is not just one of reciprocal influence... but also more radically, of constitutive co-ingredience: each is essential to the being of the other" (quoted in Anderson, 2010:41).

Property owners in Nieu-Bethesda would probably appreciate Gillies's sentiments: "Those with a lot of geography in their lives are envied. A person at one with geography is admired. The more extreme the geography, the more extremely" (2009:42). As Crang (Anderson, 2010:40-41) intimates, residents have a lot of themselves and their identity invested in the town, especially *as it was when they bought there*. As Fugard put it in *Valley Song*: "[T]he Valley is changing and that selfish part of me doesn't want that to happen. It wants it to stay the unspoilt, innocent little world it was when I first discovered it" (1996:84). According to Moran (2009:250-251):

A recurring argument in modern environmental writing [is] that our lives gain purpose and meaning from the concrete particulars, the texture and detail of individual existences knotted together in unique localities over many years. In this argument, the problem with roads is not just that they destroy the planet but that their levelling sameness undermines this parochial quest for meaning. They make the whole world *reachable and despoilable* [italics added].

'Despoilable' is a potent epithet, akin to rape. In the context of New Bethesda, any new infrastructural development was likely to stir strong emotions - as happened with 'the road to Mecca'.

### A 'creative class' in Nieu-Bethesda

Ingle (2010a) has written about the emergence of a statistically small but economically significant cohort of newcomers to Karoo towns. These 'semigrants' from the conurbations have responded to changing post-apartheid dispensations (Visser, 2003) by moving to the countryside.

This trend is encouraged by significant differentials in urban and rural house prices and accompanies a modern resurgence of interest in ‘country living’ made possible by advances in telecommunications, outsourcing and the breakdown of the ‘job for life’ syndrome. These individuals are classic gentrifiers (Donaldson, 2007), and many are second-home owners who oscillate between a small town and the city (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2010). In many cases, these newcomers have turned around the fortunes of dying towns.

With its romantic setting, Owl House and the Fugard connection, Nieu-Bethesda has become highly desirable to retired professionals, freelance journalists, academics, artists, film-makers, writers and skilled craftsmen. This influx of human capital exhibits many of the characteristics of the new ‘creative class’ as theorised by Richard Florida (2002). These semigrators are typically mobile (Florida, 2008) and have locational options. Their ability to settle where they want is captured by the oft-heard phrase: “This place speaks to me”. As Florida (2008:159) writes: “We seek out places that fit our psychological needs in order to establish ownership over our lives”. Later in the same book, he states that “place can determine how happy we are with ourselves... the clustering force has resulted in the geographic concentration of personality types... different kinds of places suit distinct types of people” (Florida, 2008:289). In light of this, one can detect in the creative class of Nieu-Bethesda a “distinct type” of person. This has implications for the typology-based argument advanced later in this discussion.

### **Business sector focus group concerns**

In 2007, a focus group meeting was held with members of Nieu-Bethesda’s business sector as part of a broader survey of economic activity in the Camdeboo Local Municipality (Atkinson, 2009; Atkinson & Ingle, 2010). The town’s business sector is miniscule (there is for example no petrol outlet or ATM) and is heavily reliant on tourism – most especially the passing trade visiting the Owl House (*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2008a). Although an invitation was extended throughout the community, only eight whites representing roughly half of the white-owned businesses in the town attended the meeting. This was understandable given that the few black-owned businesses in Nieu-Bethesda are micro-enterprises (taxi operator, builder, spaza shop

owners, wire artefact makers) who might have been plying their trade at the time of the meeting or who possibly viewed the focus group as a 'white issue' and no concern of theirs. These individuals' views were subsequently captured by a questionnaire administered as part of the business survey.

At the time Nieu-Bethesda had no formal Chamber of Commerce or LED Forum, and the people who spoke at the focus group did so only in their personal capacity. The Camdeboo Local Municipality is very active in the field of LED (Atkinson & Ingle, 2010), and the thrust of the focus group was to determine what the business community thought the municipality should be doing to assist local businesses. The discussion was animated and wide-ranging, and the results can be distilled into three main outcomes:

- “We want nothing from the municipality. All we ask of them is to go away and leave us alone”. This is a classically bohemian reaction to society and the state (Nozick, 1974).
- The group declared itself firmly in favour of job creation, but there was a marked antipathy to anything redolent of property development, hotels or casinos.
- There was the sense of multiple schisms within the community. It was said of the coloured community that: “They think the whites are anti-development but we think they don't appreciate the charm of this town”. This latter sentiment is far from unique to Nieu-Bethesda. Newcomers to the countryside often believe that those who've always been there cannot see the potential in what they already have. In this regard they are sometimes, but not always, correct (Ingle, 2008b).

It is the business owners' feelings about development that will be analysed in further detail. Elsa's words about Nieu-Bethesda in *Mecca* have proven prophetic: “Well, it can't cut itself off from the twentieth century for ever... Your little world is not as safe as you would like to believe ... If you think it's going to be left alone to stagnate in the nineteenth century while the rest of us hold our breath... you're in for one hell of a surprise. And it will start with your Coloured folk.” (Fugard, 1985:25).

## Roads – assumptions and realities

Although the “strategic importance of road infrastructure for tourism” has rightly been advanced as a truism in the literature (CDS, 2010:3), one should be wary of jumping to conclusions. When it was suggested to the Nieu-Bethesda focus group that the tarred road might be just the ‘magic bullet’ that the small town’s economy needed, the response was lukewarm. The group had very mixed feelings about any sudden avalanche of tourists and especially about being more accessible to ‘package tourists’.

One of the awkward realities of the highly competitive tourism industry is that many tourism operators value the revenue received from tourists much more than they value the actual tourists themselves. The revenue is the reward, but the tourist is the work. Ever since the days of the Grand Tour, tourists have been viewed with a measure of exasperation (Murray, 2008). In addition, not every tourism enterprise necessarily welcomes an increase in local tourist visitation. While restaurants and curio shops would most likely benefit from increased passing trade, the benefit to small accommodation establishments is much less straightforward. A small B&B with a healthy occupancy rate can only expect marginal gains from an increase in tourist numbers before bumping up against limitations imposed by its size. Furthermore, there is the very real risk that visibly increased tourism traffic would bring a disproportionate number of new entrants into the marketplace (Marais, 2004). A small B&B may then find itself ‘crowded out’ in an industry where barriers to entry are fairly low. Particularly dreaded are new players that operate at scale. Clarens in the eastern Free State provides a textbook case of a scenario in which “local control over the tourism industry is lost” (CDS, 2010:2). The issue of control is quite important to local stakeholders. There is no shortage of towns (De Rust, Sutherland, Graaff-Reinet, Prince Albert and Nieu-Bethesda itself) where the number of guesthouses has mushroomed in recent years and where national accommodation chains could be poised to make inroads.

Until 2010, the dangerous access road (*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2008b) acted as a *filtering* mechanism, discouraging people ‘*who are not like us*’ from coming to the town. Such ‘intruders’ might include mass tourists, partying day-trippers, drug-dealers, people without sufficiently robust vehicles, or those who do not want to expose their gleaming vehicles to rough country

roads. In a sense, the challenging untarred road could be seen as providing a preliminary 'rite of passage' that one must go through before entering the town. Someone prepared to brave the gravel road on a regular basis by living at the end of it might *ipso facto* reveal his or her tacit commitment to a distinctive 'cluster' of values.

Rightly or wrongly, the business owners at the focus group viewed the new road as a prelude to state intrusion, and as a precursor to increased taxes and unwanted interference in their affairs. Scott (1998:187) succinctly encapsulates the wellspring of these sentiments: "Contemporary development schemes... require the creation of state spaces where the government can reconfigure the society and economy of those who are to be 'developed'. The transformation of peripheral non-state spaces into state spaces by the modern, developmentalist nation-state is ubiquitous and, for the inhabitants of such spaces, frequently traumatic". As it so happened, property rates in Nieu-Bethesda have recently increased substantially (Langmead, 2009; and see Slabbert, 2010).

For all that Fugard celebrates Nieu-Bethesda's remoteness, he is also mindful of that part of the community for whom Nieu-Bethesda is a dead-end, a place from which to flee at the first opportunity - if only there were a decent road and affordable public transport (Fugard, 1996). Here, "the culture of poverty" still prevails (Fugard, 1997:44-45), and as Fugard implies and Butcher (2003) will argue, it is kept in place by isolation.

In time, the initial hardline opposition to the road from the local business community seemed to falter as its benefits came to be appreciated. Local residents even began expressing impatience for the project's completion, especially when it was nearly abandoned mid-way due to budgetary constraints (*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2010a; Graham, 2010).

### **'Moral' versus 'mass' tourism for the Karoo**

In modern tourism analysis, there has been a significant shift towards the advocacy of 'ethical tourism', which typically finds expression in niche tourism. It sees itself as being the



'sustainable' alternative to mass tourism in that it strives to conserve, protect and even cherish that which the tourist pays to 'consume' (Novelli, 2005). Here one can think of the natural environment, indigenous practices and cultures, and so forth as being the attractors of 'ethical tourists'. The tourism literature is replete with hostility to what is popularly referred to as 'mass tourism'. "That mass tourism can come to destroy the very elements that gave rise to it in the first place is manifested not just, say, in physical changes in a place's visual appearance, but in the damage to the aesthetic value of a place, the loss of valuable aesthetic qualities" (Todd, 2009:164). The same critique is advanced by Butler (1998:223):

To contemplate tourism and recreation as only being capable of minor effects and always destined to play a supplementary role in rural communities and economies is to severely underestimate the potential effects of these activities... The negative and undesired effects of these activities in destination areas often result because the magnitude of the leisure industry in all its forms is not well understood or investigated before development occurs. Once developed, tourism and recreation have a pattern of taking over communities and economies, and moving from a supplementary or complementary role to one of domination... the sheer weight of numbers of users at specific popular sites can cause major environmental damage.

These arguments reflect precisely what was worrying some business owners in Nieu-Bethesda about enhanced access to the town. There is already a concern about just how many more visitors the fragile Owl House can bear (Knott-Craig, 2010). In 2008, it was reported that: "Annually Graaff-Reinet has approximately 130 000 bed nights of which 70 percent is taken up by foreigners, while some 16 000 visitors journey to Nieu-Bethesda to see this tiny hamlet and its famous Owl House. While the latter was formerly a day trip for visitors, now 50 percent stay overnight in order to better experience the nostalgic way of life in the Karoo" (*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2008a). Some tourism establishments in Nieu-Bethesda might have also worried that many of the over-nighters might revert to being day-trippers when the 50km distance separating Nieu-Bethesda from Graaff-Reinet became an easily travelled tar road.

In his analysis of the bifurcation that has arisen in current tourism discourse, Butcher (2003; 2009) critiques what he terms 'the New Moral Tourism' over against 'Mass Tourism'. Butcher argues that 'Mass Tourism' is not as destructive as it is often made out to be by the advocates of

'ethical tourism'. According to Butcher, the New Moral Tourism had its origins in eco-tourism but soon came to embrace a whole slew of variants under the rubrics of 'pro-poor tourism', 'responsible tourism', 'ethical tourism', 'cultural tourism' and so forth. "New Moral Tourists engage in a search for selfhood, one which locates a spiritual centre in the destination... cultural transformation is often interpreted as destructive... they seek timelessness, not change, in a rapidly changing world... a sense of 'culture' is constructed... that may not correspond to the desire or potential for change in less economically developed regions" (Butcher, 2003:78,82). The advocates of Karoo tourism draw heavily on such notions (see Ingle, 2010b). Such 'ethical tourists' share key characteristics with Florida's 'creative class', as they seek new and remote areas for self-discovery and creative experiences. However, they have also been savagely mocked by Brooks (2000:206-207) as the new "bourgeois bohemians", or Bobos:

If you observe Bobo travel patterns and travel literature, you will detect a distinct set of preferences. The Bobo... is looking for stillness, for a place where people set down roots and repeat the simple rituals... Bobo travellers are looking to get away from their affluent, ascending selves into a spiritually superior world, a world that hasn't been influenced much by the global meritocracy. Bobos tend to relish People Who Really Know How to Live – people who make folk crafts, tell folk tales... – the whole indigenous people/noble savage/tranquil craftsman repertoire.

According to Butcher (2003:22), academic analyses of mass tourism denigrate it for its *sameness, crudity, destruction and modernity*, whereas 'the New Moral Tourism' is purported to be about *difference, sensitivity and preservation*. He highlights the fact that moral tourism is intrinsically critical of modern progress. New Moral Tourists associate mass tourism with unfeeling, impersonal global capital. They champion the 'local' and the 'intimate', and they tend to be anti-capitalist in their sympathies (Ingle, 2009). In essence, Butcher presents the proponents of ethical tourism as being "reactionary romantics" - guilt-obsessed, puritanical killjoys determined to take the *fun* out of holidaying. "Is tourism to be an angst-ridden pursuit, a necessary evil, something we do but wish others wouldn't... or is it to be guilt-free enjoyment?" (Butcher, 2003:141). What particularly riles Butcher is the preachy sanctimony that seems to be widespread in the 'responsible tourism' literature. This is epitomized by Monbiot: "Tourism is,

by and large, an unethical activity, which allows us to have fun at everyone else's expense" (Butcher, 2003:12). What commentators such as Monbiot fail to appreciate – according to Butcher – is that mass tourism provides a livelihood for many millions of people. This debate remains fundamentally unresolved, with Butcher's views being controversial (Smith, 2009).

What then are the developmental outcomes associated with this binary?

Butcher argues that New Moral Tourism simply sustains the business interests of tourism operators that are supposedly pro-poor. Discouraging tourism 'at scale' serves to sustain poverty and retard real economic growth in developing countries. Whereas critics of mass tourism deride a destination such as Torremolinos on Spain's Costa del Sol as a "ghastly, hyperactive, unsightly holiday inferno", Butcher (2009:249-253) cites it as a shining example of real poverty alleviation. Mass tourism has been enthusiastically embraced by the locals in Torremolinos, and it has brought them a previously undreamt-of level of affluence. Butcher also points to the island of Malta, where the small population is apparently only too pleased to be swamped by a million tourists a year. For Butcher, ethical tourism too readily detaches human welfare from economic growth, seeking instead to *fix* people in the 'authentic' context of their subsistence-level poverty.

There is clearly a clash of paradigms as to what constitutes sustainable, developmental tourism. This tension plays out in small Karoo towns where the touristic ethos of the new cohort of affluent newcomers is sometimes perceived as promoting their own self-interest rather than the material upliftment of the poor.

The problem with the preservationist ethos is that - for the most part - it seeks to perpetuate precisely those 'traditional' conditions that the aspiring poor want to transcend. And so it is that in Nieu-Bethesda and throughout the Karoo, those who want to preserve the region's heritage and its natural environment find themselves vulnerable to the charge of being anti-developmental. The poor invariably prefer something that has the prospect of decisively changing their lives, something that delivers up modernity's 'goodies'. This 'something' often takes the form of mass tourism and infrastructural development.

## The quest for 'authenticity'

According to Boyle (2003:15), "The current demand for authenticity... derives from the so-called 'cultural creatives' in the USA and the so-called 'inner-directeds' in Europe – those people identified by the sociologists who put education, individuality and authenticity at the heart of their ambitions for themselves" (see also Ray & Anderson, 2000 for a discussion of values-driven lifestyle choices). Those people who leave the cities for the countryside are "the shock troops of authenticity" (Boyle, 2003:41). This longing for 'authenticity' has significant implications for development, as it typically favours retention of the *status quo* as opposed to new infrastructural investments.

Insofar as tourism is a performance art (Ingle, 2009), there has always been a preoccupation with gradations of authenticity (Norval, 1936; MacCannell, 1976). In her study of "authentic urban places", Sharon Zukin (2010:22) articulates the preservationist ethos that is equally applicable to the quest for rural authenticity evident in Nieu-Bethesda: "Rundown nineteenth-century houses and small shops are appealing to many people with middle-class cultural tastes because they embody the aesthetic distinction of objects that are, on the one hand, simple, handmade tokens of craftsmanship and, on the other, living history... The 'gentry' don't want opulent, luxurious, ... magnificent and extravagant...[they want] *authentic*, natural, warm, ... honest, organic, ... unique". On the other hand, a preoccupation with the 'authentic' may well have perverse outcomes. What could be more *inauthentic* than a small town frozen in time? "How much commodification can occur before an asset ceases to be authentic?" ask McKercher & Cros (2002:76).

Furthermore, it is not clear that the cause of authenticity is promoted by putting artificial constraints on infrastructural development. Picturesque small towns have to somehow find a middle way between becoming kitsch artefacts of the past and having their charm and uniqueness obliterated by rampant modernity. Small towns also have to allow for the possibility that they may become bigger towns (Donaldson, 2007; CDS, 2010). Some growth must take place in order for towns to remain vibrant and viable.

## The infrastructure dilemma laid bare

Paul Edwards (2010:12) points out in his magisterial *A Vast Machine* that: “Infrastructure formation is never tension-free. Emerging infrastructures inevitably create winners and losers. If they are really infrastructures, they eventually make older ways of life extremely difficult to maintain... Every choice involves tradeoffs and consequences... every stage of infrastructure is marked by struggle”. Under these circumstances, what price an old-world authenticity arrived at via arrested development?

The tension in Nieu-Bethesda is essentially one between those who have ‘come up’ through an older way of life and wish to transcend it (by moving towards modernity) and those ‘coming in’ from modernity seeking to augment their portfolio of lifestyle options with an older way of life. Of course, the newcomers can always temporarily opt out whenever it suits them, as evidenced by the relatively large number of ‘second home’ owners in Nieu-Bethesda (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2010). These two constituencies have differing aspirations and differing *escape strategies*. Some want to ‘escape from’, while others want to ‘escape to’. Thus it is, for example, that residents of the coloured township Pienaarsig, when canvassed, express themselves overwhelmingly in favour of street lighting, whereas Village residents deliberately forego street lighting so as not to compromise their starry night skies.

There is a pervasive underlying tension between the ‘creative destruction’ caused by infrastructural development (facilitating ‘mass tourism’) and the urge to protect and conserve heritage and the environment advocated by ‘moral tourism’ (see for example Marais, 2004:432 on the “Tourism Mecca” of Clarens). Either one of these polarities can be constituted as being ultimately ‘anti-developmental’ by its opponents (Butcher, 2003).

At some point, tough choices must be made in which lucrative, high profile, but most likely unsustainable windfalls are pitted against more ‘responsible’, long-term considerations that are hopefully sustainable but contain no immediate payback. What should be allowed to trump what? Should ‘job creation’, for example, override environmental stewardship? What should be the key indicators for developmental progress – employment, household incomes, or promoting

the local GDP? Progress in eliminating infrastructural backlogs? Some kind of ‘happiness index’? Over what timeframe and at what point in the future will net developmental gains be determined? Just before the next election, or in ten or fifty years time? Attempting to determine answers to any of these questions is inevitably going to entail some agonising trade-offs.

This is the dilemma of infrastructural development – what trumps what, and at what point in time should the developmental balance sheet be drawn up? In the closing lines of *Oedipus Rex*, Sophocles says: “Count no man fortunate until he’s dead”. Life is so full of unanticipated reversals of fortune that only at an absolute end-point can one pass judgement on the outcomes of human endeavour.

## Conclusion

Fugard’s *Road to Mecca* derives its dramatic force from the showdown that ensues when latent inner tensions are brutally exposed to scrutiny. Although small town issues may appear to be no more than a ‘storm in a teacup’ from a national perspective, they frequently anticipate conflicts that eventually play themselves out on a much wider canvas. The tension between different paradigms of development is present not only in Nieu-Bethesda. It is also implicit in the environmental issues surrounding uranium mining in the Beaufort-West area (Van Rooyen, 2010), the feasibility of Spaceport Karoo (Ingle, 2011) and the prospect of hydraulic fracturing (‘fracking’) for natural shale gas in the Karoo (Atkinson, 2011; Du Toit, 2011). As Milton and Dean (2010:64) caution: “Development has water and biodiversity costs. Destruction of the Karoo’s natural capital will kill off businesses and reduce future options, leaving damaged landscapes and destitute people”.

These difficult developmental debates do not constitute academic nit picking. Tough trade-offs have to be made by towns and officials grappling with infrastructural and economic decisions, often without the benefit of precedent. Infrastructural development may be a pact with the devil, or it may prove to be the proverbial “Road to Mecca”.

## References

- Anderson, J. 2010. *Understanding Cultural Geography*. New York: Routledge.
- Atkinson, D. 2009. Economic decline and gentrification in a small town: the business sector in Aberdeen, Eastern Cape, *Development Southern Africa* 26(2):271-288.
- Atkinson, D. 2011. 'Fracking' fiasco exposes SA's fractured planning system [online]. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=133655> [Accessed 8 February 2011].
- Atkinson, D. & Ingle, M. 2010. A multi-dimensional analysis of Local Economic Development in Graaff-Reinet, Eastern Cape, *Journal for New Generation Sciences* 8(1):11-28.
- Boyle, D. 2003. *Authenticity*. London: Harper Perennial.
- Brett-Rite, E. 2009. Camdeboo: cream of the crop. *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 30 October: 1.
- Butcher, J. 2003. *The Moralisation of Tourism: Sun, sand... and saving the world?* London: Routledge.
- Butcher, J. 2009. Against 'ethical tourism'. In: Tribe, J. (ed). *Philosophical issues in tourism*. Bristol: Channel View Publications. pp 244-260.
- Butler, R. 1998. Rural recreation and tourism. In: Ilbery, B. (ed). *The Geography of Rural Change*. Harlow: Longman. pp 211-232.
- Centre for Development Support (CDS). 2010. Small town tourism development risks: lessons from Clarens and Dullstroom. *CDS Policy Lekgotla No. 3*. Bloemfontein: Centre for Development Support, University of the Free State.

De Botton, A. 2002. *The Art of Travel*. London: Penguin.

De Wit, A. 2009. Household Quality of Life and Local Economic Development assessment in the Camdeboo Municipality. Karoo Development Conference, Graaff-Reinet. 26-27 March 2009.

Donaldson, R. 2007. Tourism in small town South Africa. In: Rogerson, C.M. & Visser, G. (eds). *Urban tourism in the developing world*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Du Toit, J. 2011. Fracking the Karoo. *Middelburg Courant*, 3 February: 1, 15.

Edwards, P.N. 2010. *A Vast Machine*. Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press.

Emslie, A. 1991. *The Owl House*. London: Penguin.

Emslie, A. 1997. *A journey through the Owl House*. Johannesburg: Penguin.

Florida, R. 2002. *The rise of the Creative Class: and how it's transforming work, leisure, community, and everyday life*. New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. 2008. *Who's your city?: how the creative economy is making where to live the most important decision of your life*. New York: Basic Books.

Fugard, A. 1985. *The road to Mecca: a play in two acts*. London: Faber & Faber.

Fugard, A. 1996. *My Life & Valley Song*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Fugard, A. 1997. *Cousins: a memoir*. New York: Theatre Communications Group.

Gillies, A. 2009. *Keeper*. London: Short Books.

*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2008a. Karoo: demand up for tourist accommodation. 30 May: 21.



*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2008b. Konstabel sterf in gru-ongeluk. 19 September: 2.

*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2009a. Fugard Festival in village of Nieu-Bethesda. 3 July: 13.

*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2009b. Fugard Festival presents a singular chance. 2 October: 3.

*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2009c. Council slogging uphill to address the housing needs in Nieu-Bethesda. 13 November: 5.

*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2010a. Local road construction and tarring operations terminated. 4 June: 3.

*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2010b. The Fugard connection. 3 September: 5.

*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2011. Shell on the 'fracking' wrong foot. 4 February: 1-2.

Graham, T. 2010. Pad tydelik oop maar frustrasie oor gesloer. *Kapaaislander*, July: 4.

Hoogendoorn, G. & Visser, G. 2010. The role of second homes in local economic development in five small South African towns. *Development Southern Africa*, 27(4): 547-562.

Ilbery, B. (ed). 1998. *The Geography of Rural Change*. Harlow: Longman.

Ingle, M.K. 2008a. Economic potential in South Africa's arid areas: A selection of niche products and services. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Centre for Development Support Arid Areas Programme.

Ingle, M.K. 2008b. The Subaru Fauresmith 200km Challenge: Looking a Gift-horse in the Mouth? *Africa Insight*, 38(3):86-99.

Marais, L. 2004. From small town to tourism Mecca: The Clarens fairy tale. In: Rogerson, C.M. & Visser, G. (eds). *Tourism and development issues in contemporary South Africa*. Pretoria: Africa Institute.

McKercher, B. & du Cros, H. 2002. *Cultural tourism: the partnership between tourism and cultural heritage management*. New York: The Haworth Hospitality Press.

Milton, S.J. & Dean, W.R.J. 2010. The basis for sustainable business in the Karoo: Bringing ecological and economic issues together. *Journal for Development Support 2*: (in press).

Moran, J. 2009. *On roads: a hidden history*. London: Profile Books.

Murray, N., 2008. *A corkscrew is most useful: the travellers of empire*. London: Little Brown.

Nieu-Bethesda. 2011. <http://www.nieu-bethesda.com>

Norval, A.J. 1936. *The tourist industry: A national and international survey*. London: Isaac Pitman & Sons.

Novelli, M. (ed). 2005. *Niche tourism: contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Nozick, R. 1974. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. UK: Basil Blackwell.

Ray, P.H. & Anderson, S.R. 2000. *The cultural creatives: how 50 million people are changing the world*. New York: Harmony Books.

Ross, S.I. 1997. *This is my world: the life of Helen Martins, creator of the Owl House*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Ingle, M.K. 2009. Prospects for tourism as a catalyst for development in South Africa". *Journal for New Generation Sciences*, 7(1):18-33.

Ingle, M.K. 2010a. A 'Creative Class' in South Africa's arid Karoo region. *Urban Forum*, 21:405-423.

Ingle, M.K. 2010b. Making the most of 'nothing': astro-tourism, the Sublime, and the Karoo as a 'space destination'. *Transformation*, 74:87-111

Ingle, M.K. 2011. The Copernican shift in space tourism and its implications for tourism in the Great Karoo. *South African Geographical Journal*, 93(1): (in press).

Johnson, P. 1991. *The Birth of the Modern*. London: Phoenix.

Jordan, B. 2010. Petrol station fuels dorp's anger. *Sunday Times*, 19 September: 9.

Knott-Craig, A. 2010. I want to put some facts on the table. *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 4 June: 4-5.

Kruger, N. 2007. Nieu Bethesda Case Study. University of the Free State Arid Areas Research Programme, Bloemfontein: Centre for Development Support.

Langmead, D. 2009. Nieu-Bethesda is over-rated. *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 14 August: 4.

MacCannell, D. 1976. *The tourist: a new theory of the leisure class*. New York: Schocken Books.

Malgas, J. & Couzyn, J. 2008. *Koos Malgas sculptor of the Owl House*. Nieu-Bethesda: Firelizard.

Scott, J.C. 1998. *Seeing like a state: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Slabbert, A. 2010. Rocketing municipal bills hit SA [online]. Retrieved from: <http://www.fin24.com/economy/rocketing-municipal-bills-hit-SA-20101206> [Accessed 4 January 2011].

Smith, M. 2009. Development and its discontents: Ego-tripping without ethics or idea(l)s? In: Tribe, J. (ed). *Philosophical issues in tourism*. Bristol: Channel View Publications. pp 261-277.

Todd, C.S. 2009. Nature, beauty and tourism. In: Tribe, J. (ed). *Philosophical issues in tourism*. Bristol: Channel View Publications. pp 154-170.

Tsunokawa, K. & Hoban, C. 1997. *Roads and the environment*. Washington: World Bank.

Tribe, J. (ed). 2009. *Philosophical Issues in Tourism*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Van Rooyen, D. 2010. Uranium in the Karoo: What would be the implications for local economies? *Journal for New Generation Sciences* 8(1): 321-334.

Visser, G. 2003. Unvoiced and invisible: on the transparency of white South Africans in post-apartheid geographical discourse. *Acta Academica Supplementum*, 2003(1): 220-244.

Vorster, C. 2003. *The Owl House. Hunter's Retreat*: Blue Cliff Publishing.

Westby-Nunn, T. 2004. *Graaff-Reinet: an illustrated historical guide to the town including Aberdeen & Nieu-Bethesda*. Cape Town: Elephant Head Publications.

Wild, S. 2011. Karoo gas threat to space array system [online]. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=137419> [Accessed 17 March 2011].

Zukin, S. 2010. *Naked City: The death and life of authentic urban places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

#### 9.4 Paper IV: The Subaru Fauresmith 200km Challenge: Looking a gift-horse in the mouth?

This article describes an equestrian sport known as ‘endurance riding’. It focuses on the Subaru Fauresmith 200km Challenge, which is held every year in the small Transgariep town of Fauresmith. Given the steadily growing profile of the event, both locally and internationally, it is argued that the time is ripe for Fauresmith to begin to derive much more ‘collateral benefit’ from it than has hitherto been the case. It is maintained that this can be achieved, at virtually no cost, by means of a focussed destination branding campaign – one which rides on the back of the town’s flagship sport event.

Fauresmith, in the southern Free State, claims to be one of only two towns in the world where the railroad runs down the middle of the main street. It has an old steam engine parked in the middle of the town in an attractive little square. Fauresmith’s small tourism sector has remained fixated on this feature. But the trains do not run anymore, so there is little ‘value-added’ generated by the icon. Ironically, the town also hosts the second biggest endurance horse race in the world. Although this is a moneyed sport, attracting thousands of wealthy participants and enthusiasts, Fauresmith’s tourism sector has shown little interest in capitalising on the annual week-long event. No one driving through the town would ever dream that this was *the* place routinely celebrated as a marathon riders’ mecca in the specialist equestrian literature. No creative class has emerged in Fauresmith, to take advantage of this event (see Morgan & Pritchard, 2004).

The “best window” we have for understanding processes may be provided by accounts of when they *fail* to function as expected (Blakeslee and Blakeslee 2007: 111). Thus the second case study in this collection describes a situation where there has been an extraordinary inertia about capitalising on a major branding opportunity due to the *absence* of any appreciable creative class cohort. The article uses a lens informed by ‘sports tourism’ to examine this phenomenon.

## *The Subaru Fauresmith 200km Challenge: Looking a Gift-horse in the Mouth?*<sup>6</sup>

### **Introduction**

Competitive endurance horse riding was formalised in South Africa with the inauguration of the Endurance Ride Association of South Africa (ERASA) in 1974 (Hyland, 1988:238). The association's flagship event is the Subaru Fauresmith 200km Challenge. This is a three-day marathon staged in the southern Free State town of Fauresmith in July of every year. This article explores how the prominence accorded this event might be leveraged to yield greater economic benefit for the small commercial sector of Fauresmith.

The paper commences with a discussion of 'sports tourism' set within the context of tourism niches in general. It is shown that Fauresmith can draw on a number of distinct niches, all of which should ideally serve as mutual reinforcement for one another. An introduction to the sport of endurance riding is provided and this is followed by an account of its status in South Africa. Although the sport has not been professionalised in South Africa, the breeding of horses for endurance racing is revealed as becoming ever more lucrative. To the degree that this should be boosting the country's bloodstock reserves it is being countered by the increasing rate of export of South Africa's finest horses. This 'cherry-picking' by foreign buyers is seen in some quarters as threatening to undermine the local horse breeding industry.

The discussion then turns to a brief description of the Fauresmith 200, as it is colloquially known. The event has entered into a sharp growth phase. This has seen it attract a significant sponsor. It has also led to a measure of 'transformation' with the blooding of a 'development team'. This team acquitted itself with considerable distinction in 2008.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ingle, M.K. 2008. The Subaru Fauresmith 200km Challenge: Looking a Gift-horse in the Mouth? *Africa Insight* 38(3):86-99.

The article then provides an account of the demographics of Fauresmith. The section includes an analysis of Fauresmith's existing touristic portfolio as well as some thoughts as to what kind of tourism attractions add up to making a place a tourist destination.

An account of Subaru's sponsorship of the Fauresmith 200 leads into some reflections on destination branding, and on how Fauresmith, given the constraints imposed by its modest size, could hope to capitalise on the branding potential inherent within the world-rated sporting fixture it hosts. Sutherland in the Northern Cape is held up as an example of successful, collective, 'do-it-yourself' branding which Fauresmith should seek to emulate.

According to Butler *et al* (quoted in Hall & Page, 1999:178): "In recent years the differences between recreation and tourism in particular, except at a philosophical level, have become of decreasing significance and distinctions increasingly blurred". This discussion does not therefore seek to disaggregate rural equestrianism, in order to isolate what could be argued are its purely recreational elements, but it does tacitly recognize that there is more to sport tourism than commercial exchanges.

### **Sports Tourism as a tourism niche**

Niche tourism has attracted a good deal of scholarly attention in recent years (Novelli, 2005). In South Africa too, a number of variants such as 'casino tourism', 'festival tourism', 'second homes tourism', 'gay tourism' and 'township tourism' have been explored within the ambit of 'urban tourism' (Rogerson & Visser, 2004, 2007) and a number of articles have reflected research into touristic specialities such as trophy-hunting and eco-tourism (van der Merwe, Saayman & Krugell, 2004), backpacking (Rogerson, 2008), 'route tourism' (Kotze, 2005:70-72; Lourens, 2007; Rogerson, 2004), 'conference tourism' (Rogerson, 2007), and so forth.

According to Robinson & Novelli (2007:1), "The concept of 'niche tourism' has emerged... in counter-point to what is commonly referred to as 'mass tourism'". The word 'niche' was



borrowed from the field of ecology and as Robinson & Novelli (2007:4) go on to explain it “refers to an optimum location, which an organism can exploit in terms of resources in the presence of its competitors”. This chimes well with the ‘wide horizons’ theme which informs the Open Africa tourism route on which Fauresmith, in the southern Free State, is situated. It helps explain why the town’s rural environs so readily lend themselves to a sport such as endurance riding which is not dependent on spectator revenues for its viability, but which needs spacious and uncluttered rural landscapes within which it can be practised.

Sports tourism is uncontentionally defined as “all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organised way for non-commercial or business/commercial reasons that necessitate travel away from home and work locality” (Standevan and De Knop quoted in Ritchie, 2005:158-9). This sub-discipline has of course acquired an especial salience in the South African context due to the country’s having been awarded the hosting of the 2010 Soccer World Cup. Hitherto, in South Africa, sports tourism has comprised a relatively modest “4% of the domestic tourism market” (Ritchie, 2005:158) but this is presumably set to change in the very near future.

Just as any variety of niche tourism can be characterised as a subsidiary segment within the business of tourism as a whole, just so sports tourism is routinely ‘disaggregated’ into a number of subsidiary components. An apposite distinction is sports *participation* travel as opposed to *spectatorial* travel (Pitts quoted in Ritchie, 2005:159) while Weed (2008:1-2), in juxtaposing sports tourism as an *activity* with sports tourism as an *experience*, rather ambitiously wants to see the phenomenon treated as a “legitimate field of study in its own right” as distinct from its being merely “something that need only be examined as a tourism market niche”.

Further nuance is provided by Shipway and Jones (2008). In a discussion of “serious leisure”, they explore the concept of “social identification” (“the unique ethos, language and behaviours of participants”) from the perspective of the *insiders*. This quasi anthropological approach, which focuses on the doings of a *cognoscente*, is also germane to the present study, as will become evident from what follows.

Tourism niches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and while one might want to analyse the impact of an equestrian marathon on a destination through the lens of 'sports tourism', a sporting event's locale could legitimately require that it also be examined within the purview of 'route tourism'. As already indicated, the Fauresmith ride proffers just such an instance of this on account of Fauresmith's being situated on a designated tourism route. Again, an annual flagship event, be it sporting, social or commercial, that revolves around some or other theme can also be understood as a form of 'festival' – another sub-genre with its own nascent literature in the local context (see for example Visser, 2007, 2008).

Just when one might have thought these three dimensions, namely sports-, route- and festival-tourism, were quite enough to go on, there is a fourth suggests itself in the context of the Fauresmith endurance ride and this is heritage tourism (see McKercher and du Cros, 2002 for a full discussion of the difficulties attendant upon defining 'cultural' or 'heritage' tourism). Apart from the fact that Fauresmith has a long and interesting history (Britz, 1998; Jones, 2001) – it narrowly lost out to Bloemfontein when the first *Volksraad* put the question of a capital for the Free State Republic to the vote (NGK, 1948:13) – the Fauresmith district was at the heart of Adam Kok's Griqua polity. Although this entity came to an end in 1862 (Halford, n.d.:98), when the Griqua trekked away to Natal, the Griquas were renowned for their mobility and their keen appreciation of horsemanship (Saunders, 1994:131; Wannenburg, n.d.).

Before the introduction of vaccines, the southern Free State in the early 1800s was "the most northerly district in which horses could be bred" as the number of nights of frost in a year was adequate to kill off insects which functioned as vectors for horse-sickness (Ross, 1976:22). Indeed, the possibilities opened up by the horse, as a means of transport and as an adjunct to stock-raiding and to the conduct of war, played a major part in the political development of the Trans-Oranje. This was demonstrated most vividly by the stone-walling guerrilla tactics adopted by the Boers in the Anglo-Boer War.

All of these facets of niche tourism will be touched on in passing in a later discussion of ways in which Fauresmith could leverage endurance riding to brand itself as an all year round tourism destination. As pointed out by Visser & Kotze (2006) this sort of issue has received little

attention in the Free State context and certainly not in the Transgariep – a region which is officially regarded as being “without economic potential” (Atkinson & Marais, 2007).

## **What is Endurance Riding?**

Endurance horse riding is straightforward and largely self-explanatory. It generally consists of a daily distance of anything between 40 and 80 kilometres which may be covered over a single day or over several days in relay. There are any number of variations on the basic concept but the longer term events are considered the more challenging as it is often only on subsequent days that horses that have been ridden too hard on previous days actually drop out. Participants are typically supported by a ‘crew’, defined as “a person or group of people who assist the horse and rider during a ride” (Hyland, 1988:117-118; Snyder-Smith, 1998:119), and are subject to numerous rules governing the finer points of riding. The races are punctuated by regular veterinary checkpoints where horses are assessed as to their ability to continue. The sport is open to all age groups, men, women, children and even the disabled, just as long as they can ride, although a measure of personal stamina is called for. Rules will normally dictate that younger children and the disabled (for example blind riders) be accompanied by a responsible adult (Hyland, 1975; Hyland, 1988; Snyder-Smith, 1998).

Champion rider Ann Hyland (1975:10) points out that although endurance riding is a competitive sport “the main object is to finish the course”. Although the underlying philosophy is that “to finish is to win” (Hofmeyr, 2004:32), riders who complete a course on a horse that is in any way distressed, or not “fit to continue”, are disqualified at the finishing line. It follows then that pacing one’s ride, and correct timing, are of the essence, which is why endurance riding is very far from being a mad dash to the finish (Botha, L., 2007:18). Many factors, such as weather conditions or rider weight, also play an important role in determining rider strategy (Erasmus, 2008b; Miles, 2007:46) and success crucially hinges upon the bond between rider and mount. In Hyland’s (1975:87-103) discussion of ride tactics, she goes so far as to claim that “the real work starts after the ride, particularly on a three-day competitive trail... for it is back in the stables that the horse’s true condition will show itself”. Riders and crew can expect to be up much of the

night attending to their horses (Erasmus, 2008b) and it was perhaps no accident that Alexander the Great, a master of horsemanship, would rebuke his men, generals alike, if he caught them delegating the grooming of their mounts to menials (Hyland, 1988:19).

## **Endurance Horse Breeding and Riding in South Africa**

The upsurge in the popularity of endurance riding over the past decade, both locally and internationally, has resulted in a 20-fold increase in the price at which locally-bred Arabian steeds change hands (Botha, T., 2007:5). The Arabian is especially well suited to long-distance riding on account of its distinctive genetic make-up (it has fewer vertebrae than other breeds making it more compact) which has been honed over eons of selection, both natural and artificial, in harsh climatic conditions (Hyland, 1975:25-27; Hyland, 1988:143-149). The Arabian has long dominated the South African endurance scene – in the 1986 National Championship other breeds achieved “only a nominal showing” (Hyland, 1988:238).

Although Cecil John Rhodes is credited with having imported the first Arabian stallion into the country, it was in 1951 at a Bedford stud farm, that the South African breeding of Arabians was first undertaken in any earnest. Yet even so, while South Africa has long been renowned for its racehorses, it is only comparatively recently that breeders have moved into endurance bloodstock as a commercial proposition, on account of growing demand and profitability (Botha, T., 2007:5). It is also reported that some farmers, in the more arid areas, are contemplating diversifying into breeding endurance horses as a response to challenges presented by climate change (van den Bosch, 2008:44) although farmers are cautioned that this is not a business for those looking for ‘quick returns’ (Botha, T., 2007:5; Norval, 2008:7). Outbreaks of horse-sickness also pose a recurrent threat to breeders as these can result in severe financial set-backs (Smith, 2005:42).

South Africa has become a world leader in the breeding of horses intended for feats of endurance (Miles and Martin, 2008:48). This is evidenced by their performance in overseas events (Botha, T., 2007:5) and by the US\$350 000 recently paid by an international buyer for

three Arabian mares from an Uppington stud (Jooste, 2007:16). Amounts of up to US\$60 000 are being paid for Namibian bred horses exported to Bahrein and Qatar (Gouws, 2007b). These sums are not that surprising if one considers that the prize money for a winner at an international event may be well in excess of US\$1-million (Botha, T., 2007:6) although the sport in South Africa is conducted on an amateur basis (ERASA, 2008). South African horses are in fact now so sought after, that reservations are being expressed that the country is being depleted of its genetic stock too rapidly. More than 90 horses were reported to have been exported, mainly to the Middle East, during the first eight months of 2008 (Norval, 2008:7). The winner of the 2008 Subaru Fauresmith 200km Challenge (hereafter referred to as 'the Fauresmith 200'), Idaho Prins, was snapped up on the finishing line by a Dubai sheik's representative, for an undisclosed sum. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that foreign agents and scouts, many of which were observed attending the Fauresmith event, also often recruit veterinary surgeons, farriers, trainers, riders and grooms to accompany the horses they purchase (Norval, 2008). But breeders presumably have only themselves to blame if they compromise the sustainability of their operations by selling off too much of their bloodstock.

It is thought that endurance riding had its origins in South Africa in 1964. A spate of letters appeared in the *Landbouweekblad* over the question of which breed of horse was the toughest and best suited to long distances. The dispute was eventually resolved by means of a marathon over 167km from Hanover via Richmond to De Aar (Erasmus, 2007:34-35). Apparently it was the Arabians that came out tops.

Endurance riding in South Africa is administered by the Endurance Ride Association of South Africa (ERASA) and is predominantly a 'family sport' (Botha, T., 2007:6). The sport appears to be exceptionally well institutionalised and ERASA's current membership stands at just on 2300 (Norval, 2008:7). Endurance events are held throughout the country, all year round, and ERASA has some 46 endurance riding clubs affiliated to it (ERASA, 2008). The sport is also popular in Namibia (Gouws, 2007a). Endurance riding is not for the impecunious – horse upkeep runs to at least R20 000 per annum (Botha, T., 2007:5) and the pre-qualification and associated costs for a flagship event such as the Fauresmith 200 may run as high as R30 000 per contestant (Norval, 2008:7). The premier events on the southern Africa calendar are the annual Fauresmith, Hofmeyr

and Walvis Bay marathons (Botha, T., 2007:6). The last-mentioned sees horses having to tackle the notorious 'Dune 7' – formerly used for military training (Erasmus, 2008a). Teams and riders from as far afield as Brasil, Australia and the Netherlands regularly participate in these events (Gouws, 2007b).

### **The Fauresmith 200 Endurance Race**

The Fauresmith event was inaugurated by ERASA in 1974 with financial assistance from the *Farmer's Weekly* magazine (Hyland, 1988:238-241). By 1986 the event was already regarded as one of the world's foremost rides possibly partly due to the fact that, for whatever reason, South African riders have a reputation for going particularly fast, clocking up average speeds of 18.8 kph (Hyland, 1988:238).

The Fauresmith 200, which attracted 376 riders in 2007, is billed as "the largest endurance ride in the world". This is a signal achievement considering that endurance riding is touted as being "one of the fastest-growing sports in the world" having reportedly grown by 20 percent in the 2006 season (Miles, 2007:46).

The ride is conducted in July every year over a period of three days during which a total distance of just over 200km is covered. At the veterinary checkpoints, at the starting point and every 20 to 30km thereafter, horses are checked for a variety of conditions (such as pulse rate, respiration, dehydration, and lameness) and are not allowed to proceed if they should show any sign of distress (Miles & Martin, 2008). Riders have been known to dismount and lead their horses for long distances on foot, when they show signs of undue strain (Hofmeyr, 2004:34).

Going by the figures for 2007 and 2008, roughly 40 percent of the entrants drop out during the race which is why, as with the Comrades Marathon for example, just finishing an endurance course is reckoned as an achievement in itself. According to a race veteran: "The course runs over low hills and ridges. Going is good along the dirt roads but there are a lot of stony sections through the farms that slow you down. The first leg of day three is horribly abrasive along the tar

road verge... the pace is hot and competition for the top twenty is incredible” (Endurance Horse, 2008).

The Fauresmith 200 is run in various divisions (for example, ‘heavy-weight’, ‘children’, ‘juniors’) and some of the clubs compete by entering teams that compete against a specially selected ERASA benchmark team. Although “only a nominal percentage of the members [of ERASA] are from previously disadvantaged communities” (Norval, 2008:7) it is by no means unusual for farmhands to participate in rural sports events (see for example Labuschagne, 2007).

An innovation introduced in 2007 was a “national development team”, entered by ERASA, with the intention of extending the sport to “previously disadvantaged riders” (Miles, 2007:48). Given the high costs of participation, this team is sponsored by means of a Lotto allocation. The “Amahashe”, as they are known, excelled themselves in the 2008 event. They competed against 27 other teams and were one of only four teams who managed a full complement completion (Miles & Martin, 2008:48; Norval, 2008). Seeing that each contestant must pass about a dozen stringent veterinary checks during the entire course of the event (Hofmeyr, 2005:9), and that the Amahashe team consisted of six riders (as opposed to the usual complement of three to four riders), the team’s 2008 achievement was indeed noteworthy.

### **Fauresmith background**

Fauresmith lies 130km south-west of Bloemfontein in the southern Free State (Fauresmith, 2008). It is situated just 10km west of the old diamond mining town of Jagersfontein. Fauresmith’s main, rather whimsical, claim to fame is that the railway line runs down the centre of the main street (Explore Free State, 2008). The line has been out of commission for many years now and an imposing steam engine remains parked in the town square to remind visitors of times long past.

In terms of demographics, the 2001 Census reveals Fauresmith to have a population of about 5000, 40% of whom are under the age of 20, and 10% of whom are over 60. The racial profile is as follows: Black 64%; Coloured 26%; White 10%. Unremarkably, given work-seeking patterns, there is a gender bias in favour of females viz. 52% versus 48% males. Average household size is 3.0 and only 17% of households reported a household income in excess of R1600 per month in 2001. One in 16 people reported some form of disability. Only three percent of residents have any tertiary qualification (7.3% have matric as their highest qualification) and 25% of the total populace reported themselves as being either employed or self-employed (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2008). This is not quite the picture of extreme deprivation that is sometimes painted for the southern Free State rural agricultural centres but it does point to a miniscule business sector.

Fauresmith is an attractive small town with some handsome architectural features. Along with eight other similarly sized dorps it makes up the municipality of Kopanong which is half the size of Belgium in area. Once diamonds had been discovered in nearby Jagersfontein in the 1870s it became the custom for the mine management to reside in the genteel surrounds of Fauresmith while the miners were housed in less salubrious quarters in Jagersfontein itself (Birkby, 1987:7).

It was in Fauresmith that the van der Post family, forebears of sir Laurens, first established themselves and amassed a not inconsiderable fortune (Jones, 2001). To the west of Fauresmith, on the road to Kimberley, is to be found another old mining town, namely Koffiefontein. All these towns are linked with Philippolis in the south by means of the designated Horizon Route the motto for which, "open spaces - little places", is redolent of the very air of expansiveness that so recommends itself to extended horserides (Open Africa, 2008).

The business sector is very limited and there are only two B&Bs. Tourism attractions and activities are in general uninspiring and are as follows:

- Church Tree – the tree under which Fauresmith's first communion service was held. That this tree, situated down a side street, has been protected is laudable but it must



be owned that it is a singularly unprepossessing specimen that is highly unlikely to generate any economic multiplier effects.

- Kalkfontein Dam Nature Reserve – this is situated 35km away from the town and is not such as to inspire any but the most ardent devotee of water sports.
- Historic architecture in the form of the Boshoff Homestead, the City Hall and the old Standard Bank Building. These are some of the elements of a pleasant enough overall *mise en scene* but can hardly be accounted sufficient to attract tourists in their own right.
- Various poverty alleviation projects – these are dubious attractions at best. There are also many problems with features of this sort, not the least being that generally they are difficult to find, and if located are all too often found to be moribund.
- Stone age implements – “surrounding the town are many artefacts dating back to the Middle Stone Age” (SA Places, 2008). This sort of palaeo-tourism requires professional packaging to be effective. Unfortunately most tourists would not recognise stone age implements even if they fell over them. Typical questions are likely to be *where exactly* they can hope to stumble upon implements, and what is so special about these artefacts to justify combing the countryside in search of them.
- The aforementioned steam engine in the main street.
- The Reichardt Park Cemetery – unexciting as this may sound, a well kept cemetery can function to lend a town real advantages that are unique to it and that cannot be replicated elsewhere. The fact is that an individual can only be buried in one place. The once-grandiose van der Post family ‘patch’ in the Reichardt Cemetery, for example, can only be found in Fauresmith and nowhere else. The descendants of the occupants of these particular graves now run into very many hundreds (Jones, 2001). Fauresmith has a large graveyard which dates back to the early days of the Free State when it was a much more prominent centre. Nearby Jagersfontein is equally advantaged in this regard with numerous miners’ graves from the days when Jagersfontein was one of the world’s foremost diamond mines. One could construct a

whole narrative of a mining camp's history simply by perusing the gravestones here. Genealogical research as a hobby (see Geni, 2008) has seen staggering growth in recent times, due to the possibilities for networking opened up by the Internet, and genealogical tourism is a niche that, although in a growth phase, remains but poorly exploited in South Africa.

Apart from the specifics of who is buried in the cemetery, there is nothing here sufficiently striking to differentiate Fauresmith from a host of other similarly endowed small platteland dorps. At this point it is worth quoting Kotze, Rogerson & Visser (2005:126) at some length because what they say precisely sums up Fauresmith's dilemma:

The fact that a particular location has a beautiful sandstone church, or a few attractive sandstone houses, merely points to the presence of ancillary attractions, which do not comprise sufficient motivation to visit a location. In addition, these attractions have reduced value if they are surrounded by unattractive additions and alterations. For example, in the Free State, such attractions are often set among hideous cheap building stock that has been developed over the past century. It is important to remember the destinations against which the Free State is competing. Nearly every reasonably sized town in South Africa has an attractive church or town hall and a few other public buildings of note. This does not however turn a place into a tourist destination.

In essence the point is that simply deeming something a 'tourist attraction' does not make it so. In the end it is the tourist who will decide whether something is an attraction or not. Of course these features are important as they all contribute towards a town's unique ambience, but even collectively they are unlikely to exert significant touristic pulling power. Once again the time-honoured business school adage of 'focus on what the *customer* wants' applies (Broughton, 2008:56).

The main event on the tourism calendar is indisputedly the Fauresmith 200 (Fauresmith, 2008) when over a thousand endurance riding enthusiasts (around 400 riders plus family and crew) descend on the town for about a week and in the process completely swamp it. These visitors tend to be self-sufficient 'insiders' with a strong sense of camaraderie and used to making do

with relatively primitive facilities. This is the social, recreational dimension. They are not, for the most part, in the market for extraneous diversions or entertainment and are not therefore typically big spenders (see Saayman & Saayman, 2003:97 on the “10:100 principle” whereby “10 tourists spending R100 each are better than 100 tourists spending R10 each”).

Notwithstanding this, they provide the town with a substantial and very welcome financial injection. But the fact remains that a guesthouse can only accommodate a set number of people at a time irrespective of demand. The sudden premium placed on accommodation might allow for higher rates but that is about as far as it goes. The challenge is how to maintain something of this bonanza’s momentum throughout the rest of the year.

### **The Subaru connection**

Sport in recent decades has become the vehicle *par excellence* by means of which sponsors promote their brandnames. Hence (as of 2006) one encounters the *Subaru* Fauresmith 200km Challenge. Subaru is a local vehicle manufacturer and the “automotive branch of Fuji Heavy Industries (FHI)” a Japanese company. In South Africa Subaru is “a wholly owned division of Barloworld Motor”, a local company with a global reach (Subaru, 2008). It is of course very far from being fortuitous that Subaru should attach its brand to a sporting event that is synonymous with toughness, rugged terrain, and endurance. The company prides itself as being “one of the most dominant forces in rallying” and motor vehicles do, after all, have *horsepower*.

None of these subliminal associations is accidental. Sponsors are in a position to be highly selective about how they deploy their resources (Urry, 2002:144) but Subaru has evidently calculated some return on investment apropos of the Fauresmith 200. As the Subaru SA Managing Director is on record as saying: “we have dedicated our efforts to taking the [Subaru] brand into those arenas we believe share the greatest parallel identity with our vehicles – mountain biking and horse riding” and this, in the case of the Fauresmith 200, on account of “the commitment and drive of the organisers and competitors as [being] those qualities we share for our brand” (Barloworld, 2006:91). Although Barloworld has latched on to a promising branding

opportunity by associating itself with the Fauresmith 200, the question that presents itself is, has Fauresmith?

### **Destination branding discussion and recommendations**

Branding is an integral part of effective marketing (Broughton, 2008:40) and marketing has not been Free State Tourism's strongpoint in the past. Kotze *et al* (2005:134), found that the provincial tourism authorities were only marketing the Free State's tourism routes within the province itself, as opposed to a clientele based beyond the provincial borders. This parochial insularity is not that uncommon – the author is aware of a small town festival committee which some years ago restricted its 'publicity campaign' to the very town in which the festival was to be held, ostensibly due to the perennial 'lack of funds' but in actuality due to a lack of worldliness. The generating of free publicity seemed not to have occurred to anyone. Again, in the early days of Sutherland's seeking to benefit from the then-upcoming Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) launch, it appointed a satellite tourism officer in Cape Town (at a monthly salary of R5000) to send tourists Sutherland's way. This proved hugely successful. But a provincial evaluation conducted by a Kimberley-based 'consultancy' was highly critical of this initiative – "locate the marketing strategy and drive within the local community as opposed to Cape Town" it admonished! (Ingle, 2004). In the light of this sort of myopia, Fauresmith is to be commended in that it has very recently initiated its own website. A website is quite literally the world's window on a destination. To paraphrase one of songwriter Leonard Cohen's lyrics, a website provides the crack that lets the light in to a place.

The point is that when a place is successfully branded, a certain status (not to say *mystique*) is conferred and this status (which is analogous to a place's *personality*) functions as a *commons* (Pearce quoted in Hall & Page, 1999:103) which is in no way diminished by the classic 'free rider problem' that besets other commons, such as the oceans' fisheries for example. It is open to any denizen of Cape Town, for instance, to extract as much leverage as they choose from the *idea* of Table Mountain. In fact there is an *Alice in Wonderland* quality to this kind of

exploitation in that the more a resource is exploited the more it grows (in stature) and the more there is of it for others to avail themselves of similarly. Such a resource (one thinks of the iconic 'beefeaters' at Buckingham Palace) is available for appropriation by *anyone* and this is a 'rising tide' that the poor, those who typically cannot raise capital, can seek to turn to account. Tourists paying indigenous peoples a fee to take photographs of them is a form of this dynamic in action. The 'commodification' of Nelson Mandela and the 'Madiba brand' is another. Nieu-Bethesda rides on the Owl House brand (which has incidentally recently been appropriated by a Cape wine company for one of its labels).

Ritchie (2005:160-1) argues that "small-scale sport events can produce positive impacts for host communities without a number of the negative impacts often associated with large-scale 'hallmark' or 'mega' events such as the Olympic Games" and it is from within this perspective that the Fauresmith 200 should be evaluated. For as Ritchie proceeds to say, in the context of rural small-scale sports meetings on New Zealand's South Island, "Sport event organisers used the landscape and physical resources of the region to host active sporting events such as marathons and endurance races at little or no cost and were able to showcase the local destination and attract tourists". The similarity to the case of Fauresmith is striking but with one crucial exception. The "sport event organisers" in the latter instance are understandably exercised with promoting the *sport*, not the "local destination". There is little evidence of the event being used to *leverage* tourist traffic or of any serious effort to secure what one might refer to as ongoing 'collateral benefits', versus the once-off annual windfall that the event represents.

It is salutary that, in all the many media reports itemised in this paper's reference list, treating of the Fauresmith 200, there is not a word, or a single photograph, devoted to the town of Fauresmith itself. All one can glean from the coverage is that the town must have some kind of camping terrain, that it can get very cold, and that its environs are ideal for riding. For all that one learns about the host town from these articles, the Fauresmith event might just as well be held in the middle of the lunar landscapes of the Tankwa Karoo.

This is in no way to fault the reporters, or the event organisers, for whom it is only proper that they should focus on their core mandates, and on the immediate task at hand. The 'showcasing'

function that Ritchie cites, is the responsibility of entrepreneurs within the local community who should be aided and abetted by the relevant tourism structures, as well as the municipal Local Economic Development (LED) function. To resort to a sporting metaphor, while ERASA and the event sponsors can stage the game, the ball is firmly within the court of the players in the local business community when it comes to capitalising on spin-offs.

This community should also not wait for government to make the running (for the dangers associated with this kind of passivity see Kotze, 2005:51-52). The degree to which government should be involved in tourism promotion is part of a much more profound debate arising out of political ideologies (Hall & Page, 1999:100-103) and it is not proposed to settle the question here. But there are certain practicalities at the micro level that cannot be airbrushed away by appeals to optimal policy outcomes. With so many small towns under its belt the Kopanong Municipality is stretched to capacity insofar as tourism promotion is concerned, besides which it has the massive Lake !Xhariep development to occupy itself with. The provincial tourism bodies exist to market the province – Fauresmith should, via the cohesive agglomeration of individual efforts (Kotze, 2005:47), seek to market itself through derivative branding, parasitic upon the Fauresmith 200. Effectively this is for private individual agents to engage in free-riding on a public good that is going begging.

What does Fauresmith have that is unique to it, that only it can offer? What could somehow be conflated with the Fauresmith 200 to yield year-round manageable levels of tourist visitation that would ameliorate the effects of Fauresmith's 'boom or bust' tourism economy? The answer may sound so patently obvious as to be ridiculous, but what Fauresmith has is its unique name and *identity* that springs from its being the only place in the universe that hosts the Subaru *Fauresmith* 200 Endurance Ride. This is a world-renowned event (Hyland, 1988) which can be said, after 35 uninterrupted years, to have come of age. Hitherto it has been held *in* Fauresmith but little more than that – the challenge now is to make it more distinctively *of* Fauresmith. Identity is something that can be strengthened, built upon and developed. A parallel case might help to explicate this point.

There was a time until quite recently when the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) just so happened to be in the vicinity of Sutherland in the Northern Cape. Since then a process of *identification* has occurred such that Sutherland and SALT are so closely associated as to have virtually merged in the public understanding (Lange, 2008). SALT is no longer just *in* Sutherland, it is also *of* it.

The great French political thinker, Alexis de Tocqueville, visited America in 1831. He noted of the state of Massachusetts that it was “an association of little republics which... manage their own affairs” and that “the state legislature dealt only with statewide business”. Impressed by this state of affairs, which is reminiscent of the South African system of *spheres* of government, Tocqueville observed that, “one of the happiest consequences of such absence of government was the development of individual initiative and self-reliance. When an American projected some public benefit (‘a school, a hospital, a road’), he relied, often successfully, only on his own efforts”. He went on to remark that, “the general result of all these individual undertakings surpasses by much that which a bureaucracy could undertake... a good government’s greatest care should be to accustom the people, little by little, to do without it” (Brogan, 2006:184). This is the dynamic that needs to be catalysed at the micro level with tourism promotion in rural South Africa.

Sutherland’s reinvigoration of itself as an astronomical hub was largely due to creative entrepreneurs tapping into the vortex of energies generated by the SALT project and harnessing this free resource to fuel their own undertakings. That these nearly all partake of a stellar theme creates just the sort of ‘quorum effect’ needed to brand a town. The message is ‘think stars – think Sutherland’ (van Rooyen, 2007).

Fauresmith can do the same with the symbolism offered by the horse - which is even more potent when overlaid with the Arabian connection. A good start in this direction has been made with the recently launched website, which privileges the endurance race on its home page, but the subliminal associations suggested by the theme need to be carried over into all aspects of Fauresmith’s identity – the way it thinks of itself. The trick is to infuse an equestrian branding motif into the persona a town presents to the outside world. It is as though a town’s image were

to be given over to a 'make-over artiste'. This is quite the reverse of a 'top-down' process and is not the result of any coercive policy. It becomes universally subscribed to solely because it makes good business sense. The town's animating principle, its source of psychic energy, resides in its brand-motif. This motif is conceived of here as being *conceptual* – it is not apprehended visually as one might use a logo. It is the universal Platonic Form (say 'horsiness') as opposed to the *particular* (a logo for instance). Over time a band-wagon effect is set in motion as residents and businesses, almost unconsciously, work this concept into their business identity.

It must be cautioned that little will be achieved by allocating local resources to boosting the profile of the Fauresmith 200 itself. That can safely be left to the sponsors and to ERASA who are already prioritising quality over quantity of riders. The event has amply demonstrated its durability, and the returns to be derived from exacerbating the swamping effect of the fixture, on the local business community, could only be marginal at best and might even prove to be counter-productive. Experience has shown that in such circumstances the main drawcard should preferably not be 'piggy-backed' onto other events such as festivals, so as to avoid 'overkill' (van Rooyen, 2008:32).

What is being argued for here is the inculcation of a *notion* which is 'mainstreamed' to inform all the interactions between a place's business community and the outside world. Destination branding "emerged as a topic of enquiry in the late 1990s" according to Tasci & Kozak (2006). This academic scrutiny has unsurprisingly led to its being riven with fine semantic distinctions which seem to make it the preserve of the 'expert' ("the adoption of a highly targeted, consumer research-based, multi-agency 'mood branding' initiative leads to success every time" runs the blurb for Pritchard & Morgan, 2004). Although some of these distinctions are undeniably interesting – for example, "[the] destination brand tends to be more sustainable than destination image and both its creation and demolition take time" (Tasci & Kozak, 2006:304) – they need not detain us here. The misperception exists that destination branding is best left to high-powered marketing consultancies, and that it follows on from the creation of "logos and associated 'taglines' that destinations use" on promotional merchandise, and so forth (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005:329). Theorists typically seem to want to reify a brand and see it as something that can be negotiated and traded. This approach may not be inappropriate for a metropolis but it is



not in line with the 'do-it-yourself' destination branding this article is advocating for Fauresmith which simply does not have the wherewithal to outsource its branding. What is needed for Fauresmith costs nothing. It is a collective sense of self-esteem grounded in an informed self-image. This, in its turn, should be predicated on the realisation that the town does have something distinctive and special which differentiates it (Tasci & Kozak, 2006:301), and that this represents a form of capital which can be turned to account. The whole point of a brand identity is to decrease marketing costs, or ideally, do away with them altogether (Tasci & Kozak, 2006:300). The brand sells itself.

The platteland is replete with touristic potential but local people often take what they have grown up with for granted and lack the value-discerning perspective that informs the seasoned urbanite's 'gaze' (Urry, 2002). This is why one finds, over and over again, that it is typically urban entrepreneurs (akin to Richard Florida's (2002) 'creative class') who spot the opportunities and move in to capitalise on them, in the process transforming small urban economies (Donaldson, 2007; Webster, 2008). It would be presumptuous to try and prescribe specific concrete measures (such as: overseas apprenticeships or exchange programmes for promising grooms; establishing links with the Bridal Path Association of SA; visits to stud farms; residencies by notables in the field; workshops; leather works; riding farmstays; summer schools; conferences; etc) that could be initiated to capitalise on the Fauresmith 200, other than to flag them as ideas worth investigating. A chamber of commerce could no doubt help to get the ball rolling but, generally speaking, established businesses' circumstances are too individualised for narrowly prescribed recommendations to be of much use.

## **Conclusion**

Endurance riding is on the ascendant. Fuelled by the purchasing power of endurance horse enthusiasts in the Middle East, the sport is also serving as an important platform for stud farms and breeders to showcase the quality of their product. The Fauresmith 200 Endurance Ride is now in its 36<sup>th</sup> year of uninterrupted running and has matured to the point that it has attracted a prominent sponsor. It has accordingly been transformed into an event capable of adding

appreciable value to the small economy of Fauresmith. Up until now Fauresmith, as host town, has tended to allow itself to be overshadowed by the event instead of basking in its reflected glory. Fauresmith has not achieved anything like the free publicity it could attract to promote itself as a desirable destination in its own right.

What is needed is a tourist flow that is both dependable and sustainable to tide the town over the lean months. To achieve this Fauresmith needs to package itself around an animating principle or motif. The endurance horse, perhaps with the focus on the Arabian, could serve as the kernel around which Fauresmith differentiates or brands itself. Similarly-sized Sutherland has managed to achieve this by offering a host of attractions that relate themselves one way or another to star-gazing. This is not a matter of engaging consultants or branding experts for which there is, in any case, simply no funding. Rather it is a matter of coming to place a value on being at the centre of the equestrian fraternity's attention for a few days every year. And if this value be understood as an asset, as a form of capital which should be put to work, then the town has every right to exploit this for all its worth.

## References

Atkinson, D. & Marais, L., 2007, 'Provincial Development Policies and Plans', The Arid Areas Programme Vol 2. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Centre for Development Support.

Barloworld, 2006, *Annual Report*. Available at [http://www.barloworld.com/financials/annual2006\\_book/sustainability.pdf](http://www.barloworld.com/financials/annual2006_book/sustainability.pdf) Accessed September 2008.

Birkby, C., 1987, *Uncle George*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball.

Blain, C., Levy, S. E. & Ritchie, J. R. B., 2005, 'Destination Branding: Insights and practices from destination management organisations', *Journal of Travel Research*, vol 43, pp 328-338.

Botha, L., 2007, 'Uithouperde is 'n rooiwinstorie', *Landbouweekblad*, 23 March.

Botha, T., 2007, 'SA Arabierperd maak naam in Bahrein', *Landbouweekblad*, 5 January.

Britz, R. M., 1998, *Geskiedenis van die NG Kerk Fauresmith*, Fauresmith: NGK.

Brogan, H., 2006, *Alexis de Tocqueville – A life*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Broughton, P. D., 2008, *Ahead of the Curve: Two years at Harvard Business School*. New York: Penguin.

Donaldson, R., 2007, 'Tourism in small town South Africa', in C. M. Rogerson and G. Visser (eds). *Urban Tourism in the Developing World: The South African experience*, pp 307-326. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Endurance Horse, 2008, 'Perseverance conquers Fauresmith', Available at <http://www.endurancehorse.co.za> Accessed September 2008.

Endurance Ride Association of South Africa (ERASA), 2008, 'Clubs', Available at <http://www.erasa.co.za> Accessed September 2008.

Erasmus, L., 2007, 'Fauersmith se weners', *Landbouweekblad*, 21 September.

Erasmus, L., 2008a, 'Namib toets perd én ruiter', *Landbouweekblad*, 4 January.

Erasmus, L., 2008b, 'Koue weer toets perd, ruiter', *Landbouweekblad*, 22 August.

Explore Free State, 2008, Available at [http://www.explorefreestate.co.za/region\\_xhariep.php](http://www.explorefreestate.co.za/region_xhariep.php) Accessed October 2008.

Fauersmith, 2008, Available at <http://www.fauersmith.co.za> Accessed September 2008.

Florida, R., 2002, *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.

Geni, 2008, 'Everyone's related', Available at <http://www.geni.com> Accessed September 2008.

Gouws, A., 2007a, 'Slyp in Kalahari vir die Namib', *Landbouweekblad*, 3 August.

Gouws, A., 2007b, 'Uithouritte bevoordeel boere', *Landbouweekblad*, 24 August.

Halford, S. J., n.d., *The Griquas of Griqualand*, Cape Town: Juta & Co.

Hall, C. M. and Page, S. J., 1999, *The Geography of Tourism and Recreation: environment, place and space*, London: Routledge.

Heath, E. & Wall, G., 1992, *Marketing Tourism Destinations: A strategic planning approach*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

- Hofmeyr, I., 2004, 'The great South African horse race', *Farmer's Weekly*, 30 July.
- Hofmeyr, I., 2005, 'Corrie wins Fauresmith crown', *Horse Power*, July.
- Hyland, A., 1975, *Endurance Riding*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.
- Hyland, A., 1988, *The Endurance Horse*, London: J. A. Allen.
- Ingle, M. K., 2004, 'An evaluation of Northern Cape LED documentation', Unpublished report.
- Jones, J. D. F., 2001, *Storyteller: the many lives of Laurens van der Post*, London: Scribner.
- Jooste, C., 2007, 'N. Kaapse perde vir Europese skoue', *Landbouweekblad*, 22 June.
- Kotze, N. C., 2005, 'Key characteristics of the Free State tourism products'. *Acta Academica, Supplementum 4*, pp 46-83.
- Kotze, N. C., Rogerson, C. M. and Visser, G. E., 2005, 'A tourism development strategy for the Free State'. *Acta Academica, Supplementum 4*, pp 115-143.
- Labuschagne, P., 2007, '100 years of Galloway Boeresport in the Free State'. *South African Journal of Cultural History*, vol 21, no 2, pp 62-79.
- Lange, W., 2008, *From Sea to SALT 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Cape Town: Lupus Press.
- Lourens, M., 2007, 'Route tourism: a roadmap for successful destinations and local economic development'. *Development Southern Africa*, vol 24, no 3, pp 475-490.
- McKercher, B. and du Cros, H., *Cultural Tourism: the partnership between tourism and cultural heritage management*, New York: Haworth Press.

Miles, G., 2007, '200km, three days – endurance and toughness come standard at Fauresmith', *Farmer's Weekly*, 10 August.

Miles, G. and Martin, V., 2008, 'Fauresmith: The comrades of endurance riding', *Farmer's Weekly*, 15 August.

Municipal Demarcation Board, 2008, 'Statistics', Available at [http://www.demarcation.org.za/MunicProfileOnline/stats\\_ward.aspx?code=41602006](http://www.demarcation.org.za/MunicProfileOnline/stats_ward.aspx?code=41602006) Accessed September 2008.

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), 1948, *'n Kort Oorsig van die Geskiedenis van Fauresmith 1848-1948*. Fauresmith: NGK.

Norval, J., 2008, 'Amahashe excelled at Fauresmith', *Farming SA*, September.

Novelli, M., (ed) 2005, *Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Open Africa, 2008, 'Horizon route', Available at <http://www.openafrica.org/route/horizon-route> Accessed September 2008.

Pritchard, A. & Morgan, N., 2004, *Destination Branding: Creating the unique destination proposition*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann

Ritchie, B., 2005, 'Sport tourism - small-scale sport event tourism: the changing dynamics of the New Zealand Masters Games', in M. Novelli (ed). *Niche Tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases*, pp 157-170. Oxford: Elsevier.

Robinson, M. and Novelli, M., 2005, 'Niche tourism: An introduction', in M. Novelli, (ed) *Niche tourism*, pp 1-11, Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.

Rogerson, C. M., 2004, 'Tourism and Uneven Local Economic Development: the experience of route tourism in South Africa', in C. M. Rogerson and G. Visser (eds). *Tourism and Development Issues in Contemporary South Africa*, pp 399-419. Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa.

Rogerson, C. M., 2007, 'Conference and exhibition tourism in South Africa', in C. M. Rogerson and G. Visser (eds). *Urban Tourism in the Developing World: The South African experience*, pp 81-100. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Rogerson, C. M., 2008, 'Backpacker Tourism: Policy lessons for South Africa from international experience'. *Africa Insight*, vol 37, no 4, pp 27-46.

Rogerson, C. M. and Visser, G., (eds) 2004, *Tourism and Development Issues in Contemporary South Africa*. Pretoria: AISA.

Rogerson, C. M. and Visser, G., (eds) 2007, *Urban tourism in the developing world: The South African experience*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Ross, R., 1976, *Adam Kok's Griquas: A study in the development of stratification in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Saayman, M. & Saayman, A., 2003, 'International and African tourism markets for South Africa: an economic analysis'. *Africa Insight*, vol 33, nos 1 & 2, pp 93-98.

Saunders, C. C. (ed), 1994, *An Illustrated Dictionary of South African History*, Sandton: Ibis Books.

Shipway, R. and Jones, I., 2008, 'The great suburban Everest: an 'insiders' perspective on experiences at the 2007 Flora London Marathon'. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, vol 13, no 1, pp 61-77.

Smith, M., 2005, 'Uithou, aanhou vir perd en ruiter', *Landbouweekblad*, 12 August.

Snyder-Smith, D., 1998, *The Complete Guide to Endurance Riding and Competition*, New York: Howell Book House.

Subaru SA, 2008, <http://www.subaru.co.za> Accessed September 2008.

Tasci, A. D. A. & Kozak, M., 2006, 'Destination brands vs destination images: Do we know what we mean?' *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, vol 12, no 4, pp 299-317.

Urry, J., 2002, *The Tourist Gaze 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* London: Sage Publications.

Van den Bosch, S., 2008, 'Diversification – looking to the stars', *Farmer's Weekly*, 1 August.

Van der Merwe, P., Saayman, M. and Krugell, W., 2004, 'Factors that determine the price of game'. *Koedoe*, vol 47, no 2, pp 105-113.

Van Rooyen, D., 2007, 'Sutherland Case Study'. Bloemfontein: UFS Centre for Development Support Arid Areas Programme.

Van Rooyen, C., 2008, 'Goeie voorbereiding ál wat werk', *Landbouweekblad*, 1 February.

Visser, G., 2007, 'Festival tourism in urban Africa: the case of South Africa', in C. M. Rogerson and G. Visser (eds). *Urban Tourism in the Developing World: The South African experience*, pp 101-126. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Visser, G., 2008, 'Volksblad Arts Festival: reflections on the product, people and impacts', in L. Marais and G. Visser (eds). *Spatialities of Urban Change: selected themes from Bloemfontein at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, pp 135-153. Stellenbosch: SUN Press.



Visser, G. & Kotze, N., 2006, 'The Free State tourism economy: current dynamics, immediate challenges and future research prospects'. *The South African Geographical Journal*, vol 88, no 1, pp 88-101.

Wannenburgh, A., n.d., *Forgotten Frontiersmen*, Cape Town: Howard Timmins.

Webster, R., 2008, 'Little hamlet in reality an absolute gem'. *Advertiser en Karoo-nuus*. 11 July: 5.

Weed, M., 2008, 'Sports tourism experiences'. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, vol 13, no 1, pp 1-4.

## 9.5 Paper V: The Copernican Shift in Space Tourism and its Implications for Tourism in the Great Karoo

This article develops ideas first broached in Paper II. Given the new technical world referred to in previous sections, the last essay in this collection attempts something more specific than speculative generalisation about the future. It proposes a measure whereby the private sector, hopefully in tandem with the public sector, could take the Karoo's 'space' *leitmotif* to another level. The paper proposes that the Karoo is well suited to the construction of a spaceport.

Space tourism is arguably poised to become the most *avant garde* tourism niche. With the widely anticipated launch of commercial suborbital space travel in the near future, it is finally set to come into its own after decades of frustration. This article outlines the history of space tourism and describes how suborbital space travel differs from conventional space exploration. A key distinction is made between a space industry funded primarily by the public sector, and an industry that derives its revenues from the tourism-driven 'space experience economy'.

Recent legislation in the USA has paved the way for a space economy which is answerable to the dictates of private enterprise – hence the 'Copernican shift' in how space tourism is being conceptualised. The erosion of the hegemony exerted by traditional space industry players, such as NASA, has encouraged many high-profile private entrepreneurs to invest heavily in what amounts to a new space race – namely that of being first to market with a viable, safe, suborbital space tourism offering. One of the concomitants of the shift is the number of spaceports that is being constructed worldwide.

This article argues that it is inevitable that southern Africa will come to require a custom-built spaceport and that the Great Karoo is ideally endowed to host such a facility. This should profoundly affect the development of tourism in the arid interior and holds out encouraging possibilities for socio-economic upliftment in the region. The article claims that South Africa could, by imaginatively leveraging the various capitals already committed to the Karoo 'space' motif by the creative class, begin to benefit more extensively from these.

# *The Copernican Shift in Space Tourism and its Implications for Tourism in the Great Karoo<sup>7</sup>*

## **Introduction**

Space tourism publications have been increasing at an exponential rate since 2002. This is largely due to the excitement being generated by the prospect of the first commercial suborbital flights, now provisionally scheduled for 2011 or 2012 (Branson 2010; Schreck 2010). Since 2004 huge investment has poured into the space tourism industry (Belfiore 2007; Kemp 2007; Bizony 2009; Branson 2010; Space Tourism Society 2010).

This article seeks to show that there has been a sea-change in the way space tourism is conceptualised. It is argued that the implications of this could profoundly improve the prospects for high net-worth tourism in southern Africa. This is because the sub-continent is eminently well suited to exploit the comparative advantage, over its northern counterparts, of what might be termed the southern skies' 'celestial capital'. But for South Africa to benefit from the recent 'Copernican shift' in thinking about space tourism it needs to have a spaceport and the article proceeds to argue that it would be unthinkable for South Africa *not* to acquire one in due course. The high-lying areas of the Great Karoo meet the physical and climatic criteria for such a facility which could either be privately funded or consist of a public-private partnership (PPP).

Because this is a relatively novel topic the paper first provides some background to the recent fanfare generated by the nascent space tourism industry. It also details some of the obstacles facing the industry before exploring how a local spaceport might redound to the benefit of Karoo tourism enterprises and communities.

---

<sup>7</sup> Ingle, M.K. 2011. The Copernican Shift in Space Tourism and its Implications for Tourism in the Great Karoo, *South African Geographical Journal* 93(1):104-118.

## Space tourism – genesis

The first recorded mention of space tourism appears to date from 1967 when Baron Hilton, president of the Hilton Hotel Corporation, presented a paper to the American Astronautical Society entitled, appropriately enough, 'Hotels in Space'. It was Hilton's thesis that 'there will be space travellers... and where there are travellers there must be Hiltons' (Spencer 2004: 160).

On July 20 1969 America landed the first men on the Moon. Smith (2005: 19) says that there was 'no doubt in anyone's mind that by 2001 there [would] be bases on the Moon... and mass space tourism'. This perception had been given considerable impetus by Stanley Kubrick's seminal science fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, released in 1968. This work exerted a formative influence on many young minds (Belfiore, 2007; Kemp, 2007) and it is frequently cited as an inspiration in the space literature. The stage musical, *Hair*, proclaimed 'the dawning of the Age of Aquarius'. In keeping with the prevailing *zeitgeist*, Pan Am Airways announced that it intended to build spacecraft with the help of the USA's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The company sold tickets to some 90 000 prospective space tourists to fly them to the Moon and back (Klerkx 2004; Otto 2008).

But in the decades that followed, these heady aspirations seemed fated to remain in the realm of speculative fantasy and by the mid-1970s a measure of cynicism had crept into the public's attitude towards space travel (Klerkx 2004; Spencer 2004). The manned space programme had begun 'its long, slow slide into a bureaucratic morass from which [many feared] it might never recover' (Belfiore 2007: 3). This sense of inertia was corroborated by Kemp (2007: 6) who observed in 2007 that 'not a single human has left Earth's gravitational pull since 1972'. In effect, by beating the Russians in the race to the Moon - a race which many now believe may have been misguided on account of the opportunity costs involved (Weil 2002; Smith 2005; Van Pelt 2005; Kemp 2007) - NASA found itself in the position of the dog that caught the bus. Too closely engaged with sterile Cold War politics (Kemp 2007), and constrained by turf wars and an

ever less forthcoming Treasury, NASA retreated into an ivory tower of insularity and defensiveness (Ferris 2004; Klerkx 2004).

Space exploration came to be perceived by the tax-paying public as an expensive indulgence, the preserve of big government and remote, faceless scientists in white coats. This was a far remove from the glamour and exhilaration that had been conjured up in the halcyon days of the late 1960s (Belfiore 2007; Kemp 2007). There is a certain irony to this outcome, however, because as Klerkx (2004: 212) observes, 'NASA's original 1958 charter specifically directs the agency to "seek and encourage, to the maximum extent possible, the fullest commercial use of space"'. Clearly this could have incorporated developing the potential for mass space tourism. Instead space tourism advocates found themselves marginalised and, up until at least 1996, mocked by both NASA and the mainstream media (Spencer 2004; Belfiore 2007).

### **Space travel – suborbital and orbital**

Although wide definitions of space tourism bring 'earth-based simulations, tours and entertainment experiences' (Spencer 2004: 62) within their ambit, this article's focus is on suborbital space flight. Because this mode of space travel holds out the promise of mass participation, and because it is on the point of being realised in actuality (Belfiore 2007; Kemp 2007; Branson 2010), it is of especial salience for tourism development in southern Africa.

A suborbital flight is typically of about two hours duration and describes 'a journey that leaves the Earth's atmosphere and enters space [upwards of an altitude of 100 km] but does not reach the speeds required for continuous orbiting of the planet' (Anderson 2005: 72). As a matter of fact this altitude was reached (at Mach 6.7) by the American X-15 rocket-powered jet in 1963 (Otto 2008) but development of the craft was subsequently dropped in favour of the Apollo missions to the Moon (Kemp 2007). Suborbital travel should be distinguished from other commercially available options such as the Boeing 727's 'zero-gravity' flights (originally devised for training cosmonauts), and the 30-minute 'edge-of-space' flights offered aboard MiG-25 Foxbats. The latter ascend to a height of 25 kilometres, which is sufficient to view the

curvature of the Earth, and can travel above Mach 2.5 which is two and a half times the speed of sound (Weil 2002; Anderson 2005).

Until very recently, however, the media spotlight, apropos of space tourism, has been on full-fledged orbital travel. When Dennis Tito paid US\$18-million for a berth on a Russian Soyuz 'Taxi mission' to the International Space Station (ISS) in June 2000 he was popularly credited with being the first space tourist (Anderson 2005). The cost of his ticket served to pay 'the salaries of more than ten thousand Russian space workers for at least a year' (Anderson 2005: 8) much to NASA's chagrin (Klerkx 2004; Van Pelt 2005). This fabulous amount, coupled with Tito's having had to undergo six months of rigorous training in preparation for his stay aboard the ISS, suggests that dubbing Tito a 'tourist' was perhaps something of a public-relations misrepresentation (Kemp 2007). One senses that the space tourism lobby had waited so long, and so expectantly, for something of this nature to occur that it could not resist capitalising on the publicity generated by the sum of money involved, and claiming Tito as one of its own (Spencer 2004). Although Tito was happy to go along with the tourist ascription, his successors, notably the second space tourist Mark Shuttleworth, were not. Shuttleworth, because he was going to be conducting scientific experiments for South African research institutes while on board the ISS, deprecated what he saw as the frivolous connotations of 'tourist' and preferred that his designation be that of Flight Participant (Van Pelt 2005).

Russia subsequently came under mounting pressure from its ISS partners who were uncomfortable with its willingness to sell off its allotted berths to the ISS. An American senator likened the practice to 'pimping' (Klerkx 2004: 190). It must be granted that referring to an experience which only a handful of ultra-wealthy individuals can afford, as 'tourism', is something of a definitional stretch.

Another projected form of orbital space tourism is the space hotel concept being developed by companies like Spacehab (Spencer 2004) and Bigelow Aerospace (Anderson 2005; Belfiore 2007). Although the notion of space hotels still strikes many people as outlandish, if not downright bizarre, plans for the realisation of Baron Hilton's 1967 dream are well advanced (O'Neill 2000; Anderson 2004; Van Pelt 2005; Belfiore 2007; Seedhouse 2008; Branson 2010).

It should also be borne in mind that the ISS research facility is itself a prototype space hotel (Klerkx 2004; Pruthi 2005).

### **The Copernican shift in space tourism**

The beginnings of a breakthrough in easing NASA's apparent stranglehold on the space industry came in 1998 when then-president Bill Clinton signed the Commercial Space Act (CSA) into law. This 'required NASA to demonstrate progress in fostering commercial opportunities for the International Space Station and to commit to studying options for privatising the space shuttle' (Klerkx 2004: 238). The CSA (sec. 101) specifically states that: 'competitive markets create the most efficient conditions for promoting economic development, and should therefore govern the economic development of Earth orbital space'. The Act goes on to require the 'fullest possible engagement of commercial providers and participation of commercial users' in what it terms the 'promotion of commercial space opportunities' (United States of America 1998). NASA thus found itself being enjoined by law to give effect to the spirit of its 1958 charter. The CSA also marked the beginnings of the clearing of the regulatory undergrowth that would be necessary before space could be successfully opened up to private enterprise. Hudgins (2002) and Banner (2008) provide accounts of some of the regulatory complexities, albeit that Banner's primary focus is on the cognate field of aviation. By way of example, the CSA 'made it legal for commercial space vehicles to reenter Earth's atmosphere and return space payloads to American territory. Prior to this provision, any commercial reusable launch vehicle in America could go up, but it couldn't legally come down' (Klerkx 2004: 239).

These changes to America's domestic legislation have no bearing on outer space which remains a global commons. It is difficult to see that this will ever change. Attempts by the two erstwhile superpowers, Russia and the USA in the 1950s and 1960s, to assert some form of sovereignty over space arose out of a Cold War sense of mutual paranoia but all came to naught as being intrinsically unenforceable. As Banner (2008: 286) avers, nowadays 'it is hard to imagine what all the fuss was about'. Insofar then as space is subject to any kind of international agreement, this is still 'governed by the customary law that... was ratified by the Outer Space Treaty of

1967' which was 'signed by almost every nation in the world' (Banner 2008: 285, 287). This treaty (which has the status of international law) declares that: 'outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means'. Outer space should not, however, be used for military ends although this is very difficult to police effectively, especially with regard to satellite activity, given that 'freedom of scientific investigation' is mandated by the treaty (Banner 2008: 285). Suborbital space tourism is therefore not constrained by issues of sovereignty in space. As a matter of interest this also applies to satellites – hence the unwelcome intrusiveness, to some, of Google Earth (MacFarlane 2008). An attempt in 1976 by several equatorial nations to assert sovereignty over segments of the geosynchronous orbit, 36 000km above the equator, was roundly rejected by the United Nations' Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and has never been revisited subsequently (Banner 2008) .

Russia had in fact been hosting paying space tourists (a Japanese journalist in 1990 and a British scientist in 1991) well before Dennis Tito made the headlines and concern began to mount in America that if there *was* to be a space tourism industry then Russia was going 'to run away with it' (Klerkz 2004: 209). In 2002 Buzz Aldrin, the second man to step out onto the Moon's surface and a tireless campaigner for opening up space to the public (Klerkx 2004; Aldrin 2009), co-authored a seminal paper entitled 'Changing the Space Paradigm: Space tourism and the future of space travel' (Aldrin and Jones 2002). This article passionately (and presciently) articulated the need for what amounts to a Copernican shift in space tourism (it was Nicolaus Copernicus who found that the Earth revolved around the Sun and not *vice versa*).

In essence the authors argued that tourism should no longer be conceived of as a parasitic, downstream concomitant of space exploration but rather that tourism should be leveraged as the primary driver onto which the more traditional space activities could be 'piggy-backed' – 'the high-volume travel requirements associated with tourism can drive the evolution of civil space transportation to the next level of operational efficiency' (Aldrin and Jones 2002: 177). In other words space tourism should cease to be regarded as the handmaiden of imperatives imposed by space exploration. And this in those imperatives' own best interests. For them to remain viable, they were going to have to be *subordinated* to the requirements of space tourism.



Although the enormous sums paid for tickets aboard the Soyuz suggest that, in Russia at least, space tourism of a sort had already begun funding space exploration, the fact remains that the touristic component of these trips was an add-on, a lucrative afterthought. Similarly, MiG-25 Foxbats, for example, were not designed with joyrides for tourists in mind. The touristic component was purely incidental and had to play second fiddle to the aura of scientific *gravitas* exuded by the space industry. What Aldrin and Jones were advocating, therefore, was a complete reversal of this polarity. They recognised that volumes in the satellite launch market (about 100 launches per year worldwide) were too low to 'justify development costs for even the least costly new vehicles' and that what was needed was an 'explosion of demand for the payload market' in order to achieve economies of scale. ('Payload' refers to whatever it is, human or inanimate, that is being transported into space and is expressed in kilograms). As they put it: 'Space tourism has emerged as the only viable market with the potential to generate the high-volume traffic (i.e., revenues) needed to justify the investment required to significantly reduce the unit cost of space access' (Aldrin and Jones 2002: 180). Re-usability of craft would be key to any such strategy (Aldrin and Jones 2002; Van Pelt 2005).

The following section describes a turning point in how the private sector came finally to seize the space industry initiative from the monolithic institutions clustered around NASA. This subtle shift in the balance of power heralded the arrival of what came to be loosely referred to in some quarters as the humanisation, democratisation or privatisation of space (Hudgins 2002; Belfiore 2007). 'Humanisation' because a human face was conferred on the industry via the media; 'democratisation' because space travel was (in theory anyway) opened up to the ordinary citizen; 'privatisation' because private investments came to be overtly solicited by the industry. Investment would come to be directed to building spacecraft tailored to the needs of fare-paying tourists, with other functions tending to feature only as secondary, value-added considerations. Henceforth space tourism would cease to be quite so in thrall to the vicissitudes and whims of the space bureaucracy. In this way a *public* good would come to be funded, indirectly, by a *private* good.

## A defining moment in the history of space travel

Beginning in the mid-1990s, considerable disquiet began to be expressed about the cul-de-sac into which the space industry (as represented by NASA) seemed to have manoeuvred itself (Weinberg 2004). The following is typical of the kind of impatience that was being expressed:

Since using throw-away rockets is so expensive, the agencies should stop spending huge amounts of taxpayers' money on non-urgent activities, developing and using expendable launch vehicles. These vehicles are a dead end... the launch industry must be the most old fashioned in the world. Is there any other industry that still uses vehicles designed 40 years ago?... we need fully reusable launch vehicles, designed for repeated use like commercial aircraft (Pruthi 2005: 37).

The analogy with commercial aircraft was a telling one. How far would the aviation industry have progressed if it had been restricted to aircraft that had to be discarded after every flight? (see Berinstein 2002; Weil 2002; Klerkx 2004; Spencer 2004; Weinberg 2004; Pruthi 2005; Van Pelt 2005; Belfiore 2007 and Kemp 2007 for extensive treatments of the general disenchantment with NASA's technological progress).

The decisive moment in the opening up of space to mass tourism only came in 2004 with the winning of the celebrated Ansari X Prize, first mooted in 1996 (Belfiore 2007). Space enthusiast Peter Diamandis had been deeply taken with Charles Lindbergh's book *The Spirit of St. Louis*. He was impressed by how Lindbergh, along with the entire early aviation industry, had been incentivised by a series of prizes that were put up, generally by newspapers, for feats such as the first solo flight across the Atlantic (Belfiore 2007). Not himself a wealthy individual, Diamandis lobbied for support from the private sector to offer a substantial prize (US\$10-million) for the first company to develop a spacecraft to take three people to an altitude of at least 100km *without any government funding or assistance*; return safely to base; and repeat the feat within two weeks using the same aircraft (Belfiore 2007; Diamandis 2007).

These stipulations (the rider about government involvement was clearly intended to send a pointed message) posed daunting aeronautical challenges but they were taken up with gusto by a number of private operators. Of the total of 29 formal entrants, one was the co-founder of Microsoft, Paul Allen, who put up US\$30-million for Burt Rutan's Scaled Composites company to design and develop a winning solution (Kemp 2007; Branson 2010).

The gripping account (featuring South African test pilot Mike Melvill) of how the Ansari X-Prize was eventually won in 2004 (Belfiore 2007 and Kemp 2007 provide graphic descriptions) cannot unfortunately be relayed here. Suffice it to say that the winning designer, Burt Rutan, wanted to start the first commercial spaceline and that securing the X-Prize provided the motivation to give effect to his ambitions. Virgin CEO Richard Branson was present, 'pen poised over checkbook', to witness the winning craft, SpaceShipOne, make its second (and therefore decisive) landing (Belfiore 2007: 102). Branson negotiated a deal with Allen and Rutan. The commercial launch of Virgin Galactic (VG) was announced in September 2004 (Kemp 2007; Branson 2010). 'The world's perception of spaceflight changed forever' and capital came flooding in to the industry (Belfiore 2007: 109-12). Henceforth 'space tourism would not just be a nice spin-off... but would actually be an enabler for all sorts of new opportunities' (Van Pelt 2005: 8). The Copernican shift in space tourism was finally underway.

### **Virgin Galactic's suborbital offering**

In essence VG's suborbital flight consists of a 'mother ship' (*WhiteKnightTwo*) which carries a smaller craft (dubbed the *SpaceShipTwo*), tucked underneath it, up to a height of around 25km. Here it disengages the 8-seater sub-craft (two pilots and six passengers) to fire its rocket engines which carry it to just beyond the 100km mark – the so-called Kármán line. Then 'the motor shuts down and the spaceship coasts into space for a few minutes' describing a parabola as it responds to the forces of microgravity (Kemp 2007: 131). Passengers undo their safety belts and experience five minutes or so of weightlessness in an ethereal, 'whisper-quiet realm' (Kemp 2007: 110). It is reported that some people may undergo profound psychological or spiritual experiences at this point (Belfiore 2007; Kemp 2007; Mitchell 2008). The pilots then activate

SpaceShipTwo's 'angel wings', where 'the ship splits itself in half' to facilitate the critical re-entry phase (Belfiore 2007: 109). The spacecraft descends from its apogee and re-enters the Earth's atmosphere – a progression from absolute silence through an ever more insistent rain-like susurrus until it sounds, and feels, as though the craft is in the grip of a powerful waterfall's flow (Kemp 2007). During this time passengers will experience 'above 4 Gs for around 20 seconds, peaking at 6 G for... a couple of seconds', a 'G' being the force of gravity (Kemp 2007: 238). Initially the craft drifts down to Earth as though it were a giant feather or shuttlecock, until the pilots glide it into base. Hackneyed superlatives like 'the experience of a lifetime' seem warranted under the circumstances.

### **Market readiness and cost factors**

Market research points to interest in space travel, worldwide, being very strong (Berinstein 2002; Klerkx 2004; Belfiore 2007; Kemp 2007; Otto 2008; Seedhouse 2008). Van Pelt (2005: 5), for instance, reports that 'preliminary market surveys indicate that the number of people willing to spend serious money on an opportunity to orbit the Earth is huge' although as Duval (2005: 217) cautions 'interest does not always translate into purchase'. Be that as it may, VG is unlikely to have committed US\$120-million to developing and building the SpaceShipTwo fleet without having done its homework (Belfiore 2007; Kemp 2007; Otto 2008; Branson 2010). The company claimed, in 2007, to have registered some 65 000 people across the world as 'future astronauts' (Kemp 2007: 206). No one doubts that the potential market is massive but it is also recognised that prices will have to drop substantially to sustain the industry (Branson 2010).

The Futron Corporation (consultants to VG) envisages economies of scale resulting in a fairly rapid reduction of the price to about US\$40 000 (Kemp 2007; IOL Travel 2009) and ultimately to around US\$10 000 (Seedhouse 2008). Analogously, albeit that it is an extreme case, an annual internet subscription cost around one million US dollars in 1990, but by 2005 had fallen to \$240 (Seedhouse 2008). Although it appears that VG will be 'first to market' there are any number of other companies on the verge of launching their own offerings (Belfiore 2007; Kemp 2007; Otto 2008; Seedhouse 2008; Branson 2010) and this will also exert strong downward pressure on

pricing structures as competition begins to make itself felt. Some of these suborbital alternatives are of a different pedigree altogether. For example, the UK's Starchaser company is developing reusable rocket technology involving the use of traditional space capsules (Kemp 2007). Jeff Bezos (founder of Amazon.com and CEO of Blue Origin) is developing a top-secret spaceship at his private spaceport in Texas (Belfiore 2007). SpaceX, owned by South African expatriate Elon Musk (the founder of PayPal), recently hosted American president Barack Obama at the successful test launch of its Falcon 9 rocket designed to take tourists into orbit 250km above the Earth. Significantly enough, Obama's acclaimed 'new vision for space flight' is reported as being for commercial companies to supplant NASA's role in getting US astronauts into orbit (Philp 2010).

As far as is known, no market research of a comparable nature to that outlined above has been conducted in South Africa. Informal internet polls on South Africa's News24.com websites have however yielded similarly positive outcomes to those reported from America, the UK, Germany and Japan (News24.com 2008). But the domestic market is almost certainly far too small to sustain a viable space tourism industry predicated on local demand. A key question is how many of those polled in the North would be prepared to travel to southern Africa as a base from which to fly, to view the Earth? The 100km altitude that suborbital flights ascend to is not nearly high enough to view the Earth *in its totality* and according to Kemp (2007: 217), 'Seeing New Mexico... from [suborbital] space is very different from seeing Sweden, the North Pole or Europe'. What this means is that, unlike with orbital tourism, one suborbital space trip does not exhaust the visual perspectives one can obtain of the Earth. Marketing the South is therefore less likely to run aground on the 'been there, done that' factor. Futron believes that space tourism will significantly stimulate conventional *inter-national* tourism on Earth as repeat-travellers opt to view the planet from different locales. This is already being borne out by Swedish travel agencies' experiences with marketing VG flights scheduled to begin in 2012 from Spaceport Sweden at Kiruna (IOL Travel 2009; Spaceport Sweden 2010). An online poll of 998 respondents, conducted by Spaceport Associates in 2006, revealed that 48 percent were willing to go anywhere in the world to fly (Seedhouse 2008).

The question arises as to what sort of volumes might be involved. This is contingent upon many variables but, insofar as VG may be allowed to function as a benchmark, the company is initially targeting about seven percent (8.2-million) of US households (Kemp 2007). According to Burt Rutan, speaking for VG, 'once the revenue business begins it will likely fly as many as five hundred astronauts the first year. By the fifth year the rate will increase to about three thousand astronauts per year and by the twelfth year of operations fifty to a hundred thousand astronauts' will have been flown in total (Kemp 2007: 168). This indicates, on a conservative view, an average of about 4000 customers a year. At present capacity this would involve roughly 700 flights per annum, or two to three a day depending on prevailing conditions. Futron projects 16 000 passengers a year for its client by 2021 entailing revenues of around US\$786-million per annum (Seedhouse 2008).

### **Safety and the risk factor**

Eric Anderson (2005: 12), president of Space Adventures, notes that 'by our very nature, [we] have an innate need to explore the unknown. Yes, we can be afraid, but we are not fearful creatures'. There are numerous hazards associated with suborbital flight and the industry is acutely aware of these (Anderson 2005; Comins 2007; Marks 2008; Otto 2008). Yet, in a very real sense the heightened risk factor is a part of the thrill (Duval 2005; Seedhouse 2008). Recreational tourism often follows in the wake of intrepid pioneers who impart confidence to those who 'wait and see' (the histories of mountaineering or of hot-air ballooning are cases in point). This is a psychological dynamic (Macfarlane 2008) that entrepreneurs such as Thomas Cook (and latterly, Richard Branson) have been fully alive to (Branson 2007; Murray 2008). Customer confidence is understandably brittle in the very early stages of a perceived novelty but can grow with astonishing rapidity. All eyes will be on Richard Branson (who is notorious for 'putting his money where his mouth is') for the maiden SpaceShipTwo flight when he intends being accompanied by his aged parents, along with his two children and Burt Rutan, the spacecraft designer (Belfiore 2007; Branson 2007). If anything should go seriously wrong this will be a huge setback although VG is far more worried about a 'cowboy venture' having a serious accident thereby tarnishing the entire industry (Belfiore 2007; Kemp 2007).

Richard Holmes (2008: 141, 145) relates the suicidal enthusiasm with which the 'recklessly dangerous' pastime of hot-air ballooning was first indulged in: '... [by] 1784, the second year of the great balloon craze, no fewer than 181 manned ascents had been recorded, mostly in France and England'. In similar vein, bystanders at the Chicago World Fair in 1893 stormed the first-ever Ferris wheel (America's answer to the Eiffel Tower) on its first pilot revolution. The spectators 'emboldened by seeing passengers [the draftsmen and engineers] in the first car, had leaped into the next car, ignoring shouts to stay back'. The public clambered aboard until all the cars were full to overflowing. The wheel rose to a height of 264 feet. Instead of a passenger complement of six the wheel now carried an untested load of over 100 souls. Nobody knew how the wheel might respond or, indeed, how people would get down if the wheel's engines should seize up. No structure of this kind had ever been subjected to such stresses before, and loose nuts and bolts came raining down on the passengers as the wheel revolved. Notwithstanding this, such was the surge of people demanding to ride that the wheel was left to run continuously until nightfall (Larson 2003: 302-4).

There seems no good reason to believe that, in this age of *extreme* sports and travel (Belfiore 2007), people are any more risk-averse than were their forebears. Indeed, advance demand for the initial suborbital flights suggests a distinct appetite for danger (Kemp 2007). There will almost certainly be accidents as the industry is in the process of maturing (Anderson 2005). But there is a tacit understanding amongst would-be space travellers that: 'We can't reap the benefits of science without accepting some risks – the best we can do is minimise them' (Rees 2008: 43). Those who are now clamouring to be ahead of the pack in getting to space (and who are paying a premium for the privilege) are well aware that they are also offering themselves up as guinea pigs in the cause of what is still a grand scientific gamble (Kemp 2007; Seedhouse 2008). This is in keeping with Morgan and Pritchard's (2004: 60-1) contention that wealthy tourists' choices are increasingly determined by the need to make 'lifestyle statements' and to buy 'into an emotional relationship... with high conversational and celebrity value'. This suggests that the risk component inherent in suborbital space tourism (before it becomes routinised) has rendered it a highly saleable commodity. For one thing the 'conversational capital' arising out of this form of 'group membership' (Morgan, *et al.* 2004: 4) is likely to prove quite inexhaustible.

Industry players find themselves in something of a regulatory dilemma however. On the one hand they want regulations enforced to keep irresponsible operators at bay but, on the other hand, having recently disentangled themselves from inhibiting legislative prohibitions, they want 'to minimise the regulatory burden required for space-launch activities' (Kemp 2007: 175). In terms of the Commercial Space Launch Amendments Act of 2004 it was envisaged to 'give regulatory authority over human flight to the Federal Aviation Administration's Office of Commercial Space Transportation'. According to Spencer (2004: 41) this 'is considered a milestone in supporting the efforts of space entrepreneurs to invest in new rockets and to fly those vehicles'. Just as the internet has posed numerous new challenges for legislators (Howkins 2007), space tourism is going to have to grapple with a number of regulatory issues for which there is little or no precedent (Hudgins 2002; Marks 2008; Seedhouse 2008).

### **Spaceport specifications**

A spaceport is the space industry's equivalent of the typical airport used by commercial airlines but with customised characteristics that differentiate it from normal airports. According to Kemp (2007: 152) there are a number of basic prerequisites for a spaceport. Restricted airspace 'from the ground to infinity' is needed in order to secure an unobstructed pathway into orbit. High elevation is desirable as this reduces fuel costs for vertical rockets, such as satellite launchers, and increases payload capacity (Virgin Galactic's spaceport in New Mexico is at an elevation of about 1600 metres). The nearer a site is to the equator, the better, although this is less of a requirement for suborbital spacecraft. Spaceports should be sited where the surrounds are sparsely populated so as to minimize insurance and risk. The surrounds should also be considered ineligible for appreciable development in the future (Belfiore 2007). A high predominance of clear bright days is required in order to ensure reliability of launch schedules as is dry air to minimise corrosion. Finally, an anchor tenant should be secured in the interests of commercial sustainability.



A further requirement (and one which might tend to rule out some developing countries) is for the spaceport to be located in 'a stable country with rational and enabling laws'. A spaceport feasibility study was conducted in South Africa by a firm of American consultants some years ago but it is not known what the findings were (Finger 2006).

VG's custom-built spaceport in New Mexico (Spaceport America), designed specifically for the tourist trade, is budgeted for at around US\$250-million (Belfiore 2007; Kemp 2007). This is a modest sum in the grand scheme of things for such a strategic investment (compared for instance to the price tag accompanying certain items of military hardware) with good prospects for being recouped and for generating returns. In New Mexico's case the money is being secured through a mix of local and federal funds but spaceports are well-suited to public-private partnerships and, indeed, there seems no compelling reason why the capital funding for such a facility could not be raised via the stock exchange.

### **Potential implications for tourism in the Great Karoo**

It is arguably a sign of the times that the African Union (AU) has approved a feasibility study 'for the creation of an African Space Agency' to 'rival NASA' and that 'the International Astronomical Union (IAU) recently awarded Cape Town its Global Astronomy for Development office to help take astronomy to the developing world' (Smith 2010). In keeping with these developments it should be acknowledged that South Africa's Great Karoo is exceptionally well placed to meet with the spaceport requirements listed in the previous section. According to Belfiore (2007: 220):

Localities... around the world are doing their best to attract the emerging commercial spaceflight business. To some places with plenty of open space – in the middle of nowhere, in other words, and typically left behind by traditional businesses – spaceports look like economic salvation. Locales in Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Sweden, and Scotland all hope to host spaceports in the near future [while] in the United States,

New Mexico, Wisconsin, Florida, California, Virginia and Texas all play host to embryonic commercial spaceports.

There are already functioning spaceports in Alaska, Australia and Kazakhstan (Anderson 2004) and Israel, Brazil, China, Russia, India, Japan and the Ukraine all have 'commercial launch services' (Kemp 2007: 173). As Kemp (2007: 163) remarks, referring to VG's underground custom-built tourist spaceport being built near the town of Truth or Consequences in New Mexico, 'the New Mexican wave is only just beginning'.

Given the international trend, it is surely a foregone conclusion that southern Africa will, in due course, be able to lay claim to its own commercial spaceport. It is just a matter of time before inter-continental suborbital travel between spaceports becomes routine (Belfiore 2007; Kemp 2007; Seedhouse 2008; Branson 2010) and it would be galling indeed if southern Africa could only be viewed from space by tourists *en route* to a spaceport somewhere else in the world. No less compelling is the thought that the sub-continent's first dedicated spaceport should ideally be sited within the more elevated part of the Karoo which falls within the Northern Cape. But even if the spaceport were built elsewhere in the country, the Northern Cape's stock of 'astronomical capital' is such that it stands to benefit handsomely from a much increased flow of high net-worth tourists with an interest in all things astronomical.

This capital arises out of the fact that astronomy has a very distinguished legacy in the Cape which dates back to the establishment of the first Observatory in 1820 (Warner 1979). John Herschel's celebrated mapping of the southern skies in the 1830s (Evans, *et al.*, 1969; Buttmann 1970) was instrumental in precipitating 'the most widely circulated newspaper story of the era' (Goodman 2008: 11-3) when it was reported, erroneously, that Herschel had claimed to find life on the Moon. Herschel was generous in his praise of the marvellous clarity of the Cape air and its night skies and Fairall (2006: 5) says of the Karoo, 'That is where we astronomers migrate to when we want to study the stars nowadays'. The Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) at Sutherland and the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) bid with its MeerKAT (Karoo Array Telescope) prototype north-west of Carnarvon (Brits 2008; Van Gass 2009) have all combined to help brand the Great Karoo as South Africa's astro-tourism heartland (Ingle 2010). Van Rooyen

(2007) reports that the average number of visitors to the SALT site was 865 a month in 2006 and Sutherland now has in excess of 25 guesthouses compared with just two 10 years ago. Some of these offer advanced telescopic facilities of their own and cater for up to 200 stargazers at a time. Prince Albert has its own observatory and then are many venues besides Sutherland offering a wide variety of astronomically denominated activities and attractions (Ingle 2008).

Many varieties of niche tourism are also likely to benefit from synergies with the increased levels of business and touristic activity centred on a spaceport. Conference tourism, research tourism, transport tourism, palaeo-tourism, geo-tourism and photographic tourism are just a few that immediately suggest themselves (Novelli 2005) and which are all present in the Karoo (Ingle 2008). A spokesperson for Spaceport Sweden, operating from Kiruna, says that the town:

... is already a magnet for wildlife and adventure tourists eager to see natural phenomena like the Northern Lights and the Midnight Sun, stay at the nearby Ice Hotel, or set off on ski, dog sleigh or snow scooter trips... we expect that if one person in a family that comes up here wants to fly into space, maybe the other family members will sign up for other experiences (IOL Travel 2009).

Precisely the same logic should inform South Africans' spaceport preparations. It is unlikely that tourists will come to the country simply to jet into space and then immediately leave for home (Bizony 2008). Once in the country they could be encouraged to explore the terrain they view from space, the more especially seeing as they will have travelled a long way down to get to South Africa. It would be of inestimable value to tourism in the relatively underdeveloped Karoo to be able to draw these affluent visitors, even temporarily, up onto the escarpment and into the interior, away from the coastal 'hot spots' they tend to congregate in.

Reference was made earlier to Morgan and Pritchard's (2004) assertion that affluent tourists seek, through their touristic choices, to enter into 'an emotional relationship' arising out of that choice. Suborbital flying, by all accounts, stimulates what humanistic psychologists refer to as 'peak experiences' (Maslow 1971) and such experiences typically lead to very powerful bonds being created with the context or environment within which they occur. It may be anticipated

then that many space tourists will emerge from the terrain which offered them a platform for their peak experience having forged intense emotional associations with that environment. Branson (2007) himself provides an iconic example having, as he says, developed a singular attachment to South Africa.

If a steady flow of high net-worth individuals can be induced, via peak experiences brought on by spaceport flights, to find themselves in an emotional relationship with the Great Karoo then there should be considerable economic opportunity generated for the region. At the very least this ought to help in achieving what is a cardinal goal for all tourism enterprises - to keep the customer coming back for more.

The usages of spaceports and suborbital spacecraft go very far beyond simply taking humans into space however and there are numerous collateral benefits to be derived in the fields of education, medicine, agriculture, the environment, entertainment, telecommunications, and defence (Klerkx 2004; CSIR, 2008; *Economist*, 2008; Mhlahlo 2010). It is beyond the scope of this article to explore these but the fact is that it is the touristic dimension that will make many of these benefits more attainable. VG, for example, has contracted to perform experiments for America's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) while transporting space tourists, and it is also now engaged to conduct pilot and astronaut training (*Economist* 2008). A study conducted by the New Mexico State University on the economic effects of the state's new spaceport found that New Mexico 'could see \$991.45 million to \$1.2 billion in accumulated economic impact in the spaceport's fifth year of operation, which would include up to \$357.21 million in earnings and support 2871 jobs' (Belfiore 2007: 239).

These clusters of benefits should lead to quality of life enhancements for those who are in any way associated with local space economies (*The Times*, 2009; Mhlahlo 2010) even if this involvement extends to no more than their physical proximity to sites of activity (Bizony 2008). It is not therefore fanciful of government to hold out the prospect of space science also serving to reduce poverty (cf. DST 2007).

In their turn the kinds of spin-off benefits associated with a clustering of space-related activities should exert economic multiplier effects from which the tourism industry as a whole can only stand to gain. As an example, what Visser (2003: 116) has identified as the 'perpetuation of an uneven tourism space economy' is likely to be profoundly affected by the reconfiguration of tourist flows that a spaceport's siting in the middle of the sub-continent will entail. This could help more evenly to distribute the undue concentration of tourists on the Cape Peninsula, for example.

As suborbital travel becomes mainstreamed, and as was the case with the Information Technology (IT) industry, hitherto unforeseen applications are likely to arise and these will influence the future agenda for space technology. For the foreseeable future, however, those entrepreneurs should do very well who are astute enough to capitalise on the new commercial opportunities suborbital space tourism promises to deliver.

## **Conclusion**

The advent of suborbital space tourism represents a promising new departure which South Africa's thinly populated, arid Karoo seems particularly well placed to benefit from - especially should it host the continent's first spaceport. This article has sought to outline the history of space tourism and to show how it has 'come in from the cold', so to speak, as a result of a number of recent developments. Chief amongst these has been a Copernican shift, on the part of the American government and its space bureaucracy, as to how future space exploration should be financed. What this change in outlook amounts to is the explicit acknowledgement that, if the space industry is to survive, it must wean itself off tax revenues and align itself more closely with private enterprise in the form of space tourism - the 'space experience economy' (Space Tourism Society 2010). This realisation has prompted new legislation which seeks to return NASA to the spirit of its founding Charter where the agency was directed to maximise the commercial use of space. The sea-change in attitude towards breaking up the hegemony exerted by traditional space industry players has encouraged many high-profile private entrepreneurs to invest heavily in what amounts to a new space race - namely that of being first to market with a

viable, safe, suborbital space tourism offering. At the time of writing Virgin Galactic looks set to lead the way with its SpaceShipTwo scheduled for commercial operations in 2011 or 2012. Extensive market research points to good sustainable demand for suborbital travel but this new generation of spacecraft cannot operate from conventional airports. In anticipation of rapid growth in suborbital travel and associated markets, commercial enterprises and countries around the world are positioning themselves to benefit by constructing spaceports of their own.

Spaceports have a number of very specific requirements due to the specialised nature of suborbital flight. It is noted that Virgin Galactic has chosen the American state of New Mexico as the site for its first custom-built spaceport. In almost all respects conditions in South Africa's Karoo mirror those found in New Mexico. It seems anomalous that Africa should continue to be the only continent without a spaceport. This is especially so given the interest expressed by the AU in space exploration and the fact that South Africa, on account of its strong astronomical profile, is a leading contender for the award of the prestigious SKA bid. This article has implied that a feasibility study for a spaceport in the Karoo is warranted. Such a facility would significantly boost tourism flows in the region as well as exert a beneficial effect on education and socio-economic upliftment.

## References

Aldrin, B., 2009. *Magnificent desolation: the long journey home from the Moon*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Aldrin, B. and Jones, R., 2002. Changing the space paradigm: space tourism and the future of space travel. In: E.L. Hudgins, ed, *Space: the free-market frontier*. Washington: Cato Institute, 177-192.

Anderson, E., 2005. *The space tourist's handbook: where to go, what to see, and how to prepare for the ride of your life*. Philadelphia: Quirk Books.

Banner, S., 2008. *Who owns the sky?* Cambridge (USA): Harvard University Press.

Belfiore, M., 2007. *Rocketeers: how a visionary band of business leaders, engineers, and pilots is boldly privatizing space*. New York: HarperCollins.

Berinstein, P., 2002. *Making space happen: private space ventures and the visionaries behind them*. Medford, NJ: Plexus Publishing.

Bizony, P. 2009. *How to build your own spaceship*. London: Portobello.

Branson, R., 2007. *Screw it, let's do it again: lessons in life and business*. London: Virgin Books.

Branson, R., 2010. *Reach for the skies: how a handful of pioneers risked it all to make dreams a reality*. London: Virgin Books.

Brits, E., 2008. SA 'veg' vir radio-astronomieprojek. *Volksblad* (22nd April), Bloemfontein.

Buttmann, G., 1970. *The shadow of the telescope: a biography of John Herschel*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Comins, N.F., 2007. *The hazards of space travel: a tourist's guide*. New York: Villard.

Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), 2008. Space Science and Technology. *ScienceScope*, 3(2), 1-57.

Diamandis, P., 2007. The next space race. *In: The Economist. The World in 2008*, 153.

Department of Science and Technology (DST), 2007. Innovation towards a knowledge-based economy: Ten-year plan for South Africa (2008-2018). Pretoria.

Duval, D.T., 2005. Space tourism – Small steps, giant leaps: space as the destination of the future. *In: M. Novelli, ed. Niche tourism: contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 213-222.

*Economist*, 2008. Saint Anselmo's Fire. (2<sup>nd</sup> October), London.

Evans, D.S., Deeming, T.J., Evans, B.H. and Goldfarb, S., 1969. *Herschel at the Cape*. Cape Town: A.A. Balkema.

Fairall, A., 2006. *Stargazing from game reserves in southern Africa*. Cape Town: Struik.

Ferris, T., 2004. Stumbling into space. *New York Review of Books* (29<sup>th</sup> April).

Finger, W., 2006. *Trends in Spaceport Site Selection and Operational Requirements* [online]. Available from: [www.spacetourismsociety.org/STS\\_Library/Presentations.html](http://www.spacetourismsociety.org/STS_Library/Presentations.html). [Accessed 1 September 2010].

Goodman, M., 2008. *The Sun and the moon*. New York: Basic Books.



Holmes, R., 2008. *The age of wonder: how the romantic generation discovered the beauty and terror of science*. London: Harper Press.

Howkins, J., 2007. *The creative economy: how people make money from ideas*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Hudgins, E.L., 2002. Introduction: the coming commercial frontier in space. In: E.L. Hudgins, ed, *Space: the free-market frontier*. Washington: Cato Institute, ix-xxvi.

Ingle, M., 2008. Economic potential in South Africa's arid areas: A selection of niche products and services. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Centre for Development Support Arid Areas Programme.

Ingle, M., 2010. Making the most of 'nothing': astro-tourism, the Sublime, and the Karoo as a 'space destination'. *Transformation*, 74, 87-111 (in press).

IOL Travel, 2009. *Space: The next frontier for tourists?* [online] Available from: [www.ioltravel.co.za/article/view/4894769](http://www.ioltravel.co.za/article/view/4894769) [Accessed 1 September 2010].

Kemp, K., 2007. *Destination space: how space tourism is making science fiction a reality*. London: Virgin Books.

Klerkx, G., 2004. *Lost in space: the fall of NASA and the dream of a new space age*. London: Secker & Warburg.

Larson, E., 2003. *The devil in the White City*. London: Bantam Books.

MacFarlane, R., 2008, *Mountains of the mind*. London: Granta.

Marks, P., 2008. All aboard for the flight of your life. *New Scientist* (1<sup>st</sup> November), 2680, 24-25.

- Maslow, A.H., 1971. *The farther reaches of human nature*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Mhlahlo, N., 2010. The state of space science in Africa. *Africa Insight*, 39(4), 198-211.
- Mitchell, E., 2008. *The way of the explorer (rev. ed.)*. Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books.
- Morgan, N., Pritchard, A. and Pride, R., eds., 2004. *Destination branding: creating the unique destination proposition*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann
- Morgan, N. and Pritchard, A., 2004. Meeting the destination branding challenge. In: N. Morgan, A. Pritchard and R. Pride, eds., *Destination branding: creating the unique destination proposition*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 59-78.
- Murray, N., 2008. *A corkscrew is most useful: the travellers of empire*. London: Little Brown.
- News24.com, 2008. *Stem resultate*. [online] Available from: <http://jv.news24.com/News24v2/Components/Generic/voteResultWindow>. [Accessed 22 March 2009].
- Novelli, M., ed. 2005. *Niche tourism: contemporary issues, trends and cases*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann
- O'Neill, G.K., 2000. *The high frontier: human colonies in space* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Ontario: Apogee Books.
- Otto, M., 2008. *Feasibility study and future projections of suborbital space tourism at the example of Virgin Galactic*. Hamburg: Diplomica.

Philp, R., 2010. *SA-born space baron gets rocket into orbit* [online]. Available from: [www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/article501323.ece/SA-born-space-baron-gets-rocket-into-orbit](http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/article501323.ece/SA-born-space-baron-gets-rocket-into-orbit) [Accessed 1 September 2010].

Pruthi, R.K., 2005. *Space tourism*. New Delhi: Rajat Publications.

Rees, M., 2008. Science: The coming century. *New York Review of Books*. (20th November).

Schreck, A., 2010. *Virgin Galactic to fire up SpaceShipTwo in 2011* [online]. Available from: [www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35698725/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-space](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35698725/ns/technology_and_science-space) [Accessed 1 September 2010].

Seedhouse, E. 2008. *Tourists in space: a practical guide*. New York: Springer.

Smith, A., 2005. *Moondust: in search of the men who fell to Earth*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Smith, D., 2010. *Africa prepares to join the big boys in the space race* [online]. Available from: <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2010-09-05-africa-prepares-to-join-the-big-boys-in-space-race> [Accessed 6 September 2010].

Spaceport Sweden, 2010. *Spaceport Sweden: open for business* [online]. Available from: [www.spaceportsweden.com](http://www.spaceportsweden.com) [Accessed 8 September 2010].

Space Tourism Society, 2010. *Space Tourism 2011: Profiting from the emerging space experience economy* [online]. Available from: [www.spacetourismsociety.org/Space\\_Tourism\\_Society/Welcome\\_files/SpaceTourism2011-rev3.pdf](http://www.spacetourismsociety.org/Space_Tourism_Society/Welcome_files/SpaceTourism2011-rev3.pdf) [Accessed 1 September 2010].

Spencer, J., 2004. *Space tourism: do you want to go?* Ontario: Apogee Books.

*The Times*, 2009. Space Age Launch Party. (11<sup>th</sup> January), Johannesburg.

United States of America, 1998. *Commercial Space Act of 1998* [online]. Available from: [www.nasa.gov/offices/ogc/commercial/CommercialSpaceActof1998.html](http://www.nasa.gov/offices/ogc/commercial/CommercialSpaceActof1998.html) [Accessed 1 September 2010].

Van Gass, C., 2009. Radio telescope to probe early universe may be located in SA. *Business Day*. (18th February), Johannesburg.

Van Pelt, M., 2005. *Space tourism: adventures in earth orbit and beyond*. New York: Copernicus Books.

Van Rooyen, D., 2007. Sutherland Case Study. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Centre for Development Support Arid Areas Programme.

Visser, G., 2003. South African Tourism and its role in the perpetuation of an uneven tourism space economy. *Africa Insight*, 33, (1/2), 116-123.

Warner, B., 1979. *Astronomers at the Royal Observatory Cape of Good Hope*. Cape Town: AA Balkema.

Weil, E., 2002. *They all laughed at Christopher Columbus: an incurable dreamer builds the first civilian spaceship*. New York: Bantam Books.

Weinberg, S., 2004. The wrong stuff. *New York Review of Books*. (8<sup>th</sup> April).

## 10. Epilogue

There has been a worldwide resurgence of academic interest in semi-arid and desert regions and South Africa has proved no exception to this trend. The lion's share of South Africa's arid interior consists of the 400 000 square kilometres of the Karoo which is bordered by arid Namaqualand on the west coast, the Kalahari desert to the north-west, and the Transgariep (False or Grassy Karoo) to the north. The Karoo is divided up among four provincial administrations and is therefore very rarely treated as a coherent regional entity in its own right by the central government, whose National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) has accorded it marginal developmental potential. Inter-provincial co-operation has also proved to be the exception rather than the rule, and this has impacted upon the Karoo's ability to present itself as an attraction on a par with Australia's Outback. Although the Karoo has considerably more to offer the tourist than the Outback, the latter enjoys considerably higher rates of tourist visitation.

Until the mid-1990s the Karoo had endured several decades of being written off as a desolate, boring wasteland fit for nothing but sheep-farming. In the 1990s, however, several major trends converged which had the effect of completely transforming the Karoo in the 'social imaginary'. These trends were the opening up of the country to international market forces and influence, consequent upon the demise of apartheid; the international reappraisal of the value of desert regions with a concomitant surge in tourism flows; the onset and rapid adoption of mobile telephony coupled with e-mail and the internet; an international revisioning of the countryside which saw primary agriculture steadily supplanted by the trappings of rural postproductivism; and a property boom which reinvigorated rural housing markets which had been stagnant for decades.

Against this backdrop, at the turn of the millennium, increasing numbers of scholars sensed the emergence of a new type of individual who seemed to have co-evolved with a new knowledge-based economy made possible by huge advances in information technology. The one constant running through these identifications was the concept of 'creativity' and a high premium came to be placed on the contributions of this cohort to the knowledge economy.

The social order in South Africa was profoundly shaken by the combined effect of these paradigmatic changes, arguably no segment more so than that of the white community. While several hundred thousand whites emigrated, a very much smaller number, no longer able to afford coastal properties, looked with new eyes upon the potentials of small town South Africa either as prospective incomers or as sites for investment in second homes. The socio-economic chemistry of many small towns in the Karoo experienced a complete overhaul as a result of an infusion of new blood from the conurbations. This statistically insignificant but economically 'savvy' constituency then used their networks and professional expertise to set in motion what can only be described as a renaissance of the Karoo.

This thesis has examined numerous aspects of this phenomenon through a lens informed by Richard Florida's influential views concerning the rise of a 'creative class'. It has described the rejuvenation of certain towns by the infusion of new social and human capital and it has considered some of the consequences of this. In many cases newcomers to small towns in the Karoo have been thrown back on their own resources to secure a livelihood and this 'eustress' has resulted in many economic innovations. In-migrants have identified a wide range of 'capitals' that have been lying dormant, rather like seeds waiting for moisture. This has seen the coming-to-market of a variety of creative offerings most especially in the tourism 'value chain'. Often assisted by skilful recourse to marketing networks and to 'lifestyle media', these incomers have wrought a sea-change in the social imaginary pertaining to the Karoo. The overall positive effect of this burst of industry on these small towns is proving to be both enduring and profound.

The question which remains lurking in the shadows is whether the Karoo will go the way of the postproductivist English countryside and find itself in due course transformed almost beyond recognition. As the activism of the 'anti-fracking' Treasure the Karoo Action Group has revealed, it might be that the Karoo's very aridity will in the long run serve to shield it from over-encroachment and make secure its integrity of place.

## 11. References

- Askwith, R. 2008. *The lost village: in search of a forgotten rural England*. London: Ebury Press.
- Atkinson, D. 2011a. 'Fracking' fiasco exposes SA's fractured planning system [online]. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=133655> [Accessed 8 February 2011].
- Atkinson, D. 2011b. Crossing boundaries: the role of universities in unlocking regional development. Inaugural lecture 13 April. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State.
- Atkinson, D. 2012. Getting the chemistry right: the impact of the FIFA 2010 World Cup on Karoo towns. In: Donaldson, R. & Marais, L. (eds). *Small Town Geographies in Africa*. New York: Nova Publishers (in press).
- Atkinson, D. & Ingle, M.K. 2010. A multi-dimensional analysis of Local Economic Development in Graaff-Reinet, Eastern Cape, *Journal for New Generation Sciences* 8(1):11-28.
- Atkinson, D. & Marais, L. 2007. Provincial Development Policies and Plans. The Arid Areas Programme Vol. 2. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Centre for Development Support.
- Beale, C.L. 1980. The changing nature of rural employment. In: Brown, D.L. & Wardwell, J.M. (eds.) *New directions in urban-rural migration: the population turnaround in rural America*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 37-50.
- Beyers, W.B. & Nelson, P.B. 2000. Contemporary development forces in the non-metropolitan West: New insights from rapidly growing communities. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 16: 459-474.
- Blakeslee, S. & Blakeslee, M. 2007. *The body has a mind of its own*. New York: Random House.

Blumenfeld, J. 1971. Survey of the Cape Midlands and Karroo Regions. Vol. 4. The Economic Structure of the Cape Midlands and Karroo Region: A sectoral and spatial survey. Grahamstown: Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), Rhodes University.

Bohler-Muller, N. & van der Merwe, C. 2011. The potential of social media to impact socio-political change on the African continent. Policy Brief. Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA).

Botha, F. 2010. The impact of educational attainment on household poverty in South Africa. *Acta Academica*, 42(4): 122-147.

Boyle, D. 2003. *Authenticity*. London: Harper Perennial.

Boyle, P., Halfacree, K. & Robinson, V. 1998. *Exploring Contemporary Migration*. Harlow, England: Prentice Hall.

Brand, S. 2009. *Whole earth discipline: an ecopragmatist manifesto*. New York: Penguin.

Braun, T. 2004. *The Philosophy of Branding*. London: Kogan Page.

Brende, E. 2004. *Better off: flipping the switch on technology*. New York: HarperCollins.

Brooks, D. 2000. *Bobos in paradise: The new upper class and how they got there*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Brooks, D. 2011. *The social animal: a story of how success happens*. London: Short Books.

*Business Day*. 2012. Court rules in favour of anti-fracking group [online]. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=162239> [Accessed 10 January 2012].



Butcher, J. 2003. *The moralisation of tourism: Sun, sand... and saving the world?* London: Routledge.

Camdeboo Local Municipality. 2008. Integrated Development Plan (IDP), 2007-2012. Graaff-Reinet: Camdeboo Local Municipality.

Carlson, R.H. 2010. *Biology is technology: the promise, peril, and new business of engineering life*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press.

Carr, N. 2010. *The shallows: How the internet is changing the way we think, read and remember*. London: Atlantic Books.

Christakis, M.D. & Fowler, J. 2009. *Connected: the amazing power of social networks and how they shape our lives*. London: HarperCollins.

Collier, P. 2010. *The plundered planet*. London: Allen Lane.

Cook, G. 1971. *Towns of the Cape Midlands and Eastern Karoo*. Grahamstown: Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), Rhodes University.

Crawford, M. 2009. *The case for working with your hands or why office work is bad for us and fixing things feels good*. London: Penguin.

Donaldson, R. 2007. Tourism in small town South Africa. In: Rogerson, C.M. & Visser, G. (eds). *Urban tourism in the developing world*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Dudwick, N., Kuehnast, K., Nyhan-Jones, V. & Woolcock, M. 2006. *Analyzing social capital in context: a guide to using qualitative methods and data*. Washington: World Bank.

Dugmore, H. & van Wyk, B-E. 2008. *Muthi and Myths*. Pretoria: Briza Publications.

Du Toit, J. & Dugmore, H. 2011. Battle for the Karoo. *Country Life*. May: 30-35.

Dyer, G. 2010. *Working the room: essays and reviews – 1999-2010*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books.

Essoungou, A.-M. 2011. A social media boom begins in Africa [online]. Retrieved from: <http://www.ngopulse.org/article/social-media-boom-begins-africa> [Accessed 13 April 2011].

Fellows, W. 2004. *A passion to preserve: gay men as keepers of culture*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Florida, R. 2002. *The rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. 2005. *Cities and the Creative Class*. New York: Routledge.

Florida, R. 2008. *Who's your city?: how the creative economy is making where to live the most important decision of your life*. New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. 2010. *The great reset: how new ways of living and working drive post-crash prosperity*. New York: HarperCollins.

Foster, J. 2008. *Washed with sun: landscape and the making of White South Africa*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Free State Youth Commission (FSYC). 2004. *Youth profile of the Free State 1996 & 2001*. Bloemfontein: FSYC.

*Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 2011. Shell on the 'fracking' wrong foot. 4 February: 1-2.

Halfacree, K. 2007a. Back-to-the-land in the twenty-first century – making connections with rurality. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 98(1), 3-8.

Halfacree, K. 2007b. Trial by space for a 'radical rural': Introducing alternative localities, representations and lives. *Journal of Rural Studies* 23, 125-141.

Honoré, C. 2004. *In praise of slow: how a worldwide movement is challenging the cult of speed*. London: Orion

Hoogendoorn, G. & Visser, G. 2010. The role of second homes in local economic development in five small South African towns. *Development Southern Africa*, 27(4):547-562.

Hoogendoorn, G. & Visser, G. 2011. Tourism, second homes and an emerging South African postproductivist countryside. *Tourism Review International*, 14:1-15.

Howkins, J. 2001. *The creative economy: How people make money from ideas*. London: Penguin.

Ilbery, B. 1998. Dimensions of rural change. In: Ilbery, B. (ed). *The Geography of Rural Change*. Harlow: Longman, pp 1-10.

Ilbery, B. & Bowler, I. 1998. From agricultural productivism to post-productivism. In: Ilbery, B. (ed). *The Geography of Rural Change*. Harlow: Longman, pp 57-84.

Ingle, M.K. 2008a. Economic potential in South Africa's arid areas: A selection of niche products and services. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State Centre for Development Support Arid Areas Programme.

Ingle, M.K. 2008b. The Subaru Fauresmith 200km Challenge: Looking a Gift-horse in the Mouth? *Africa Insight*, 38(3):86-99.

Ingle, M.K. 2010a. A 'Creative Class' in South Africa's arid Karoo region. *Urban Forum*, 21:405-423.

Ingle, M.K. 2010b. Making the most of 'nothing': astro-tourism, the Sublime, and the Karoo as a 'space destination'. *Transformation*, 74:87-111

Ingle, M.K. 2011. The Copernican shift in space tourism and its implications for tourism in the Great Karoo. *South African Geographical Journal*, 93(1):104-118.

Ingle, M.K. 2012. Tarring the road to Mecca: dilemmas of infrastructural development in a small Karoo town. In: Donaldson, R. & Marais, L. (eds). *Small Town Geographies in Africa*. New York: Nova Publishers (in press).

Karoo Space. 2011. <http://www.karoospace.co.za>

Keeley, B. 2007. *Human capital: How what you know shapes your life*. Paris: OECD.

Kelly, K. 2010. *What technology wants*. New York: Penguin.

Kingsolver, B. 2008. *Animal, vegetable, miracle: our year of seasonal eating*. New York: Faber & Faber.

Lanier, J. 2010. *You are not a gadget*. London: Penguin.

Lewis, G. 1998. Rural migration and demographic change. In: Ilbery, B. (ed). 1998. *The Geography of Rural Change*. Harlow: Longman, pp 131-160.

*Mail & Guardian*. 2011. No fracking way: Sasol puts Karoo shale gas plans on hold [online]. December 1. Retrieved from : <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-12-01-sasol-puts-karoo-fracking-plans-on-hold> [Accessed 1 December 2011].

Marais, L., Ingle, M.K., Skinner, D. & Sigenu, K. 2011. An evaluation of a Family Support Programme incorporating Early Childhood Development, in the southern Free State. *Acta Academica* (forthcoming).

Mbeleni, X. 2011. Our failing municipalities. *Transformer*, 17(2):6-9.

Meagher, K. 2010. *Identity economics: social networks and the informal economy in Nigeria*. Woodbridge (Suffolk): James Currey.

Milton, S.J. & Dean, W.R.J. 2010. The basis for sustainable business in the Karoo: Bringing ecological and economic issues together. *Journal for Development Support* 2: 58-66.

Morgan, N. & Pritchard, A. 2004. Meeting the destination branding challenge. In: Morgan, N., Pritchard, A. & Pride, R. (eds). *Destination branding: creating the unique destination proposition 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Oxford: Elsevier. pp 59-78.

Nel, E. & Hill, T. 2008. Marginalisation and demographic change in the semi-arid Karoo, South Africa. *Journal of Arid Environments*, 72:2264-2274.

Nussbaum, M. 2010. *Not for profit: why democracy needs the humanities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Nye, J.S. 2011. *The future of power*. New York: Public Affairs.

Parker, A. 2011. Don't cut speed limits – fix the railways and traffic lights [online]. *Business Day*. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=143600> [Accessed 24 May 2011].

Phillipson, N. 2010. *Adam Smith: an enlightened life*. London: Allen Lane.

Putnam, R.D. 2000. *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Putnam, R.D. & Feldstein, L.M. 2003. *Better together: restoring the American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Ray, P.H. & Anderson, S.R. 2000. *The Cultural Creative: How 50 million people are changing the world*. New York: Harmony Books.

Reynolds, S. 2011. *Retromania*. New York: Faber & Faber.

Richards, G. 2011. Creativity and tourism: the state of the art. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(4):1225-1253.

Sen, A. 2006. *Identity & violence: The illusion of destiny*. London: Penguin.

Scott, J.C. 1998. *Seeing like a state: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Seabrook, F. 2005. The end of the provinces: we are all metropolitans now. *Granta*, 90. pp 225-241.

Shackleton, C.M., Shackleton, S.E., Gambiza, J., Nel, E., Rowntree, K., Urquhart, P., Fabricius, C. & Ainslie, A. 2010. *Livelihoods and vulnerability in the arid and semi-arid lands of southern Africa*. New York: Nova Publishers.

Sisman, A. 2006. *Wordsworth and Coleridge: the friendship*. London: HarperCollins.

Slow Tourism Network. 2012. <http://www.slow-tourism.net>

Smiffie. 2011. <http://www.smiffienews.co.za>

South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR). 2007. The skills shortage: urban legend or fatal constraint? *Fast Facts*. December. pp 2-10.

South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR). 2008. *South Africa Survey 2007/2008*. Johannesburg: SAIRR.

Stephens, J. 2011. Fracking: vat jou goed en pak, vrak [online]. May 5. *The Media Online*. Retrieved from: <http://themediainline.co.za/2011/05/fracking-vat-jou-goed-en-pak-vrak> [Accessed 5 May 2011].

Taylor, C. 2005. Return to Akenfield: England's classic village forty years on. *Granta*, 90. pp 11-55.

Taylor, C. 2006. *Return to Akenfield: portrait of an English village in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. London: Granta Books.

The Presidency, 2006. National Spatial Development Perspective. Pretoria: Republic of South Africa. Available at: <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?relid=514>

*TimesLive*. 2010. Sasol to explore Karoo for shale gas [online]. July 19. Retrieved from: <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/articles558262.ece/Sasol-to-explore-Karoo-for-shale-gas> [Accessed 20 July 2010].

Treasure the Karoo Action Group (TKAG). 2011. <http://treasurethekaroo.blogspot.com/>

Turkle, S. 2011. *Alone together: why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books.

Urry, J. 1995. *Consuming places*. New York: Routledge.

Vernon, M. 2011. *How to be an agnostic*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Visser, G. 2003a. Gentrification: prospects for urban South African society? *Acta Academica Supplementum*, 2003(1): 79-104.

Visser, G. 2003b. Unvoiced and invisible: on the transparency of white South Africans in post-apartheid geographical discourse. *Acta Academica Supplementum*, 2003(1): 220-244.

Vrey, W.J.H. 1974. Demografiese Sosiologiese Studie van die Blanke Bevolking in die Sentraal-Karoo. Bloemfontein: Instituut vir Sosiale en Ekonomiese Navorsing, University of the Free State

Willis, K. 2005. *Theories and practices of development*. Oxford: Routledge.

Zukin, S. 2010. *Naked City: the death and life of authentic urban places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



## Summary

There has been a worldwide resurgence of academic interest in semi-arid and desert regions and South Africa has proved no exception to this trend. The lion's share of South Africa's arid interior consists of the 400 000 square kilometres of the Karoo. The Karoo is divided up among four provincial administrations and is therefore very rarely treated as a coherent regional entity in its own right by the central government, whose National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) has accorded it marginal developmental potential. Inter-provincial co-operation has also proved to be the exception rather than the rule, and this has impacted upon the Karoo's ability to present itself as an attraction on a par with Australia's Outback, for example.

Until the mid-1990s the Karoo had endured several decades of being written off as a desolate, boring wasteland fit for nothing but sheep-farming. In the 1990s, however, several major trends converged which had the effect of completely transforming the Karoo in the 'social imaginary'. These trends were the opening up of the country to international market forces and influence, consequent upon the demise of apartheid; the international reappraisal of the value of desert regions with a concomitant surge in tourism flows; the onset and rapid adoption of mobile telephony coupled with e-mail and the internet; an international revisioning of the countryside which saw primary agriculture steadily supplanted by the trappings of rural postproductivism; and a property boom which reinvigorated rural housing markets which had been stagnant for decades.

Against this backdrop, at the turn of the millennium, increasing numbers of scholars sensed the emergence of a new type of individual who seemed to have co-evolved with a new knowledge-based economy made possible by huge advances in information technology. The one constant theme running through these identifications was the concept of 'creativity' and a high premium came to be placed on the contributions of this cohort to the knowledge economy.

The social order in South Africa was profoundly shaken by the combined effect of these paradigmatic changes, arguably no segment more so than that of the white community. While several hundred thousand whites emigrated, a very much smaller number, no longer able to

afford coastal properties, looked with new eyes upon the potentials of small town South Africa either as prospective incomers or as sites for investment in second homes. The socio-economic chemistry of many small towns in the Karoo experienced a complete overhaul as a result of an infusion of new blood from the conurbations. This statistically insignificant but economically 'savvy' constituency then used their networks and professional expertise to set in motion what can only be described as a renaissance of the Karoo.

This thesis examines aspects of this phenomenon through a lens informed by Richard Florida's influential views concerning the rise of a 'creative class'. It describes the rejuvenation of certain towns by the infusion of new social and human capital and it has considered some of the consequences of this. In-migrants have identified a wide range of 'capitals' that have been lying dormant, rather like seeds waiting for moisture. This has seen the coming-to-market of a variety of creative offerings most especially in the tourism 'value chain'. Often assisted by skilful recourse to marketing networks and to 'lifestyle media', these incomers have wrought a sea-change in the social imaginary pertaining to the Karoo. The overall positive effect of this burst of industry on these small towns is proving to be both enduring and profound.

**Keywords:** social capital; human capital; postproductivism; creative class; niche tourism; counterurbanisation; weak ties; Richard Florida; Karoo; social networks.

## **Opsomming**

Wêreldwyd is daar onlangs 'n oplewing in akademiese belangstelling in semi-ariëde streke en woestyne, en Suid-Afrika is geen uitsondering nie. Die grootste gedeelte van Suid-Afrika se droeë binnelandse streek bestaan uit die Karoo, wat 400 000 vierkante kilometre beslaan. Die Karoo is gedeel tussen vier provinsiale administrasies, en is dus nooit bestuur as 'n enkele streeksentiteit in sy eie reg nie. Die sentrale regering se Nasionale Ruimtelelike Ontwikkelingsperspektief het dit bestempel as 'n streek met min ontwikkelingspotensiaal. Inter-

provinsiale samewerking is redelik raar, en dit het 'n regstreekse impak op die Karoo se kapasiteit om homself te bemark, byvoorbeeld gelyk aan Australië se Outback.

Tot die middel-1990s is die Karoo gesien as 'n verlate, vervelige land wat vir niks anders as skaapboerdery kan dien nie. In die 1990s het verskeie belangrike tendense begin plaasvind, wat die Karoo begin transformeer het in die publieke denke. Hierdie tendense was gegrond op die ontsluiting van Suid-Afrika vir internasionale market en invloed, na die aftakeling van apartheid; die internasionale herbesinning oor die nut en waarde van woestyne, veral in die konteks van toerisme; die uitbreiding van mobiele telefoonnetwerke, saam met e-pos en die internet; 'n nuwe internasionale benadering tot die ontwikkeling van landelike areas, met die aanvulling van landbou deur verskeie ander ekonomiese aktiwiteite; en 'n opswaai in die eiendomsmark wat landelike behuising baie meer aantreklik gemaak het.

Teen hierdie agtergrond, veral aan die begin van die nuwe eeu, het baie meer navorsers begin besef dat 'n nuwe sosiale wese ontstaan het. 'n Nuwe kategorie mens het ontwikkel in pas met die kennis-gebaseerde ekonomie wat moontlik gemaak is deur die vinnige uitbreidings in inligtingstechnologie. 'n Konstante tema is die begrip van 'kreatiwiteit', en die belangrikheid van die kreatiewe bydraes van hierdie nuwe kategorie mense word al hoe meer besef.

Die sosiale struktuur in Suid-Afrika is diep geskud deur die gesamentlike impak van hierdie veranderinge. Veral die blanke gemeenskap is hierdeur geaffekteer. Terwyl menige blankes gemigreer het, het 'n aansienlike getal ook besluit om na klein dorpie in Suid-Afrika te verhuis, óf as nuwe inkomelinge, óf as beleggers wat tweede huise aangeskaf het. Die sosio-ekonomiese samestelling van baie klein dorpie in die Karoo is fundamenteel verander as gevolg van hierdie nuwe intrekkers van die metropolitaanse gebiede. Hierdie statistiese onbenullige maar ekonomiese belangrike groep het hulle netwerke en professionele vaardighede gebruik om 'n renaissance in die Karoo te bewerkstellig.

Die tesis ontleed verskeie aspekte van hierdie verskynsel deur Richard Florida se invloedryke konsep van die 'kreatiewe klas'. Dit beskryf die oplewing van sekere Karoo dorpe deur die invloed van nuwe 'sosiale en menslike kapitaal', en die verskeie nuwe-effekte van hierdie

instroming. Die inkomelinge het ook verskeie sterk eienskappe van die dorpe en die plaaslike gemeenskappe ge-identifiseer, wat hulle aan die werk gesit het, amper soos sade wat vir reën gelê en wag het. Daarom het 'n verskeidenheid kreatiewe produkte in die Karoo die lig begin sien, veral in die toerisme waarde-ketting. Baiemaal het hierdie kreatiewe beleggers hulle eie bemarkingsnetwerke en ander 'lewenstyl media' gebruik, om 'n diep verandering in mense se persepsies oor die Karoo teweeg te bring. Die positiewe effek van hierdie oplewing in die plaaslike ekonomie van klein dorpe sal landurig en transformerend wees.

(Hierdie vorm is ook beskikbaar in Afrikaans.)



University of the Free State

The Director: Finance

339 BLOEMFONTEIN 9300 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

www.ufs.ac.za/register2011

REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION: 2011

IMPORTANT: PLEASE TAKE THOROUGH COGNISANCE OF INFORMATION ON PAGE TWO

1. Student number: 2007104579

2. Academic career: Undergraduate [ ] Undergraduate medics [ ]

OFFICE USE UGRD PGRD HSUG HSPG

Post graduate [x] Postgraduate medics [ ]

3. Initials and surname MM GOKOVA

4. Are you presently a full time employee? At the University YES NO Outside the University YES NO

Office use: 2111

Office use: 2112

5. MODULES: FIRST SEMESTER AND YEAR MODULES

MODULES: SECOND SEMESTER

Table with 3 columns: MODULE CODE 1st year semester & year modules, WHERE WILL LECTURES BE FOLLOWED, STUDY CODE. Includes example row: Eg. EKN114 or FIN208, Eg. Bloemfontein/ Welkom etc, Eg. 6301

Table with 3 columns: MODULE CODE 2nd semester, WHERE WILL LECTURES BE FOLLOWED, STUDY CODE. Includes example row: Eg. EKN124, Eg. Bloemfontein/ Welkom, Eg. 6301

6. ONLY FINAL YEAR STUDENTS WHO COMPLETE A QUALIFICATION THIS YEAR: Indicate the degree/diploma/certificate MDS When will the qualification be complete: first semester examination [ ] OR second semester examination [ ] Your record will not be checked towards obtaining a qualification should you fail to complete this part.

SIGNATURE: STUDENT [Signature]

DATE 15/02/2011

Declaration by student: I hereby confirm that I have taken thorough notice of the information on the page 2 and agree to the stipulations.

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

1. Registration forms must not be submitted to a desk/lecturer/department for registration purposes, except in cases where the department concerned is responsible for such registrations.
2. Registration will take place strictly according to the programme. (First semester).
3. Late fees can be charged should you register outside your programme.
4. Fees must be paid into your student account five days before registration.
5. It remains the responsibility of the student to ensure that no class clashes occur between modules.
6. Academic advice must be obtained before submitting your registration form.
7. Last day to make changes: first semester-/year modules 28 January 2011 and second semester 22 July 2011.
8. Registration and/or continuation with a qualification/module is subject to the applicable admission requirements/preconditions.
9. By signing this form, the student accept responsibility for the correctness of registered modules and undertake to comply with cut off dates regarding changes.
10. A student who wants to totally cancel/discontinue his/her studies, must inform the Director: Student Academic Services of this in writing.

#### OFFICIAL USE

1. FINANCE: IN ORDER. Proceed with registration.

\_\_\_\_\_  
OFFICIAL: FINANCE  
(PRINT)

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

2. ACADEMIC ADVICE (Compulsory for all students).

\_\_\_\_\_  
ADVISOR  
(PRINT)

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
PERSONNEL NUMBER


\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

3. FACULTY OFFICERS:

• Plan/career

• Year modules under term 1

• Form signed by student and advisor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

15/02/2011  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE