

VFR travel and second homes tourism: the missing link? The case of South

Africa

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Abstract:

Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) travel and second homes tourism as topics of investigations have seen an upsurge in international research over the past twenty years. However, rarely has the conceptual link between the two issues been explored at any great length. The purpose of this paper is to explore the nexus between VFR travel and second homes tourism with particular reference to the Global South. The case of South Africa provides the empirical context. It is revealed that VFR travel and second homes in South Africa must be understood in terms of two circuits. The first circuit, mainly of affluent whites, mirrors the experiences of the Global North with VFR travel linked to recreational second homes. The second circuit shows the experiences of the Global South where working class residents migrate between first and second homes through circular migration as a consequence of labour migration

Keywords: Visiting friends and relatives travel (VFR), second homes, tourism.

1. Introduction

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel is a large component of the global tourism economy, however, until recently, VFR travel was considered a hidden aspect of international tourism (Palovic, Kam, Janta, Cohen, & Williams, 2013). Behind this standpoint are a combination of factors including:

- consistently low estimates of the size of the VFR market (Jackson, 1990);
- a widely held belief that VFR travellers inject negligible income into local economies (Backer 2010); and
- the view of many observers that “the VFR market [is] mundane and lacking in the glamour of travel to exotic places” (Morrison & O’Leary, 1995, p. 5).

This said, in recent years the volume of research interest has shown a marked upturn. In a useful content analysis of the scholarly outputs on VFR travel conducted by Griffin (2013) for the period 1990–2010, it was confirmed that this form of travel is gaining an increasing amount of attention with most research currently upon North America and Australasia.

Second homes research re-emerged in the early 2000s after a hiatus during the 1980s and 1990s – a hiatus brought about by the relevancy debates of the time, which did not consider second homes tourism to be an important research niche (Müller & Hoogendoorn, 2013). However, the work of Müller (2006, 2007), Hall & Müller (2004), Müller & Hall (2003), Gallent (2007), Gallent, Mace & Tewdwr-Jones (2005) has been particularly influential since the re-emergence of this field of study. These authors have explored themes in terms of:

- regional perspectives relating to issues of mobility and migration in a multifunctional countryside;
- social, environmental and economic impacts on local communities; and
- policy and planning regulations in countries such as Sweden, the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

However, it seems that the link between VFR travel and second home ownership remains inadequately explored despite the recent example of McLeod and Busser (2014) and Duval's (2004:95) suggestion that VFR travel can be considered a form of second home tourism. For example, Williams and Hall (2002) argue that VFR travel is an extension of migration and second homes tourism is a phenomenon that links tourism and migration (Hall & Müller, 2004), which essentially means that these two phenomena overlap. This is because processes of mobility and migration relating to second home ownership visitation often result because of VFR travel (Hoogendoorn, 2011b).

Arguably, in terms of existing international scholarship around VFR travel, the most under-represented area concerns the Global South in general and the region of sub-Saharan Africa in particular. Although African tourism scholarship has expanded in the past decade most attention is upon themes relating to international leisure tourism (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2011; Rogerson & Visser, 2011; Rogerson, 2012; Dieke, 2013). Among the least well-understood dimensions of the African tourism economy is travel that is about visiting friends and relatives (VFR). Nevertheless, its importance has been noted; for example, in terms of air travel passengers on African airlines it is estimated that 30 percent are travelling for VFR purposes (Christie et al., 2013, p. 56).

In terms of research investigations on second home ownership once again the global South is on the scholarly margins. One observes that the body of literature focusing on countries such as China is very small (Hui & Yu, 2009; Huang & Yi, 2011) and that currently the bulk of second homes research has been conducted on South Africa (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2011; Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2012; Long & Hoogendoorn, 2013). In the case of South Africa, a number of debates have emerged, however, second homes research has focused on white, wealthy, mobile and highly educated second home owners, mirroring many of the debates of the Global North for example, it has been found that second homes ownership and the concomitant VFR travel that results from this property ownership has had beneficial economic impacts in host regions (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2010). However, except for the work by Hoogendoorn (2011a) that advocates for a broader understanding of usage and visitation in second homes tourism in terms of definition, no research interrogates the direct link between VFR travel and second homes in the South African context, nor in the context of how it resembles and differs from the contexts of the Global North. It is against this background that the purpose of the paper is to explore more rigorously the nexus of VFR travel and second home ownership – especially in terms of the differences between the experiences of the Global North and Global South. The South African experience provides the empirical context for detailed discussion.

2. Exploring VFR travel and second homes tourism

2.1. Experiences of the Global North

In Northern scholarship on VFR travel, there is a great research focus on how to classify such travel and boost its commercial impact (Pearce, 2012). For example,

countries like Sweden and Finland have widespread second home ownership and all levels of society rely substantially on VFR travel as a means of developing their domestic tourism markets (cf. Müller, 2013; Hiltunen, Pitkänen, Vepsäläinen & Hall, 2013). In establishing a categorisation of the VFR market, Backer (2012, p. 75) draws distinctions between three groups. The first are ‘pure’ VFRs who are travellers who stay with friends and relatives and state VFR as the main purpose of a trip. Second, are the CVFRs or commercial accommodation VFRs who stay in commercial forms of lodging but who have travelled to particular destinations with a VFR purpose. Lastly, there are EVFRs who are styled as ‘exploiting’ VFRs as they are staying with friends and relatives, albeit the visit to them is not the prime purpose of the sojourn. In terms of academic analysis of VFR travel, Pearce (2012, p. 1028) identifies “two trajectories needed to understand the concept; on the one hand travellers may visit friends and relatives or they may be hosts to such visitors”. These central issues are reflected in a growing body of research about VFR travel in various countries of the Global North (e.g. Backer, 2007; Young, Corsun & Baloglu, 2007; Asiedu, 2008; Backer, 2010; Uriely, 2010; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Griffin, 2013; McLeod & Busser, 2014).

For the most part, second homes research has explored VFR travel only indirectly. For example, Hall and Müller (2004, p. 6) have noted different explanations for the process of migrating between second and first homes, such as “residential tourism”, “semi-migration”, “summer migration” and “seasonal suburbanization”. Furthermore, Müller (1999) argued that the reasons people own second homes is often the result of the ‘Cult of Nostalgia’ or the ‘Rural Idyll’ where second home owners use second homes as a means to rekindle themselves with nature, heritage and

childhood memories by reconnecting with family and friends. Marjavaara (2007) notes that, in the case of Sweden, second homes are often located in areas where second homes owners may have originated from before becoming urbanised, or where their parents or grandparents may have come from. Therefore, visitations to second homes in these locations are based around family heritage. Moreover, parents or grandparents may be retired in second home locations and provides the ideal location for family to visit from major urban centres. Casado-Diaz (2004) suggests that there is an inextricable link between second homes tourism, VFR-travel and retirement migration. This is especially the case in Western Europe where, for example, British second home owners travel to Spain and France seasonally (known as ‘swallows’) and the result is the movement between two locations with the subsequent visiting of friends and relatives in either location, be it the United Kingdom or France (for example). In fact, Hoogendoorn (2011b) found in his research on second home owners in elite locations in South Africa that half of second home owners who are not sole owners, share ownership with friends and relatives. Therefore, the purpose of second home ownership in some localities is based around VFR activities, although if friends and relatives own a second home together this could potentially not be considered VFR travel anymore – which requires conceptual clarification. McLeod and Busser (2014, p. 89) therefore define the direct linkage between second homes and VFR as follows: “hosting means that friends and/or relatives (1) came to spend time with the second homeowners, (2) stay at their property while visiting the destination and/or (3) came to visit the destination for other purposes but extended or modified the stay to spend time with the second homeowner”.

Second homes as a global phenomenon and consequent VFR travel have evolved a variety of second home dominated geographies (Visser, 2003). Therefore, a number of second homes studies have focused economic development possibilities of this type of tourism, especially in economies that are heavily reliant on tourism (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2010). For example, Bieger, Beritelli and Weinert (2007) found that in the case of Switzerland, especially young second homeowners were prone to host friends and relatives and consequently rent out their second homes for additional income, which has direct economic benefits for host communities. In terms of local economic development initiatives through second home development, McLeod and Busser (2014) make a valid point by arguing that determining whether second home owners are willing to host friends and relatives would allow for policy regulations to be developed. This would potentially enable an environment for encouraged visitation, which could reap the benefits in especially struggling rural economies. In addition, visiting second homes through VFR travel could lead to the purchasing of second homes by visiting friends and relatives which can have economic benefits for property markets (cf. McLeod & Busser, 2014). In terms of understanding VFR travel and second homes tourism, the work of Overvåg (2011) on the ‘multi-house-home’ and Halfacree’s (2012) work on ‘heterolocal identities’ have noted similarities between experiences in the Global North and the Global South in terms of circulation and migration. Nevertheless, this research does not show the complexities of VFR travel and of multi-locational homeownership that exists in the Global South and further is not directly linked to questions of labour migration.

2.2. Experiences of the Global South

In seeking to understand the character and patterns of VFR travel and second homes in the Global South, however, it is contended that the nexus between migration and VFR activity/second home ownership must be acknowledged as the starting point for analysis. Arguably, the strength of this relationship is also recognised in Northern research, where migration is considered a prerequisite for both VFR travel and second home tourism and has a distinctive relationship (Boyne et al., 2002; Hall & Müller, 2004; Palovic et al., 2013). In an examination of ‘emerging world tourism regions’, Cohen and Cohen (2014) assert clear that historically spatial movements in these areas would be typically low in scale, slow, and confronting a range of barriers – geographical, political and technological. Under such circumstances, VFR was one of the major practices of the lower strata with visits between friends and relatives occurring often, particularly on festive occasions (Cohen & Cohen, 2014). Overall, much of the practice of VFR in the Global South and resultant second home visitation can be conceptualised as part of what Gladstone (2005) describes as the ‘informal sector’ of travel and tourism.

The distinguishing traits of VFR travel within the Global South must be understood in part as a consequence of a differential trajectory of urbanisation there as compared to that which was experienced in the Global North. With the mass informalization of work in cities across much of Asia and Africa, VFR travel has expanded considerably in scale in the wake of the maintenance of circulatory migration flows between urban and rural areas – which involves the splitting and dispersion of family and social networks (Dick & Reuschke, 2013). One example of this is second home owners alternating between mainland China and Hong Kong where families regularly move between the two locations, especially when spouses originate from different locations

(Hui & Yu, 2009). Consequently, the growth of rhythmic home trips by circulatory rural and urban migrants becomes commonplace, in particular during public holidays (Cohen & Cohen, 2014). In addition to domestic VFR travel, the growth of international labour migration from less to more developed regions has also triggered VFR movements which would include family visits to expatriate communities, including students studying abroad (King & Gamage, 1994; Asiedu, 2008).

Table 1: Reasons for Circular Migration and VFR Travel in the Global South

Structural Factors	Key Issues
Economic Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tradition of seasonal, agriculture-based mobility in the pre-colonial period • Circular migration to mines in colonial times (often coercive) • In the post-colonial period, precarious tertiarisation linked to urbanisation without industrialisation • Expansion in demand for women workers in domestic service and other activities
Spatial Structures (Inequalities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban primacy • Strong urban-rural inequalities • Informalisation of urban settlements
Transport and Communication Technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructural improvement, especially roads, in peripheral and rural areas enabling greater mobilities • Growth of mobile telephony

Societal Modernisation

- Increased female autonomy and acceptance of women's mobility
- Dual breadwinner households linked to economic survival

Source: Adapted after Dick & Reuschke, 2013, p. 180.

Table 1 captures a cross-section of reasons explaining why individuals continue to be engaged in circular migration and consequently are drivers for visitations between first and second homes in the Global South. Four essential sets of structural factors are recognised which must be understood as conditioning factors for much of VFR mobilities and second home ownership in the Global South. These relate to economic transformations, spatial structures, improvements in transportation and communication technology, societal modernisation and leisure time possibilities. In an important contribution, Dick and Reuschke (2013) draw attention to the fact that in many countries of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa the phenomenon of 'urbanisation without industrialization' has resulted in the absorption of circular migrants in various forms of urban informal sector work. This represents the economic background for the persistence of circular migration across much of the Global South. From this perspective, VFR travel and second home ownership which is associated with circular migration forms a necessary component for individual and household survival as the maintenance of a foothold in rural areas is often a vital strategy for household reproduction (Steinbrink, 2009). Indeed, Lohnert and Steinbrink (2005) identify that a significant and growing number of households in the Global South organise their livelihoods in the contexts of networks that bridge the rural-urban divide. This results in the growth of what are variously styled as, "split households" or "multilocal/translocal households". Although national census data fail to capture this phenomenon

of circular migration several detailed research investigations attest to its growth in many parts of the global South (Dick & Reuschke, 2013) and especially across the region of Southern Africa (Lohnert & Steinbrink, 2005; Steinbrink, 2009, 2010; Greiner, 2013). Multilocal households live in two separate areas, usually urban and rural areas – their livelihood strategy being to take advantage of opportunities in both areas in order to “enhance income accumulation and risk resilience” (Dick & Reuschke, 2013, p. 188). Nevertheless, beyond household economic resilience it is noted that the rural part of the household can fulfil vital social and reproductive functions such as child rearing, schooling of children as well as care and support for the elderly (Schmidt-Kallert, 2009).

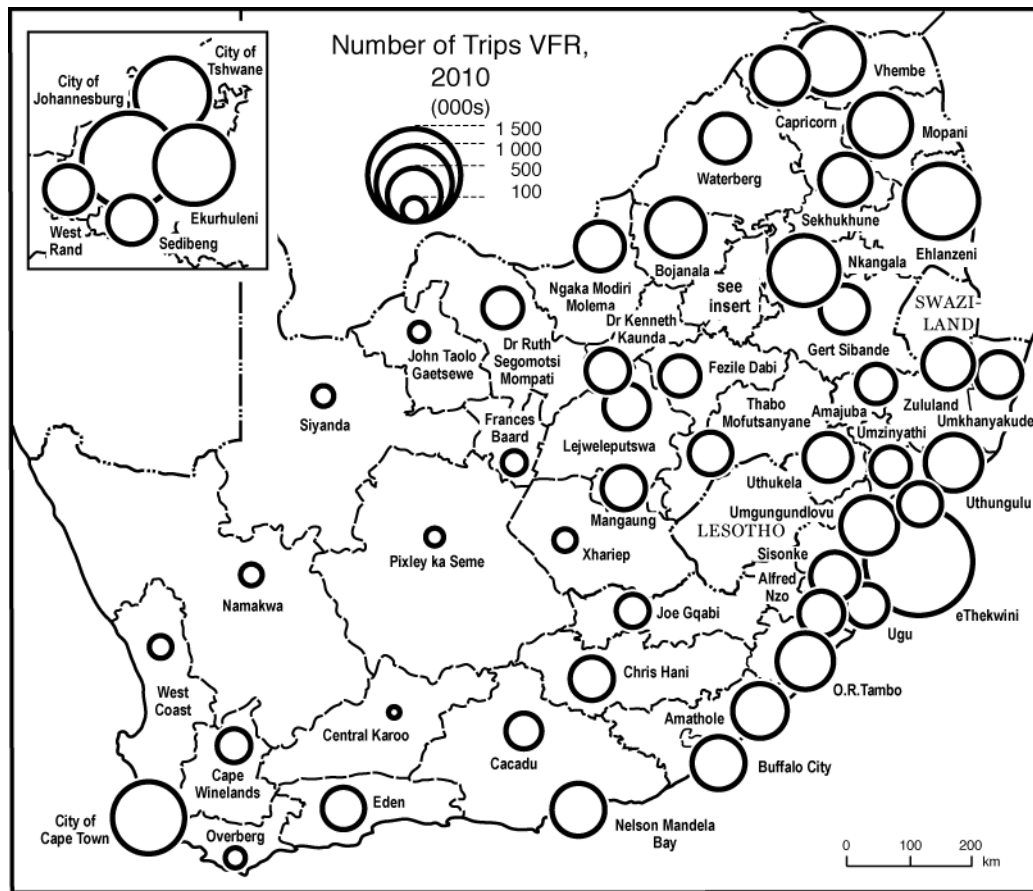
3. VFR travel and second homes tourism in South Africa

In contemporary South Africa, VFR travel occurs with both international and domestic manifestations. Data on VFR travel in South Africa is available from official sources, including those of South African Tourism (2013) and Statistics South Africa (2013). In addition, further information can be accessed from the (unpublished) database of Global Insight which provides details of the tourism performance of all local authorities in the country in respect of inter alia, the number of tourism trips differentiated by purpose of trip; number of trips and bednights by origin of tourist (domestic or international); calculation of tourism spend; and estimated contribution of tourism to local gross domestic product. This data base allows the construction of a spatially differentiated picture on VFR travel. There is, however no official database exists in South Africa that records second homes and movements through VFR to second homes, such as in Sweden where researchers use the ASTRID database (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2012; Marjavaara, 2007b).

The existing sources show that for the past decade, VFR travel has been a substantial and growing component of South Africa’s international as well as the domestic

tourism economy. According to the Global Insight data between 2001 to 2010 total VFR trips expanded from 13.3 million to 23.6 million in total, a growth 77.4 percent in a decade. South African Tourism (2013) data confirms that volume of VFR travel exceeds the number of leisure or business travellers and, despite lower expenditures per trip, must be considered as exerting potentially significant impacts for VFR destinations. Critically, VFR travel in South Africa is the segment of travel which is massively dominated by 'ordinary' or working-class travellers. Indeed, in investigations about VFR travel in the country, it is shown that the black population represents approximately 78 percent of VFR travellers. In particular, in common with many parts of the world, it is shown that VFR travel is the most popular form of domestic tourism in South Africa (Rule et al. 2003; Rogerson & Lisa, 2005). According to official data, VFR travel constitutes 72 percent of all domestic trips in South Africa with seasonal peaks occurring at Easter and Christmas. For the groups of mostly black travellers who are engaged in travelling between urban and rural 'homes' the shared minibus taxi represents the most important mode of transportation. The minimal role of what Backer (2012) calls CVFRs (VFR travellers who stay in commercial accommodation) is revealed as a distinctive facet of domestic VFR tourism in South Africa. It is evident that the small South African element of CVFRs is almost exclusively white travellers as revealed for example in the patronage of bed and breakfast accommodation in the coastal city of East London (van den Bos, 2012).

Figure 1: The Spatial Distribution of VFR Trips in South Africa, 2010



Source: Author based on Global Insight data

In South Africa, the geography of the VFR travel can be mapped through the Global Insight data. The analysis reveals a close (but not perfect) relationship to the national distribution of population. Figure 1 shows the number of VFR trips according to each local municipality in the country for 2010. It shows a number of significant findings. First, that South Africa's largest cities are the major destinations for VFR travel and therefore that VFR travel is an important constituent of the tourism economies of the country's leading cities, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, or Pretoria. Overall, the four largest VFR destinations are the municipalities of Ethekwini (Durban), the City of Johannesburg, the adjoining municipality of Ekurhuleni, and the City of Tshwane

(Pretoria) which account for 24 percent of all VFR travel in South Africa. Second, as compared to leisure or business travel, which are highly polarized upon a small cluster of destinations, the spatial pattern of VFR travel is far more spread (Rogerson, 2015). It is evident that a large number of mainly rural municipalities especially in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwZulu-Natal provinces are significant destinations for VFR travel. For example the district municipalities of Capricorn, Sekhukhune, Vhembe, Ehlanzeni, Mopani, O.R. Tambo, Uthungulu, Amatole or uMgungundlovu are significant receiving destinations for VFR travel. These particular district municipalities include the major parts of what were formerly known as the Homelands or Bantustan areas created under apartheid. The Homeland areas traditionally were the source regions of migrant labour for the cities of South Africa. Indeed, such areas were the sending regions for ‘cheap labour’ and created by a coercive labour regime that separated geographically the areas of labour force maintenance and renewal (Wolpe, 1972).

Figure 2 maps the 23 priority district municipalities which represent the most distressed areas of the country, exhibiting underdevelopment, high levels of poverty and unemployment and major backlogs of basic services such as health, water or sanitation. These district municipalities contain the major part of what were the former Homelands. Nevertheless, these poverty-stricken areas are shown to be key destinations for VFR travel in South Africa.

Figure 2: The Priority Development Districts of South Africa, 2010

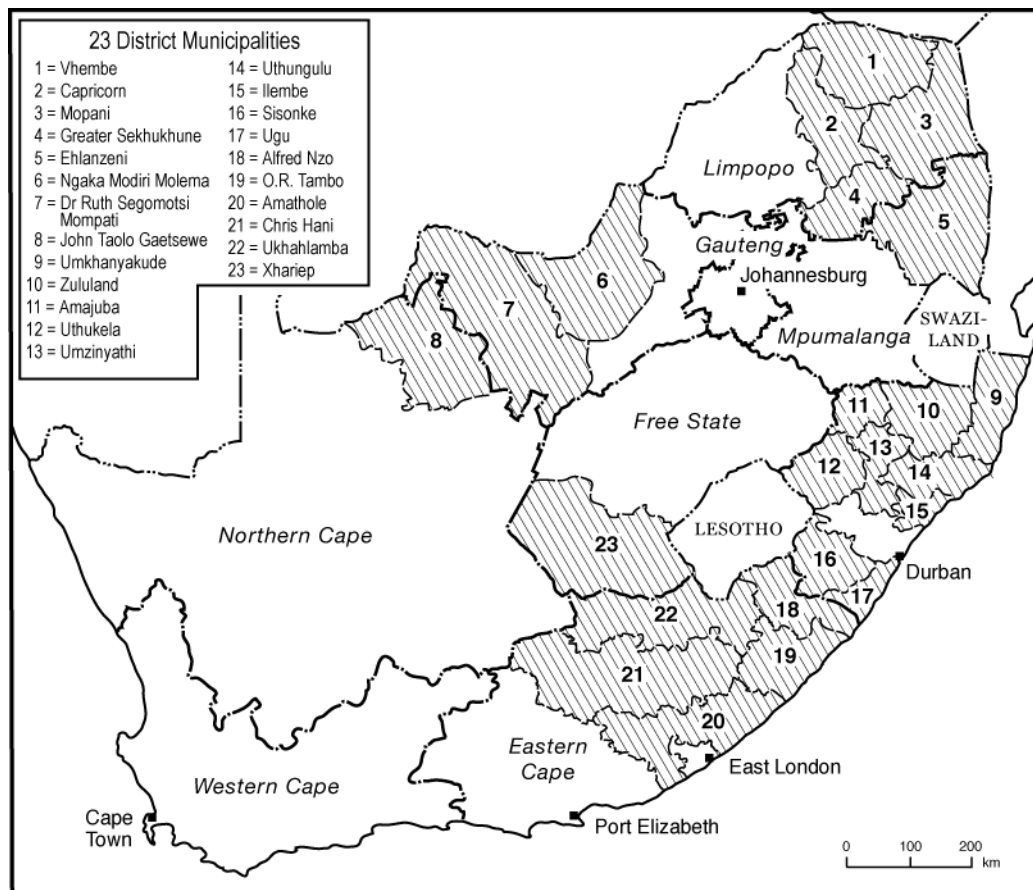


Table 2 presents the number of VFR travel trips recorded for each of these municipalities in 2010 and the share of VFR trips as a proportion of all tourism trips to these destinations. It shows that Ehlanzeni, Vhembe, Mopani and Capricorn in Limpopo, OR Tambo and Amatole in Eastern Cape, and Uthungulu and Zululand in KwaZulu-Natal are key destinations in the geography of VFR travel. Their importance can only be understood with reference to the historical role assumed by these regions as sources of cheap labour power under apartheid. In terms of South Africa's trajectory of capitalist development, this migratory labour arrangement was the "backbone" of the apartheid political economy, keeping wages artificially low, as it allowed for the externalisation of "reproduction costs for the labour power needed in the urban-industrial centres of the country" (Steinbrink, 2010, p. 38). With the transition to democracy and the end of apartheid it was widely thought that circular migration would erode and be replaced by permanent settlement in urban areas. In

particular with the abolition of influx control many observers expected that migration patterns would normalise with permanent settlement superseding circular migration.

Table 2: VFR Travel to Priority District Municipalities, 2010

District Municipality	VFR Trips ('000s)	VFR as % of All trips in District
Amatole	516	88.1
Chris Hani	334	74.9
Joe Gqabi (Ukhahlamba)	190	84.3
OR Tambo	554	83.8
Alfred Nzo	348	89.9
John Taolo Gaetsewe	64	75.6
Xhariep	88	45.0
Ugu	312	64.2
Uthukela	398	77.2
Umzinyathi	270	51.8
Amajuba	268	87.0
Zululand	444	83.5
Umkhanyakude	363	72.0
Uthungulu	555	84.0
iLembe	318	78.6
Sisonke	414	90.0
Ngaka Modiri Molema	415	75.0
Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti	277	80.7
Ehlanzeni	958	56.7
Mopani	687	64.2
Vhembe	773	80.4
Capricorn	558	53.2
Greater Sekhukhune	456	91.9

Source: Author Calculations based on Global Insight data

The evidence, however, suggests that this is not occurring and that circular migration continues to be an important dimension of the urbanization dynamics of contemporary South Africa (Todes, Kok, Wentzel, Van Zyl, & Cross, 2010). This supports the notion that second home ownership in South Africa is part of societal culture at different levels and is considered important in South African life (Hoogendoorn, 2011a). In common with trends observed in other parts of the Global South, circular migration has remained a central phenomenon in South Africa. As Steinbrink (2010) shows, circular migration persists – albeit in a different form as households have changed the way of organising migration. Arguably, after the collapse of apartheid, the informal organisation of translocal livelihoods replaced the state-enforced migrant labour system resulting in the continuation of circulatory movements. In contemporary South Africa, Steinbrink (2009, p. 248) points out that “the majority of the population in the rural areas of former homelands and also large parts of the population living within or on the fringes of urban centres are embedded in translocal contexts”. In the port city of Durban, many residents of low-income areas consider “the urban area [as] only a temporary place to stay” while “the rural home is regarded as the real home” (Smit 1998, p. 77). The frequency of return VFR trips to the rural home varies but is most often monthly. Similar findings are disclosed from other research on migration and urbanisation in South Africa (Lohnert & Steinbrink, 2005; Clark, Collinson, Kahn, Drullinger, & Tollman, 2007; Steinbrink, 2009; Todes et al., 2010).

As a whole, therefore across South Africa “circular migration predominantly connects rural and urban areas and tends to involve poor households” (Dick & Reuschke, 2013, p. 190). It is evident that most migrants maintain intensive contact with relatives in

rural areas with migrants from one village in the former Transkei Homeland visiting the home village from Cape Town at least once in the previous 12-month period with visit duration varying in length from 3 days to as much as several months (Steinbrink, 2009). These visits occur mainly at school holiday periods, for celebrations and ceremonies (funerals, weddings, initiation) and for traditional healing. Migrant associations, which function as support networks in urban areas, reinforce urban-rural connectivities and encourage return trips to rural areas by urban migrants (Steinbrink, 2009, 2010). Thus, with a large segment of the population in rural areas of former Bantustans as well as a majority of the marginalised population residing within or on fringe of cities integrated into translocal contexts of living, the phenomenon of VFR travel in South Africa is reinforced among the country's poor (Lohnert & Steinbrink, 2005, p. 102). This means that, as Hoogendoorn (2011a) shows, low income earners in the Global South also are second home owners, a fact which is little acknowledged in Northern second home scholarship. In South Africa the 'second home' of low-income earners is considered part of household survival and reproduction rather than used for purposes of recreation, however this is not the case as low income earners do inhabit their 'second home' for leisure purposes (Hoogendoorn, 2011a, p. 46). First and second homes are also continually inhabited either by nuclear family or by extended family (Hoogendoorn, 2011a).

Table 2 shows that one vital outcome of this pattern of VFR travel by black migrants in South Africa is that for most of the poorest parts of the country VFR travel is the most significant component of local tourism economies (Rogerson, 2015). Indeed, it is apparent from Table 2 that for many of the district municipalities that incorporate former Homelands areas VFR travel can comprise 80 percent or more of total tourism

trips. The major geographical distribution and local impacts of VFR tourism in South Africa thus relate to complex urban-rural mobilities and the maintenance of a rural 'home' by many black urban dwellers. For most of the eastern parts of South Africa VFR travel constitutes over 70 percent of all tourism. In certain areas, however, such as Sekhukhune, Zululand, Amajuba, Joe Gqabi, O.R. Tambo or Alfred Nzo there are few other forms of tourism mobilities apart from VFR travel. These are areas where labour migration is entrenched and translocal livelihoods are maintained across large distances. VFR travel and second home ownership is at the heart of this new landscape of circular migration in South Africa. Engaging in first and second home ownership, through VFR travel and labour migration is seen by many poor South Africans from homeland areas, as a 'rite of passage' to enter adulthood (Masetle, 2010). In terms of economic impact, often the reason for having first and second homes is the remittance economy, and that children can be afforded a safer and more stable educational environment (Hoogendoorn, 2011a).

In completing the picture of VFR travel and second homes in South Africa one must turn to what might be called a second upper circuit of such mobilities. This second circuit is comprised of affluent, mainly white travellers and exhibits parallels to the kinds of VFR travel linked to second homes which have been documented in Nordic countries and Australia (Hoogendoorn and Visser, 2004; Hoogendoorn, Marais and Visser, 2009; Hoogendoorn, Mellett and Visser, 2005). In the case of the Global North, reasons for visiting second homes often cited are relaxation, leisure, outdoor activities and escaping from city life. These are the essential drivers of the other 20 percent of VFR movements which have been explored in a range of investigations by Hoogendoorn and Visser (cf. 2010; 2011). It is important to note that the spatial

patterns of these forms of travel depart markedly from the dominant patterns of travel by working-class Black South Africans. It is shown that in terms of their spatial distribution white second home owners access privately owned second homes very differently in elite coastal locations especially in the Western Cape in places such as Stellenbosch, Hermanus, Plettenberg Bay and Knysna (Amoils, 2013; Visser, 2003). This upper circuit of mobility is not directly linked to VFR travel and labour migration as is the case of working-class Black South Africans.

4. Conclusions

This paper sought to unravel the nexus of VFR travel and second homes, an issue that has attracted little direct scholarship. It was argued that in the global South the nature of VFR travel must be understood in relation to urbanisation and migration processes which have taken a different course to that of Europe, North America or other advanced economies. The most distinguishing trait of migration in the Global South is that circular forms of migration have persisted as a consequence of the growth of urbanization which is disconnected from industrialization processes. An understanding of this migration context is an essential starting point for unpacking the nature and patterns of VFR travel and second home ownership in many parts of the Global South and in particular the South African case which was scrutinised in some detail.

South Africa does not have an official database that considers second homes tourism, in relation to VFR travel patterns. Nevertheless, our analysis reveals a large tourism geography in South Africa dominated by second homes which should not be ignored in academic research or in policy frameworks. It is essential to distinguish between

different patterns of mobilities or circuits which relate to VFR movements and second homes in South Africa. On the one hand there is a small elite circuit of mainly white tourists who engage in visiting second homes for reasons of relaxation, leisure, outdoor activities and escaping from city life. This 'upper circuit' has close parallels to research in the Global North about VFR travel to for example the Gold Coast of Australia (cf Backer, 2008, 2010). On the other hand, there is a second, much larger set of mobilities for VFR travel by poor black South Africans. Much of this lower circuit is an informal sector variant of travel and involves direct family visits to children and grandparents who permanently reside in rural areas. The roots of large-scale VFR travel in the country must be interpreted as part of the making of a coercive labour regime organised around cheap migrant labour power in colonial times and subsequently under apartheid. The ending of apartheid has not produced the anticipated demise of circular migration as a change occurred from a formal to an informal system of circular mobilities that in turn relates to the existence of two separate but interconnected homes. Overall this type of mobility challenges the Northern dominated conceptions of VFR travel and second homes tourism.

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