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# TOURISM-LED LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades a considerable amount of international research has been undertaken concerning the organization, dynamics and implementation of Local Economic Development (LED) planning (see e.g., Harvey, 1989; Clarke and Gaile, 1998; Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Pyke, 1998; Scott and Pawson, 1999; Glasmeier, 2000; Jessop and Sum, 2000; Helmsing, 2001a, 2001b). LED is defined as a process in which partnerships are established between local governments, the private sector and community-based groups in order to manage existing resources for job creation as well as the stimulation of local economies (Helmsing, 2001a; World Bank, 2001). Central to the new local entrepreneurialism is the notion of public-private partnerships, "in which traditional local boosterism is integrated with the use of local government powers to try and attract external sources of funding, new direct investments or new employment sources" (Harvey, 1989: 7). In addition, to attract new business into a locality, the public sector commonly engages in the speculative construction of place, which is "achieved by sponsoring certain events, promoting specific place images or by investing public money into urban redevelopment projects" (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000: 25). In the international context, Agarwal et al. (2000: 252) observe that "tourism is widely recognised as an instrument of local economic development". Indeed, there is an observable trend across many developed countries for LED initiatives to be based increasingly upon promoting localities as centres of consumption rather than of production activities (Harvey, 1989; Britton, 1991; Agarwal, 1999). Tourism spaces represent examples of localities in which local development is firmly anchored upon *consumption* rather than production-based growth and development.

In South Africa a surge of studies on LED has occurred since 1994 in parallel with the new policy emphasis accorded to LED planning, particularly in the post-apartheid era (South Africa, 1998; DPLG, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Nel, 1999a, 2001a, 2001b). Core themes that have been investigated concern the successes and failures of different forms of LED intervention, institutional arrangements for LED, the changing policy environment, and a stream of case studies on the efforts of particular urban and rural localities to introduce LED interventions (see e.g., Maharaj and Ramballi, 1998; Rogerson, 1997, 1999, 2000; Nel and Humphrys, 1999; Nel, 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Bloch, 2000; Harrison and Naidoo, 2000; Walker, 2000; Dorfling, 2001; Philander and Rogerson, 2001; Binns and Nel, 2001, 2002). Despite the growth of research and the popularity of LED studies in South Africa, one notable theme that is markedly under-represented and little discussed within the existing literature is that of tourism-led LED (see Nel, 2001a). The relative lack of attention accorded to tourism-led LED is surprising in view of both the international importance that is attached to tourism as a catalyst for job creation and the increased prominence given in South Africa to tourism as a potential driving force for national economic development. With the significance accorded to tourism as a potential economic driver for the South African economy in the 21st century, it is essential that local policy-makers develop a firmer understanding of the complex issues concerning tourism-led LED.

The objective in this article is to investigate existing debates surrounding tourism-led LED. More especially, the focus is upon identifying the key dynamics and success factors in tourism-led LED both from the international experience and a more limited South African research record. Because of the emerging nature of LED planning in the developing world as a whole, much of the discussion necessarily draws upon the experience of tourism spaces and tourism-led LED in developed countries. This examination of the comparative South African and international experiences of tourism-led LED is organized in terms of four sections of discussion. First, the key factors in the emergence and development of successful tourism spaces are investigated. Second, the international experience of tourism-led LED is reviewed and certain best practice elements are distilled. Third, the existing South African material concerning tourism and LED is reviewed. Finally, by way of a conclusion, ten key principles are identified from the international and South African experiences concerning tourism and local economic development.

### *SUCCESSFUL TOURISM SPACES*

At the outset it must be appreciated that localities may become recognised as tourism spaces in at least three different ways (Davidson and Maitland, 1997). First, many localities, such as seaside resorts or spas, are 'discovered'

by entrepreneurs or developers who identify in these places, certain opportunities for development. There will follow the construction and development of accommodation and recreational facilities, tourist attractions or conference centres whose appeal may only partly depend on the attractiveness of the place where they are located (see Agarwal, 1999). Second, in many developed countries certain localities have become tourism spaces, if not against the will of the local inhabitants then at least often without their direct encouragement, as a result of much enhanced levels of personal mobility. For example, many coastal and rural areas, mountain and wilderness spaces, towns and cities have become tourism spaces by default often because of improved levels of mobility and of an increased search by people for new experiences in places previously untouched by tourism (Davidson and Maitland, 1997). Finally, in many cases, tourism spaces emerge out of necessity as tourism development may be driven by the imperative for localities to secure new economic activities in order to create employment and growth as traditional industries or activities decay or decline. Beginning in the 1980s across many cities of the USA and Western Europe 'urban tourism' emerged as a major focus for local economic development and urban regeneration (Law, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996). Moreover, tourism was identified also as an important local driver for economic development across many rural areas of Western Europe that were experiencing depopulation and decline (Cavaco, 1997; Page and Getz, 1997; Slee et al., 1997; Jenkins et al., 1998; Agarwal et al., 2000; Lassila, 2000).

For any locality to emerge as a successful tourism space, a number of critical factors must be in place and coalesce. First, there is a fundamental requirement for localities to develop a total tourism product or portfolio of products which will attract visitors (Davidson and Maitland, 1997: 21). The tourism product is viewed as a combination of resources and services. Resources are seen as constituting the initial attraction that the destination has for visitors whereas services are provided to make possible or enhance the visit, and supplied mainly, or in some cases entirely, for tourists. Smeral (1998: 375) argues that the competitive position of any tourism destination is determined to a significant extent by the diversity and quality of its resources and services. In particular, considerable emphasis is given to the importance of quality as a factor in impacting upon the competitiveness of tourism spaces (Smeral, 1998).

The resource base of any locality comprises its natural resources (climate, environment, landscape), built environment resources (historic sites, retailing attractions and the like) and socio-cultural resources (including arts, culture, festivals, sports attractions) (Davidson and Maitland, 1997). The appropriate packaging and marketing of the unique combination of resources of localities in terms of 'imaging' a place is essential for its success. Essential services as part of a locality's tourism product would include

transport services (provision of roads, airport facilities), hospitality services (accommodation, restaurants and bars) and critical support services (tourist information centres, conference or guide services) which are geared to attract visitors and enhance their experience. Overall, it is evident that the attractiveness of particular tourism spaces arises from its blend of resources and services. Davidson and Maitland (1997: 23) observe: "Without such a mix, a place will not work as a destination".

Nevertheless, for tourism activity at any locality to be considered a success, it must not only provide a satisfactory experience for visitors but it must also maintain or improve the quality of life of local populations as well as protect the local natural, built and cultural environment or resources. In addition, the tourism industry itself, more especially the private sector, must be rewarded in terms of reasonable profits for the risks it takes in investing in commercial facilities at the tourism destination. It is stressed that only in circumstances when "tourism is developed in an integrated manner which respects the rights and wishes of all of these parties, can it be considered a success" (Davidson and Maitland, 1997: 2).

Second, the success of tourism spaces is inextricably linked to the process of what Helmsing (2001a: 17) calls "locality development". Essentially, this term refers to "the overall planning and management of economic and physical development of the area concerned" (Helmsing 2001c: 7). In terms of tourism spaces, this links to the emergence of a specialised infrastructure which is designed specifically to support the competitiveness of the local economy. One example would be establishment of local training institutions aimed to provide necessary skills for employment in tourism or for enhancement of tourism entrepreneurship opportunities through small business development. Nevertheless, it is essential that locality development also respond more broadly to "the management of the entire local territory" (Helmsing, 2001a: 18). This should be undertaken in a manner that builds up physical infrastructure and local economic and social overhead capital providing for the balanced development of all land uses, resolving land use conflicts, minimising negative externalities, such as congestion or pollution, and seeking to maximise positive externalities in the form of agglomeration economies. Locality development includes several components, including participatory local planning, improvement of land use regulation and the creation and expansion of economic and social overhead capital, including local training institutions (Tosun, 2000; Helmsing, 2001c).

A third critical underpinning for overall success in tourism spaces is the effective planning and management of tourism at destinations (Davidson and Maitland, 1997: 96). In tourism destination management, a partnership is essential between public and private sectors. The planning and development of tourism at destinations is seen as far too important to be left solely in the hands of private sector entrepreneurs, whose major concern is

profits and often may have no long-term allegiance to the locality as a whole. That said, if tourism development is dominated by the public sector then it is viewed as unlikely to be developed at an optimum rate from an economic point of view (Bramwell and Sharman, 1999). Accordingly, the experience of both North America and Western Europe concerning destination management points to the importance of evolving a range of public-private sector partnerships in order for successful tourism spaces to be created and sustained (Law, 1993; Agarwal, 1999).

In terms of destination management there are several critical issues that must be successfully addressed. First, the management of the competition that may occur between tourism and other economic activities for the use of resources in particular tourism spaces. Indeed, it is common for resources which have tourism potential to be attractive to other kinds of enterprise. The best example is the conflict that exists between the demands for mineral extraction in beautiful and or remote rural areas with an unspoilt natural landscape attractive to visitors. Accordingly, seeking complementarities or synergies between competing resource users and resolving conflicts are keys for successful destination management. Second, another vital task for destination management is to manage the portfolio of tourism products in a tourism space in terms of the long-term economic health of a locality. Indeed, it is clear that the success of tourism spaces "depends not so much on having a single successful (tourism) product as on having a successful portfolio of products" (Davidson and Maitland, 1997: 58). Destination management must confront a variety of problems ranging from coping with decline to dealing with rapid growth, introducing new products or establishing tourism as a significant part of the local economy. Overall, successful destination management depends on having a portfolio of tourism products that have to be constantly modified, updated and in some cases re-invented.

Third, destination management may require the initiation of visitor management plans so that large numbers of people can be accommodated at popular destinations without causing negative consequences for the local tourism resource (natural, built, socio-cultural) base. Visitor management is seen as an ongoing process which aims to reconcile the potentially competing needs of tourists, the place and the host community (Tyler, 2000). The need for visitor management planning arises from the fact that whilst the private sector driven tourism industry may be successful at attracting visitors to destinations, it is often less successful at protecting destinations from the negative effects of tourism development. The visitor management planning process is concerned with how to accommodate visitors whilst minimizing the adverse impacts that they may cause (Davidson and Maitland, 1997). The case of the Peak Tourism Partnership is of a public-private sector organization set up to develop visitor management and sustainable tourism in England's Peak district (Bramwell and Sharman, 1999).

Fourth, destination management points to the wider need for what is termed "the institutional thickness of a successful tourism system" (Geerts, 2000: 120) which requires involvement from all stakeholders. It is argued that successful tourism spaces require "more than the presence of a range of interesting attractions"; instead "the organisational structure and culture of its tourism system exert a great amount of influence" on its success (Geerts, 2000: 124). Essential elements of institutional thickness are seen in terms of, *inter alia*, good leadership, collective representation from a range of organisations and institutions, high levels of inter-institutional co-operation and communication, network cooperation, and identification with a common objective. The record of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands is that institutional thickness is critical for successful tourism spaces and that "poor inter-organisational communication and coordination lead to a duplication of effort, to activities that overlap and conflict and to fragmented decision-making" (Geerts, 2000: 129). In rural tourism spaces, the importance of networking for co-operation is given considerable prominence (Komppula, 2000).

Finally, destination management often is linked to the preparation of local authority tourism strategies. The British experience shows that such strategies may vary considerably in their scope, content and level of detail and that "a well-researched and realistic tourism strategy or policy can be a very effective tool in developing tourism at a particular destination, to the advantage of residents, the environment and the tourism industry itself" (Davidson and Maitland, 1997: 179). Bramwell and Sharman (1999: 392) argue that there are "many potential benefits when stakeholders in a destination collaborate together and attempt to build a consensus about tourism". Such collaboration potentially avoids the cost of resolving conflicts in the long term, improves the coordination of policies and related actions and further 'adds-value' by building upon the store of knowledge, insights and capabilities of stakeholders in the destination.

In a review of the British record of local authority tourism strategies three major themes emerge as positive features (Davidson and Maitland, 1997). First, the importance to local authorities of isolating clearly-defined aims for developing local tourism; in the better strategies the various components are linked back to the aims. Second, local authorities should start from the perspective of tourists in order to guide future development. Third, local authority strategies must address the resentment from local residents concerning expenditure on developing tourism facilities or infrastructure, *inter alia*, by ensuring that facilities are as desirable to local people as to visitors, engaging local residents in debates about the most appropriate forms of development, and ensuring that tourism activities are self-financing and not a burden to local tax payers.

It is concluded from an investigation of the experience of tourism spaces in developed countries that no single plan or policy can offer a panacea for

instant success through tourism. Indeed, Davidson and Maitland (1997: 187) assert that there is "no off-the-peg package which will guarantee all destinations success through tourism". Nevertheless, the earlier review presented has discerned certain critical ingredients that might constitute the 'best practice' of successful tourism spaces. Of critical importance is the development of a total tourism product or, more correctly, a portfolio of different quality tourism products (Smeral, 1998). Equally significant is the role of destination management planning in all its various facets and especially of the imperative for institutional thickness (Geerts, 2000). It is against this backdrop that attention turns now to interrogate the international record of tourism-led local economic development initiatives.

#### *TOURISM-LED LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE*

Until the 1980s the activity of tourism-led LED was confined narrowly to the place marketing activities of the traditional sea, sun and sand resorts and inland spas of North America and Western Europe (Agarwal, 1999). Since the early 1980s, however, global economic restructuring has witnessed a spreading wave of interest and interventions concerning tourism and local economic development, particularly in North America and Western Europe (Britton, 1991; Law, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996; Murphy, 1997). Indeed, the strength of this wave is demonstrated by the fact that by the 1990s it could be confidently stated that tourism was "an essential part of the economic development strategies of the local state" (Hall and Jenkins, 1995: 38).

Throughout the 1990s interest in the opportunities for tourism-led economic development spread beyond Western Europe and North America into urban Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong (Rowe and Stevenson, 1994; Chang et al., 1996; Teo and Yeoh, 1997; Chang, 1999; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000). In Singapore the vigorous initiatives set to catalyse tourism through new historical and cultural attractions represent an outcome of the interplay between global economic forces on the one hand, and local level economic planning on the other (Chang et al., 1996; Teo and Yeoh, 1997; Chang, 1999). In New Zealand public sector entrepreneurship in tourism development is an important component in a new local culture of public management which surfaced in the 1990s (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000). At the close of the 1990s the first signs were in evidence that the wave of tourism-led initiatives for economic development was spreading into Africa. In addition to the launch of tourism initiatives in several South African cities (see below), tourism was acknowledged as a potential important focus for economic development in Lusaka, Zambia (Lusaka City Council, 1999) and Manzini, Swaziland (Manana, G., 2001)

One final element in the international spread of tourism-led economic development relates back to its origins in the coastal resorts of Western Europe. Indeed, throughout the 1990s many of the declining coastal resort areas of Western Europe re-engaged with LED initiatives in order to rejuvenate seaside tourism and aggressively compete with newer tourism destinations (Agarwal, 1999; Agarwal et al., 2000).

Undoubtedly, the major geographical focus of this post-1980 wave of tourism-led LED activity has been, and continues to be, in cities rather than rural areas (see Couch and Farr, 2000; Law, 2000). Although some notable successes were recorded in certain small town tourism-led LED initiatives in both Australia and Canada, it was in the larger urban centres that tourism gained a major profile in local development planning. Beyond urban tourism it should be acknowledged that a number of smaller rural-focussed tourism LED initiatives also have been launched in Western Europe, North America and Australasia (Page and Getz, 1997; Lassila, 2000; Saxena, 2000). In order to address rural out-migration and depopulation and restructure ailing rural economies, there was "a search for local development strategies which are considered to be sustainable and which include activities that capitalise on local resources" (Cavaco, 1997: 140). Accordingly, the belief crystallized that "tourism will provide a new source of income and jobs" and has the capacity to facilitate the re-population or revitalisation of many semi-abandoned rural spaces (Cavaco, 1997). In many respects therefore the impetus for galvanizing rural LED initiatives in tourism was similar to that in cities in that lost employment opportunities in the traditional economic base precipitated a review and promotion of their tourism resources (Davidson and Maitland, 1997: 107). The growth of rural tourism LED initiatives has been promoted in a range of national policies and European Union initiatives such as LEADER (Jenkins et al., 1998).

### *The Development of Urban Tourism and LED*

The origins of the recent wave of tourism-led LED in cities are generally attributed to the initiatives that were launched in Baltimore, Lowell and Boston to build up their attractions for visitors and establish themselves as tourism destinations (Davidson and Maitland, 1997: 96). Over the last two decades more and more non-traditional destinations, particularly industrial cities, have become involved in the business of urban tourism (Law, 1991, 1996, 2000). For example, many industrial cities in Britain such as Sheffield, Birmingham, Wigan, Bradford, Liverpool, Glasgow or Manchester have sought to become tourism destinations (Fowler, 1992; Davidson and Maitland, 1997; Law, 2000). The role of entrepreneurial localities was that of creating tourism demands through enhancement of the tourism resources and services in these areas (Law, 1992, 1993; Hall and Jenkins, 1995).



As parts of the total tourism product or portfolio, the development of inner-city leisure spaces, waterfront developments, festival market places, casinos, museums, conference centres, festival markets and sports stadium were the physical manifestations of the new LED initiatives for urban tourism (Law, 1991; Hall and Jenkins, 1995; Chang et al., 1996; Law, 1996).

Tourism was sought because of the positive impacts that it could offer for local economies in terms of job creation and enterprise development (Law, 1993; Davison and Maitland, 1997; Swarbrooke, 2000). More especially, in a context of global restructuring and de-industrialization, tourism offered opportunities for the renewal of many urban economies that were in decline (Law, 1996). Nevertheless, tourism also played a wider role by helping to remould the image of these places and because of the complementarity it has with other growing activities. In particular, image enhancement was assisted by the role that tourism played in the process of physically regenerating the inner cities of many European and American cities (Law, 1992, 2000). Urban spaces were reconstructed in a manner which accorded with "the imaging needs of demand-side economic development strategies" (Hall and Jenkins, 1995: 38). Components of re-imaging included the hosting of large-scale sports or cultural 'mega-events', dockland redevelopment projects, the making of heritage precincts, the establishment or refurbishment of art galleries, theatres and museums, and the development of city cultural policies (see Law, 1991, 1993).

It is evident that an essential pre-condition for the success of urban tourism was further investment in tourism resources and services. In Western European cities public finance was essential in order to develop infrastructures and to provide key attractions (Owen, 1990; Law, 1996). Public support for tourism as an LED strategy is thus essential for a number of reasons (Law, 1991). First, that local officials want to feel that they have the local population behind them when they commit resources to this strategy. Second, "tourism is most successful when local people enthusiastically support the programme" (Law, 1991: 52) in terms of making visitors welcome, looking after tourism resources and the like. As Owen (1990: 201) argues it is critically important that the tourism-leisure-recreation element of LED interventions "must be seen to benefit the host community no less than the visitor". Third, as tourism-led LED requires a partnership with the private sector it is more likely that public recognition for urban tourism will secure support from the private sector.

At a simple level, it might be viewed that cities "are developing the tourism industry in the same way as they might develop any other industry" (Law, 1993: 166). Nevertheless, Law (1992: 601) cautions that "it would be wrong to see the promotion of tourism simply as one component of local economic policy, similar to either industrial or office development". It is argued that "the tourism industry is not like other industries" and that in

terms of LED, tourism has a much broader significance (Law, 1993: 166). Investment in tourism involves the development of facilities, activities, physical environments and infrastructure which will have benefits for the local community (Law, 1993: 28). Furthermore, it involves marketing the city and selling of an image which will assist in the attraction of industrial and commercial activities. Finally, it is argued that many activities being expanded, such as culture or sport, may persuade potential residents, such as professionals or entrepreneurs, that these 'tourism spaces' are good places in which to live and maybe invest (Couch and Farr, 2000). The elements of tourism promotion in cities are seen as exerting a wider influence on urban economic development beyond that of the tourism economy itself. Overall, therefore, tourism development in cities is seen as congruent and supportive of wider LED strategies (Law, 1996: 11).

Some of the range of strategies applied in urban areas to promote tourism-led LED may be illustrated from the recent experience of New Zealand, where a number of local authorities have actively engaged in tourism promotion. Not surprisingly, place marketing represents the most common activity engaged in by local authorities with the generation of promotional literature, signage and tourism product development (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000). Another common theme is the encouragement of event tourism, through support for cultural, arts and sports festivals. Further initiatives have involved assistance for new museums and the planning of waterfront developments (Page, 1993). Of note in the New Zealand experience are certain attempts to enhance community involvement and raise awareness of tourism variously through open days, radio talkback shows and regular columns in the local newspaper (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000).

### *Assessing Tourism-Led LED*

Tourism-led LED initiatives in North American and Western European cities have been the subject of assessment and critical attention by several authors (Owen, 1990; Law, 1993, 1996, 2000; Swarbrooke, 2000). For some scholars, most importantly Law (1992, 1993, 1996), it is argued that the jury must still be out. It is stressed that "urban tourism is still in its early days and many cities are still getting their tourism strategy and promotional organisation into place so that it is too early to make a final evaluation of their programmes" (Law, 1992: 615). For other writers, however, given the vast amount of public money spent on urban tourism initiatives, "the lack of critical evaluation in this field is both surprising and concerning" (Swarbrooke, 2000: 284).

Most writers appear to concur that the role of tourism-led LED in urban areas has been most successful in the case of American cities, such as Baltimore or Boston. Nevertheless, even in these 'success stories', areas of great

poverty and deprivation may be closely juxtaposed with high profile tourism developments. The dynamism in U.S. cities is seen as contrasting with the stagnation of many British tourism-led LED initiatives (Swarbrooke, 2000). Within Western Europe, considerable credit is given to the two Spanish cities of Barcelona and Bilbao in terms of implementing strategies of economic development linked to successful tourism. Both cities are seen as having implemented co-ordinated strategies which have transformed these cities. Liverpool, Rouen and Rotterdam are further examples of cities where a tourism-led LED initiative is claimed to have achieved a measure of success (Owen, 1990; Fowler, 1992). It is cautioned, however, that the present positive impact of tourism upon these European cities may be short-lived. Indeed, staying successful will demand constant innovation and investment in order to keep ahead of such newer rivals as St. Petersburg or Tallinn. Swarbrooke (2000: 281) cautions: "By embarking on a tourism-led strategy cities are committing themselves to a long-term strategy with no guarantee of success".

Generally speaking, there appear to be nine major areas of debate or discussion concerning the tourism and LED (Goodwin, 1998; Ashley et al., 2000; Swarbrooke, 2000). These relate to the following themes:

- questions of democracy
- community involvement
- resource allocation
- distribution of costs and benefits
- the concept of partnership
- sustainability
- the relationship of tourism with other economic sectors
- monitoring
- poverty alleviation

Each will be examined briefly in turn.

First, in terms of democracy, many of the tourism-led LED initiatives implemented in Western Europe and North America have been criticised for being undemocratic in terms of their implementation, which often took place through the establishment of special agencies designed to regenerate urban areas. Second, citizens in tourism spaces must be engaged in key decision-making concerning the locality or otherwise a situation emerges which can lead to resentment and negative attitudes towards tourists. Third, debate has been aired over the use of public funds to develop tourism infrastructure with the argument put forth that such monies could be devoted to more valuable causes, such as improving health, housing or education facilities. Fourth, the distribution of costs/benefits has been subject to contestation with local populations arguing that whilst the private sector benefits, local populations appear to receive "a less impressive deal"

(Swarbrooke, 2000: 276). Fifth, the partnerships established for tourism and LED are often seen as uneven with the public sector providing most resources, the private sector taking most financial benefits and poor communities entirely excluded from these partnerships. Six, the sustainability of many tourism-led LED initiatives has been questioned more especially as in many cases both in urban and rural areas, the adoption of such strategies is a last resort and that many local people probably would prefer to see attempts to revive traditional industries and livelihoods rather than the rise of tourism. Seven, in many cases tourism has been planned in isolation and that potential synergies or complementarities with other economic activities have been lost opportunities. Eight, monitoring procedures need to be set in place in order to see how strategies are working out in practice, allowing the option of the abandonment of tourism-led LED in those cases where satisfactory outcomes are not being achieved.

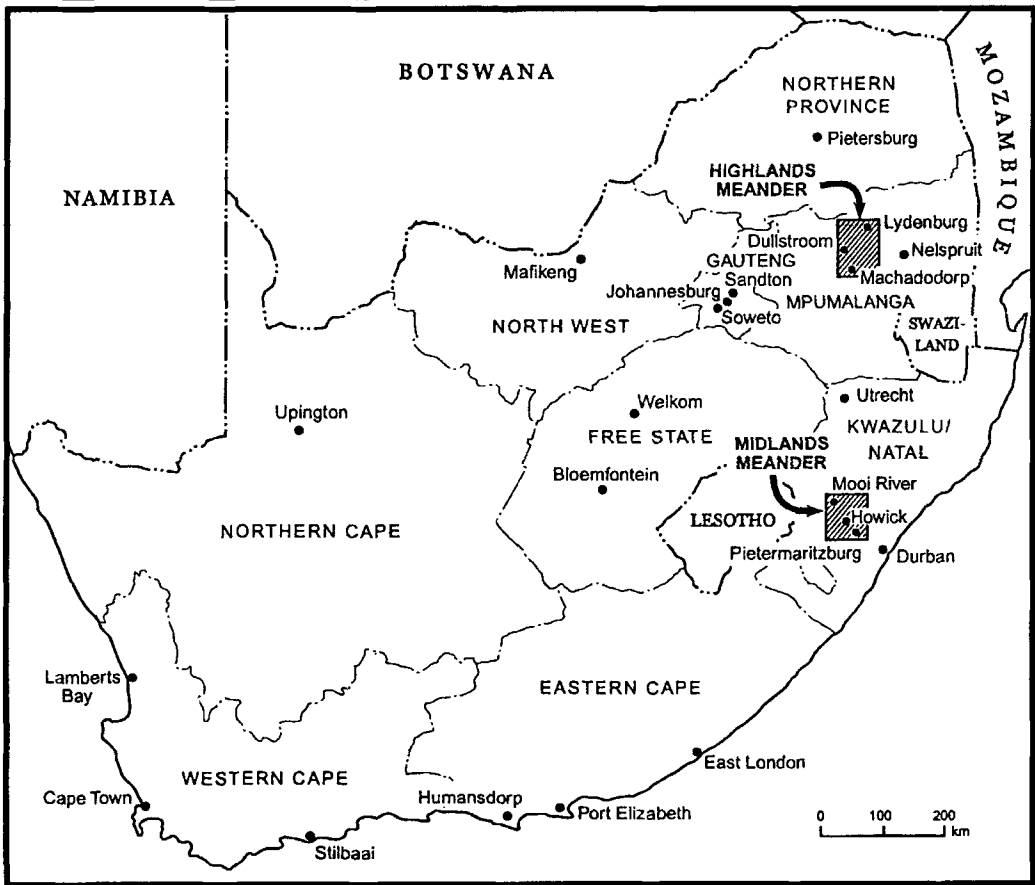
Finally, it is essential, particularly in the context of developing countries, that poverty issues be put firmly on the tourism agenda (Goodwin, 1998; DFID, 1999; Ashley et al., 2000). Pro-poor tourism focuses explicitly upon maximizing benefits for the poor as the end, not a means (DFID, 1999). Pro-poor LED initiatives must seek to expand the participation of poor people in the tourism economy "by addressing the barriers they face and maximising a wide range of employment, self-employment and informal sector opportunities" (Ashley et al., 2000: 5). Goodwin (1998) argues that in achieving the objectives for LED, "local development requires that the benefits of tourism be distributed beyond the local or national elites and those who find employment in their hotels and agencies". The core issues that need to be addressed in realising the potential for pro-poor tourism to contribute to sustainable LED are issues of ownership, economic leakages, local employment and benefit distribution (Goodwin, 1998; DFID, 1999; Ashley et al., 2000).

### *TOURISM AND LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA*

In South Africa the majority of successful tourism spaces owe their development to their discovery by entrepreneurs or private developers who saw opportunities for profitable investment. More recently, a number of other tourism spaces, particularly in small towns and rural areas, have been opened up as a result of an extension of the range of the 'pleasure periphery' due to improved levels of travel amongst the population as a whole. Lastly, a growing number of tourism spaces are emerging as a product of pro-active interventions for LED using tourism as a lead economic sector.

Figure 1

Location of Select Tourism-Led LED Initiatives in South Africa



Place marketing has been the most common and long-established feature of local tourism development in South Africa. Only in the 1990s did the first serious initiatives emerge for what would later be termed 'tourism-led LED' (Fig. 1). In these cases locally elected representatives often in partnership with the private sector chose to market or further develop the municipality or region for tourism, based upon its natural, built or cultural resources. In addition to initiatives that have been launched in Cape Town and Durban (well-established South African tourism centres) involving waterfront redevelopments, a number of non-traditional tourism places are undertaking initiatives to promote tourism development. Often these newer initiatives are driven by necessity as the decline of a traditional economic base precipitates a search for new sources of employment. Two good examples of urban tourism as regeneration catalyst are found in Johannesburg and Welkom. Several initiatives are taking place in Johannesburg for

catalysing the existing tourism economy, most importantly the planned development of Newtown as a cultural district, the construction of the Sandton Convention Centre for business tourism and, promotion of Soweto as a centre for political tourism. In the Free State town of Welkom the collapse of the gold mining economy resulted in a search for new sources of growth, including the building of a world class race track designed for motor-cycling in order to attract sports tourism (Binns and Nel, 2001).

Outside of the major cities and secondary towns, many other tourism-led LED initiatives are being launched. The research undertaken for the South African tourist cluster study provides an important basis for energising a series of tourism clusters or networks in smaller towns and rural areas (The Cluster Consortium, 1999). The Cluster Consortium sought to galvanize thematic clusters in the areas of both heritage tourism and eco-tourism (The Cluster Consortium, 1999). At present, the most notable small town tourism initiatives are those taking place at Stilbaai and Lambert's Bay which are linked to the decline of traditional fishing economies in these towns. In addition, there is considerable activity around the development of 'route tourism', which involves linking together the tourism resources of a number of smaller centres and collectively marketing them as a single tourism destination region. The most advanced examples of this kind of tourism-LED initiative are the Midlands Meander in KwaZulu-Natal and the Highlands Meander in Mpumalanga (see Rogerson, 2002).

Since 1999 there has been growing support from central government for the support of a range of local tourism-led LED initiatives, particularly linked to goals of job creation and poverty alleviation in South Africa. Under the Local Economic Development Fund (LEDF), an initiative which provides targeted funding to encourage bottom-up community economic development as well as to foster entrepreneurship, many local tourism projects have secured financing (Binns and Nel, 2002). In terms of this central government scheme, financial support is offered to specific locally proposed projects which are selected through an annual open competition. One case of a LEDF tourism project is the development of the Kouga cultural centre at Humansdorp in the Eastern Cape. Another example is the ambitious LED project at Utrecht in KwaZulu-Natal "where the entire town will be surrounded by a game park and a planned game farm in an attempt to create a major tourism destination" (Binns and Nel, 2002). Beyond the LEDF, other support for local tourism development in South Africa is sourced from the central government's poverty relief fund which centres on both tourism infrastructure projects and tourism product development. In particular, this fund provides support for the establishment of a number of tourism routes which are designed to benefit poorer communities by drawing them into the tourism mainstream.

Overall, therefore, there is presently considerable interest in the possibilities for developing tourism-led LED in many urban and rural areas of South Africa (Fig 1). Nevertheless, research on tourism and LED as yet is in its infancy. Importantly, LED receives no mention in most of the standard texts on South African tourism (e.g., Saayman, 2000). Moreover, only a handful of studies focus specifically on the question of tourism-led LED in South Africa (Nel, 1999b; Mathfield, 2000; Rogerson, 2002). Below are presented the key findings of two research investigations concerning Stilbaai and the Midlands Meander which together highlight different facets of tourism-led LED in contemporary South Africa.

### *Stilbaai: From Fishing Town to Tourism Town*

The small town of Stilbaai in the Western Cape represents a valuable case study in successful LED initiatives for economic transformation of a declining locality. The spatial structure of the town of Stilbaai reflected the typical apartheid legacy with the existence of two different and separated communities. The first Stilbaai was a population of mostly wealthy white residents, the majority of whom were temporary dwellers, leaving their properties vacant for large parts of the year. The permanent residents were largely retirees, small tourism operators and the owners of the limited services available in Stilbaai. Retirement, small-scale tourism and minor services thus dominated the first Stilbaai. The second Stilbaai community was living in the adjacent coloured settlement of Melkhoutfontein, a settlement with desperately poor infrastructure and an economy anchored solely on fishing (Nel, 1999b).

Since the 1970s, however, the fishing industry has been in decline as a result of overfishing along the southern Cape coast. By the early 1990s the fishing economy of Melkhoutfontein was in terminal decline with the result that an estimated 80 percent of the settlement's potentially economically active population were unemployed. According to one contemporary report, Melkhoutfontein had become among the poorest fishing villages in the Western Cape province. The prospects for work opportunities in Stilbaai were scarcely better for since the late 1980s the local economy was in stagnation. Stilbaai's local crisis had two origins: first, that the seasonality of existing tourism patterns was creating troughs in the economy and limited net growth, and second, that the aging white population was in need of various support and care facilities which were not available. It was the combined effects of these crises which came together to precipitate LED initiatives that would transform Stilbaai into one of the most successful small town LED regeneration initiatives (Nel, 1999b).

The origins of the LED initiative was the establishment in 1985 of the Jagerbosch Community Care Centre which was set up initially to care for the needs of the white retired community. Subsequently, as a Section 21

community this became a channel of funds and support to several community initiatives in the town. The community centre began to offer employment opportunities to unemployed women in Melkhoutfontein in order to meet the social, welfare and support needs of the ageing white population. The centre's success precipitated a direct appeal from the Melkhoutfontein community for the building of a similar facility. What occurred was a coming together of two key local leaders or champions and the formation of a joint Community Development Committee mandated to determine the development goals and needs of Stilbaai and specifically of Melkhoutfontein (Nel, 1999b).

The initial focus of the development committee was the establishment of a care facility in Melkhoutfontein. This was financed out of both local fundraising activities (cake sales, donations) and later from external donors. Training in building and running the facility was provided to local residents, including the offering of craft courses which would allow women to benefit from the tourism trade after completion of the care facility. The project instilled considerable local pride and with its completion in 1995 was seen as a beacon of hope. An additional project was the beginnings of community gardens in Melkhoutfontein in order to improve levels of nutrition.

The core LED growth initiatives concerned energetic efforts to promote the local tourist base, both in Stilbaai and Melkhoutfontein. Major elements in this tourism initiative included, *inter alia*, the construction of a craft centre at the Melkhoutfontein care facility and the training of women in design, colour and use of local products; the search for local and international markets for these craft products; the creation of South Africa's first botanical gardens in a township, where plants indigenous to the southern Cape have been established; securing organized tour groups to the centre, which is linked to the preparation and serving of traditional foods in a purpose built lapa; and, the formal training of one member of the community as a tour guide.

In Stilbaai the local Tourism and Economic Forum, which represents tourist and business interests, began to aggressively market the area as a family holiday destination. The marketing focus was on the 'Bay of Sleeping Beauty' and stressed the local unique attractions of whale watching, the presence of 'tame eels', and the spring flowers linked to the botanical garden. The private sector was encouraged to invest in Stilbaai by the marketing of the town as a tourist destination on the one hand and by a series of initiatives designed to assist the living conditions, infrastructural upgrading and job creation in the 'rejected' part of Stilbaai, namely Melkhoutfontein.

The results of this LED initiative in Stilbaai and Melkhoutfontein have been a net expansion of 191 new formal businesses, the creation of 700



permanent job opportunities in the building industry, a dramatic fall in local unemployment, and an expansion in the numbers of tourist visitors. The Stilbaai LED strategy embodied a dual focus; first, a market-led and business driven growth strategy oriented around tourism, and second, a market-critical and community driven thrust towards addressing poverty alleviation.

Although the Stilbaai LED experience underlines the importance of local agency, leadership and vision in ensuring success, it is important not to overlook the valuable role played by external agencies. Overall, four sets of agents facilitated change in the town. First, was the role played by the communities of Stilbaai and Melkhoutfontein as a whole which allowed the projects to go ahead. Second, was the existence of an energetic champion of LED who was responsible for organising developments, setting up the Jagersbosch Community Care Centre as a Section 21 Company, and helping to involve the local government. Third, the local LED institutions, Jagersbosch, the Community Development Committee and the Tourism and Economic Forum all played important roles in facilitating change. Finally, the role of external agencies, including Eskom, the Independent Development Trust and the Development Bank of Southern Africa supplied finance to initiate the development process (Nel, 1999b).

### *The Midlands Meander*

The Midlands Meander, which spans an area of approximately 64 km from Pietermaritzburg to Mooi River, represents an example of route tourism, which is a growing focus for tourism-led LED in South Africa (see Rogerson, 2002). The Meander is strategically located straddling the N3 national highway and main railway line that links Gauteng to Durban. It is focused upon a cluster of 120 white-owned small enterprises, including art studios, country hotels, flower farms, cheese makers, tea gardens, craft, pottery and weaving workshops, trout farms and golf courses. Collectively, this group of hospitality ventures and craft activities produce a network of quaint experiences that has started to put the Natal Midlands firmly on the national tourism map.

At its inception in 1985 the Meander began as an unplanned local economic initiative, involving a collaboration amongst a group of local artists, potters and weavers. Later, a series of accommodation and other hospitality-type enterprises were added to the attractions of the area. An important step was the amalgamation of different routes in 1992 and the formation in 1993 of the Midlands Meander Association. This is a not-for-profit organisation that began and has remained a voluntary association, with its major activity being that of marketing the Midlands Meander. Each year the organization produces a Midlands Meander map with the costs of pro-

duction divided among its membership who are given coverage in the brochure. In addition, the Association further supports the Meander by purchasing exhibition space at travel and trade shows.

The success of the Midlands Meander as an example of tourism-led development is primarily a result of the driving forces from the private sector. Local government involvement in this development initiative has occurred, however, through the support for marketing and promotion which has been offered by the iNdllovu Regional Council. This Council has played a useful facilitative role in support of the Midlands Meander in terms of forging linkages between various spheres of government relating to specific tourism issues, such as questions of road signage.

A recent detailed investigation of the Midlands Meander concluded that "in the context of an effort to grow tourism as an industry in South Africa, the Midlands Meander is an example of a successful locality-bound route that has expanded exponentially" (Mathfield, 2000: 54). One of the major facets of the Midlands Meander success is that it is targeted at a particular niche market, which is day trippers and groups of predominantly upper-income white holidaymakers. In particular, the success of the Meander emphasizes the importance of 'cumulative attraction', in which a group of enterprises separated over a large area are joined conceptually together as if they are located en route, in proximity or in logical sequence to each other. The systematic linkage between businesses which is both thematic and physical is at the heart of the marketing strategy of the Midlands Meander Association. Another important feature of the success story has been the linking of enterprises to a marketing association which has engendered a strong sense of community amongst its membership.

Although the Meander has been extremely successful in terms of tapping its targeted white tourist market, questions can be posed as to whether this LED initiative can open additional opportunities for growth and development. It is evident that the Meander has not begun to attract the large and growing urban, African middle-class tourist market. Indeed, it is striking that the artefacts and cultural experiences in Zulu rural traditionalism are largely ignored despite the fact that the surrounding local communities provide a craft and heritage focus within its midst (Mathfield, 2000). Hitherto, the activities of the Midlands Meander have been linked into the white-owned commercial farming economy of the Natal Midlands with so far limited spin-offs and opportunities for black entrepreneurs. Moreover, the linkage effects of the Meander enterprises have been primarily non-local, once again with minimal multiplier consequences for surrounding black communities.

It is argued that if the Midlands Meander is to be turned from a successful example of route tourism to a successful broad-based LED initiative, a rethinking of current directions is urgently required. At present, black en-

trepreneurship and clientele are not seen or imagined as being possible contributors to the long-term success of the Meander and of its tourist enterprises. Yet, as Mathfield (2000: 62) argues "real opportunities exist for the Meander to think and do otherwise" in terms of incorporating existing skills and interests in neighbouring black communities and in attracting the expanding black middle class tourism market. Unless such changes are implemented, the Midlands Meander will remain merely an excellent example of route tourism rather than a case of "tourism-driven local economic development that reaches across racially and socially divided communities that share common space" (Mathfield, 2000).

### *TEN KEY PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL TOURISM-LED LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

From the international and limited South African experience of LED there emerge a series of guidelines or key principles that may be discerned concerning tourism-led LED. These ten principles, which draw particularly from the works of Davidson and Maitland (1997), Goodwin (1998) Ashley et al. (2000), Geerts (2000), Swarbrooke (2000) and Tosun (2000), represent essential elements of an emerging best practice for tourism-led LED. These principles are important for the planning of future tourism-led LED interventions in South Africa.

1. There is a need for realism by policy-makers as to whether tourism is a viable option for particular localities, whether in urban or rural areas. Unless the locality has an adequate total tourism product or portfolio of products, tourism-led LED is not a viable option. Areas that would not have the basic requirements for tourism would be those which are in combination (a) intrinsically physically unattractive, (b) lack infrastructure, (c) not perceived as safe or secure; and/or (d) inaccessible by road or rail.
2. Economic development cannot be divorced from environmental, and particularly, social development. As well as job creation, enterprise development and environmental management, there is a need for stable communities, a well trained and educated workforce, safe environments and a healthy population. Tourism cannot create these social benefits but it cannot survive long without them.
3. Successful LED means bringing tangible benefits to poor communities. In developing economies, therefore, LED must be firmly linked to a commitment to pro-poor tourism policies. Pro-poor interventions in LED strategies must seek to enhance opportunities and expand the impact of tourism widely in local communities. In addition, tourism taxes or spin-offs might be used to improve local schools, health facilities or community development projects.
4. It must be acknowledged that tourism does not exist in isolation of other economic activities. An holistic approach is required in LED programming

- which recognises the linkages between tourism and other economic activities, seeks synergies and complementarities.
5. Attempts should be made to avoid the ghettoisation of tourism in destination regions. Tourists should be encouraged to venture away from the 'tourist oases' and instead participate in a richer learning experience in destination areas, taking the opportunity to meet local people, take part in everyday local events or even to visit local work places.
  6. There is a strong case for seeking to move away from large-scale and prestige projects and instead focus upon smaller scale projects, growing organically over time and under local managerial control, where possible. These smaller tourism projects potentially might offer greater opportunities for local enterprise and especially for SMME development.
  7. Local networks and networking should be encouraged as far as possible in order to ensure that the requirements of the tourism industry are maximised for local suppliers, reducing leakages from the local economy.
  8. Constant and objective monitoring and performance indicators need to be put in place.
  9. Community participation within and support for a tourism-led local economic development initiative must be maximised. Nevertheless, in developing countries, the limits of community participation also need to be recognised. It is naïve to assume that a participatory tourism development approach will alter the existing structure of the tourism industry without changing the dominant socio-economic and political structure of a locality.
  10. Finally, there is a critical need for good governance, cooperation and institutional thickness in order for the effective implementation of tourism-led LED initiatives.

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