Small Town Pioneers:  
Trials in Lifestyle Migration

Christina Kargillis, *Treading the Rainbow*, 2010

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Acknowledgements

This thesis represents a three-year journey which began on a very different latitude to where it has concluded. Exploring the scope of the inquiry was a six month endeavour in itself and I need to thank Dr Kitty Te Riele with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences for steering the path in helping me to define my research query through multi-dimensional topic unveiled in the following pages. I also thank my professional friends and academic peers whom I consulted within the first six months to help define the purpose of the research and my position within it.

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Person V: Dr Tamsin Kerr
Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

[Signature]

Date 25/09/2011
Abstract

This thesis explores the challenges and negotiations within the ‘lifestyle migration’ or sea/tree change of working people, to places rich in nature but ‘lean’ in industry. It examines how they overcome social, environmental and economic challenges in the process of negotiating a new life. The research is founded upon an empirical study in conjunction with relevant literature and theoretical analysis.

The inquiry stems from the need to address the growing popularity of the lifestyle migration phenomenon, where approximately two thirds of working aged migrants within the study site ‘fail’ within five years, and greater indications of ‘failure’ are found elsewhere in Australia.

In this research, lifestyle migration is positioned as a quest for self-actualisation where the contradiction exists of seeking a better life through a pathway of risk in unknown landscapes of apparently limited opportunities, often resulting in the experience of a somewhat more difficult life. In order to reach self-actualisation, lifestyle migrants must undergo the trials of changing environmental, social and economic paradigms in the process.

In exposing how the survivors have managed to survive, this study identifies the renegotiation of values with a particular emphasis towards control over one’s own life. It is suggested that for many lifestyle migrants, living a life orchestrated by the power structures of social expectations has failed the individual, who in turn, seeks to empower themselves by choosing a different ideology. However, new measures of status become apparent through lifestyle migration, as found in the research. Control over one’s own life and status issues are two of 30 themes explored in the narrative analysis of the study, where participants stemmed from diverse socio-economic positions and represented both the coastal and hinterland townships within the study site.

In order to understand how the survivors managed to survive, the research employs a unique approach in exploring the relationship between adult education perspectives focusing on reflexive identity and innovation theories, as well as educational perspectives of self-efficacy and emotional intelligence.

The findings suggest that lifestyle migrants need to be creative in order to survive through reflexivity with external factors, positioning the process of the relocation as a creative act.
The research argues that such a reflexive construction encourages a pioneering spirit among the survivors in displaying flexibility, accepting risk and adopting a self-reliant approach towards work and community involvement. These ‘small town pioneers’ embrace the wild frontier without the familiar structures of urban society, changing work and developing skill sets in order to survive. Creativity is crucial in such problem-solving, along with a reorchestration of values.

Cross-disciplinary fields involved in the exploration include studies in education in lifelong learning, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence; anthropology and sociology pertaining to lifestyle migration research; geography in explorations of transmigration and home; and philosophy in relation to status and the search for meaning.

Critically, this thesis considers existing lifestyle migration research where cultural implications pertaining to its country of origin are exposed, positioning the phenomenon as a non-homogenous entity on a global scale. Locally, the empirical work further supports a lack of homogeneity within the paradigm through a detailed exploration of interpretations within the findings. Such perceptions and their implications are previously unaddressed in academic discussion around the topic.

This thesis is a Doctor of Education by Portfolio, comprising four sets of components or artefacts – the thesis metastatement, a book, journal articles and audience participation tools – which contribute to both knowledge and to practice. Each of the portfolio’s artefacts hold specific aims, however the contribution of the thesis as a body of work is threefold:

1. Presenting findings which governing authorities may incorporate to inform their socio-cultural-economic decisions regarding non-urban migration;
2. Presenting an opportunity for transfer of learning for new and potential lifestyle migrants in exposing limiting and facilitating factors involved in the quest socially, culturally and economically;
3. Combining traditionally disparate concepts – creativity theory and identity theory – to understand the problem of the sustainability of lifestyle migration among working people.
Index of Portfolio Components

This thesis, *Small Town Pioneers: Trials in Lifestyle Migration*, is a Doctor of Education by Portfolio. It contains the following components in order of inclusion:

1. **Doctoral Metastatement**
   This metastatement explains the progression of the portfolio construction for the thesis, *Small Town Pioneers: Trials in Lifestyle Migration*, through discussion of the conceptual framework, contribution to professional practice and academia, theoretical basis, methodology and rationale of the portfolio artefacts. It outlines the contribution to knowledge and practice and demonstrates the ‘doctoralness’ of the portfolio as a thesis, further elaborated through its artefacts.

2. **Book – Small Town Pioneers: Trials in Lifestyle Migration**
   This book is the key artefact of the portfolio containing the majority of the research within this thesis. It represents a comprehensive account of the theoretical arguments, methodological approach and relevant literature in addition to a detailed account of the findings and summaries of the narratives. It is targeted to the professional audience(s) in making a contribution to practice, and also to the academic audience, contributing to knowledge.

3. **Journal Articles**
   Two academic journal articles are included. They contribute to knowledge through a cross-disciplinary approach which illuminates macro theories of creativity and identity, and educational perspectives, so that we may better understand and theorise upon the phenomenon of lifestyle migration among working people.

4. **Audience Participation Tools**
   This artefact comprises a research blog (smalltownpioneers.wordpress.com), various media inclusions and public talks. Their doctoral value is situated in their public accessibility as devices which target new and potential lifestyle migrants where they engage a community of practice and contribute to the cultural development of the practice of lifestyle migration, through participation and dissemination.