

# 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.

As a cross-disciplinary topic, determining a suitable supervisor was a test however the extensive experience of Professor Diana Slade was invaluable in providing me with a structural framework for the efforts ahead while her extensive network of colleagues helped me in refining my approach. Diana's direction for me was clear and ambitious – she must have known I perform well under pressure! Essentially she defined the mechanics of the task and provided constructive feedback on my chapter development early into the thesis, setting the bar for the remainder of it. Following her departure for an international commitment I was met by Dr Tony Holland who steered the remainder of the course until Diana's return, when I was lucky to have both pairs of eyes over the final stages. Tony's expertise in educational theory and vocational paradigms provided a perfect counterpart to the work I had completed at this juncture. He was always supportive, interested and generous with his knowledge in helping me to develop a meaningful piece of research, and I owe a great debt to his engagement with the project from reviewing my work to introducing new theoretical concepts into the equation.

This thesis is a professional portfolio and represents a new approach for the doctorate within the faculty, engineered by Professor Alison Lee. Alison's guidance was therefore indispensable in helping me to devise a portfolio which satisfied the criteria while introducing exciting avenues for it, such as the direction that its key artefact, a book, has taken. Through my literature review I embarked upon other researchers who have nurtured kindred topics and I am grateful especially to Postdoctoral Fellow, Dr Nicholas Osbaldiston of the University of Melbourne who took the time to discuss concepts and literature around lifestyle migration. His thesis and journal articles have been an inspiration and have also played an important role in articulating the differences between our approaches towards the phenomenon.

As a remote student who has completed two previous degrees with UTS, my ability to work autonomously has been honed over the years, however I found the doctorate the most demanding of these and it is possibly the most anti-social thing I have ever done! Therefore communication with friends, participants and interested parties throughout the experience has enabled me to stay connected and to pretend that doctoral life was 'normal'. At this point I need to thank my adrenaline-charged Cattle dog whose inability to sit at my feet for more than four hours at a time ensured that my responsibilities to him were adhered to, saving my eyesight and my sanity in the process. His obtuse personality greatly provided relief from this hermitage where indeed, our daily walks rose from five to ten kilometres and lunch was often held in conjunction with a backyard frisbee session rather than at the computer.

As an empirical piece of research there would be nothing to explore without the engagement of the participants – 22 people who either volunteered to share their stories in response to an invitation from a stranger, or otherwise agreed to participate. These diverse individuals are connected not only by the participation criteria for the research, but by their interest and their generosity of time and spirit. Thank you. Each spent approximately two hours with me in person along with a stream of following communication to help me develop the concepts inside this book for the ultimate benefit of yet, other strangers. Fourteen participants have opted to be identified in the research while eight have chosen confidentiality. Those agreeing to be identified are as follows, with thanks:

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Person C:	Angus Martin
Person D:	Anita Poteri Auckland, Executive Producer, Itchy Feet Media
Person G:	Brad Harrison
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Person I:	Donna Shepherd, Proprietor, Reef 'n' Outback Rail Tours
Person J:	Duncan Howdin, Proprietor, Shazzam Studios
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Person L:	Geoff Powell, Proprietor, Photographica Creative Solutions
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Person Q:	Cr Lew Brennan, Sunshine Coast Regional Council
Person T:	Rhana Harrison, Proprietor, Anura Design
Person U:	Steve Lawrence, Director, Noosa Boardroom
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

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## **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.

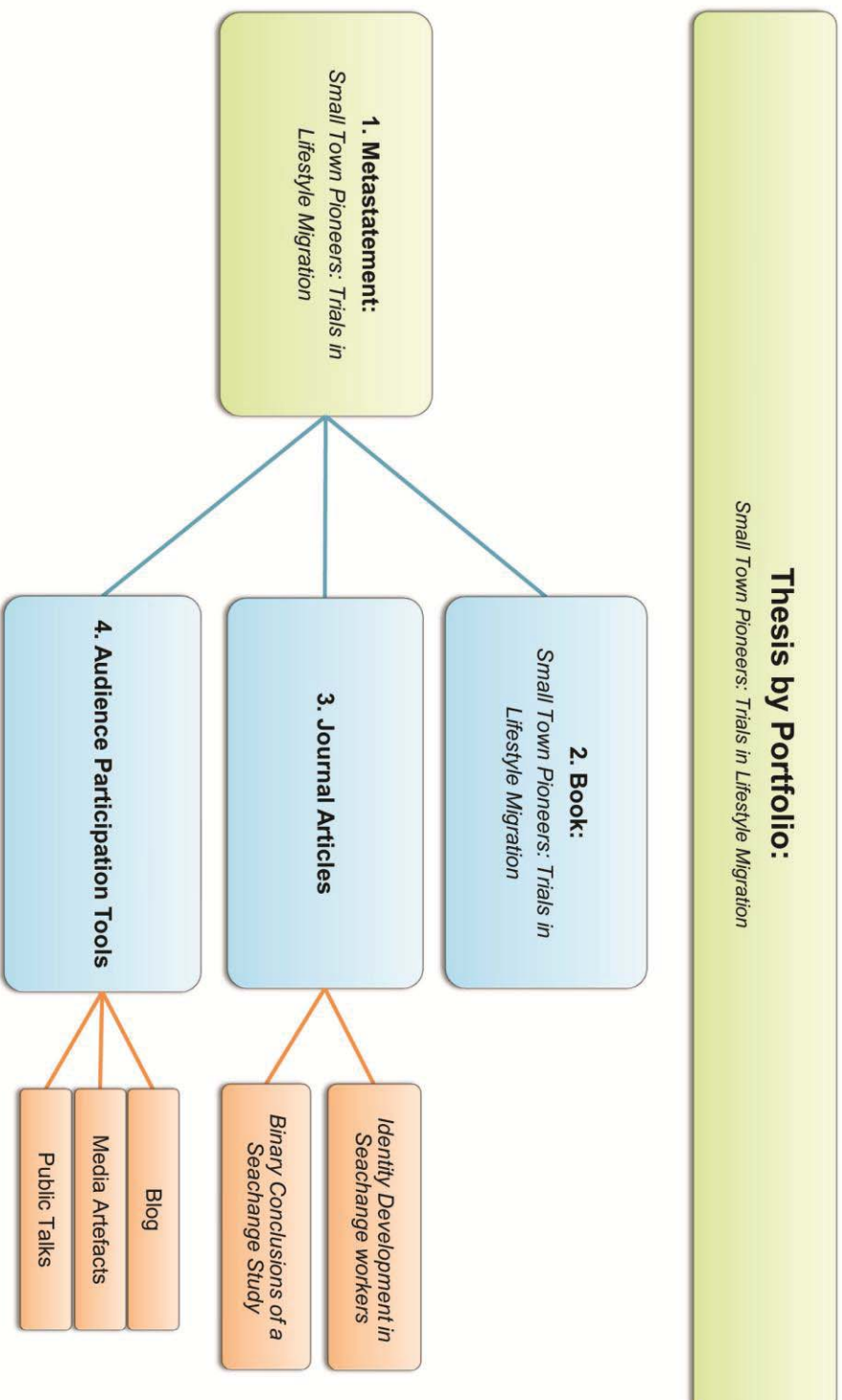
Cross-disciplinary fields involved in the exploration include studies in education in lifelong learning, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence; anthropology and sociology pertaining to lifestyle migration research; geography in explorations of transmigration and home; and philosophy in relation to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

# Portfolio Components and Relationship



# **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](http://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.