

## Socio-cultural and socio-economic features of second homes in Rosendal, South Africa

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### How to cite:

Hay, A. and Visser, G., 2014: Socio-cultural and socio-economic features of second homes in Rosendal, South Africa. In: Rogerson, C.M. and Szymańska, D. editors, *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series*, No. 26, Toruń: Nicolaus Copernicus University, pp. 157–166. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2478/bog-2014-0051>

**Abstract.** Second homes have seen increased research interest over the last decade. On the whole, these investigations have mainly been understood in the spatial context of the developed North. Second homes have only recently been seen as a role player in the changing economic spatialities of small town geographies in South Africa. This growing scholarship on second homes has, however, been less concerned with the social impacts of the phenomenon. The investigation is set against the argument that second homes have social impacts on the immediate and surrounding areas in which they are situated. This investigation also demonstrates that second homes are phenomena with which not only the elite engage but a range of different socio-economic cohorts, including the poor. The social impacts of second homes in this investigation are shown to vary along race and class lines. Against the backdrop that second homes are relevant to very large parts of South African society, the social impacts associated with second homes need to be taken into account in future development planning in South Africa.

### Article details:

Received: 1 August 2014  
Revised: 4 September 2014  
Accepted: 5 September, 2014

### Key words:

second homes,  
impacts,  
South Africa.

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## 1. Introduction

Globally, the second homes phenomenon has seen research attention in many developed countries (Müller, 2011), but considerably less so in the developing South (Hoogendoorn, 2010; Van Noorloos, 2012). The impacts of second homes on host regions and locations have been analysed from different perspectives, often focusing on economic, environmental, and social variables (Atkinson et al., 2007; Hoogendoorn, Visser, 2011a; 2011b; Van Noorloos, 2012). A commonality both developing and developed world second homes discourses share is an interest in smaller urban places in rural settings (Hoogendoorn et al., 2009; Hoogendoorn, Visser, 2011b; Hall, Müller, 2004). This investigation is aligned with the spatial focus of those debates and thematically on social issues associated with second homes in destination regions.

The most comprehensive single investigation into the impact of second homes in smaller urban places in South Africa is Hoogendoorn's (2010) con-

tribution on the role of second homes in South Africa's evolving post-productivist countryside. This research, along with a handful of co-investigators, has mainly been framed by an interest in the economic issues related to second home development (Hoogendoorn, Visser, 2011a, 2011b, 2014a, 2014b), although environmental issues linked to second home development have recently appeared (Long, Hoogendoorn, 2013). Within the South African second homes discourse, there have not been any investigations dedicated to understanding the social impacts of second homes in urban South Africa, either large or small (cf. Van Laar et al., 2013). The rationale behind the research reported in this paper is to address this investigatory gap.

The investigation draws on the empirical realities of Rosendal (1) (and its surrounds) located in the Eastern Free State, one of South Africa's agricultural heartlands (Fig. 1). Since the late 1990s, this town has evolved from one servicing the surrounding agricultural community to a popular second homes destination (Hay, 2014). The economy of the town has been re-imagined and it is now, to a large ex-

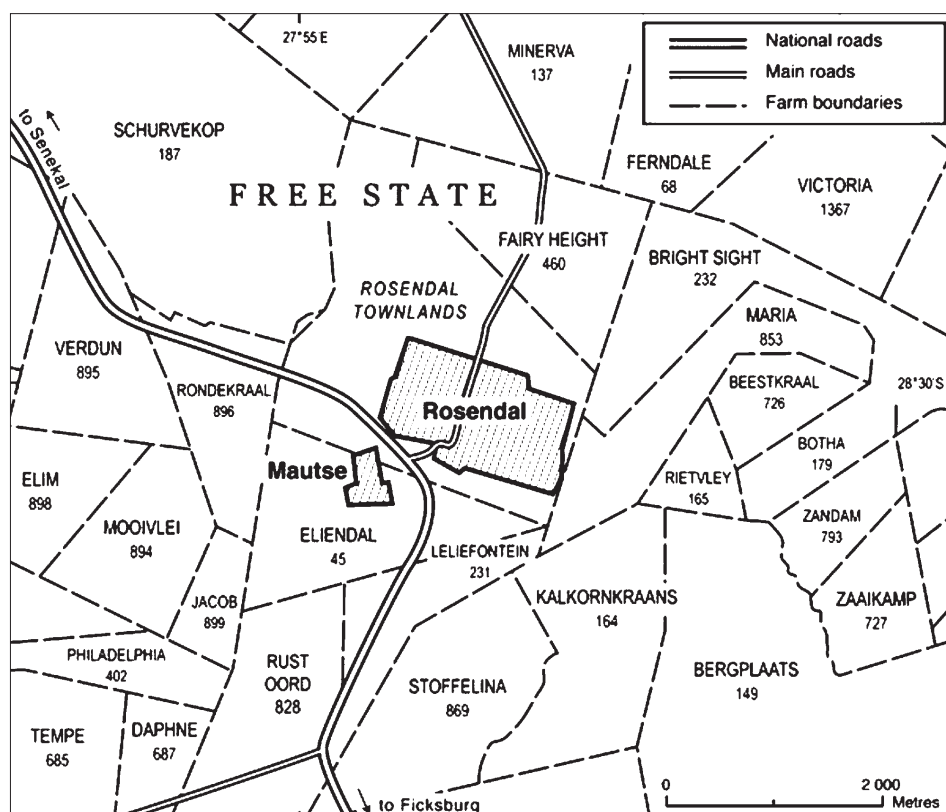


Fig. 1. Rosendal and hinterland

Source: Authors

tent, driven by the needs of second home tourism. As elsewhere in small urban settlements, second home development and its associated economic activities have been central in stemming economic decline (Hay, 2014). Questions surrounding the social impacts of the town's redevelopment as a second home host community have remained unanswered. The aim of this investigation is to gauge and evaluate the social impacts of second home tourism in Rosendal. A number of themes, concerning the social impacts of second homes on this town and its hinterland, were drawn from 30 detailed interviews and over 100 questionnaires with permanent residents and second home owners during the period December 2011 and December 2013. Three sets of impacts were identified and form the main structure of the paper. The first section is concerned with a number of socio-cultural impacts associated with second homes. It is shown that similar to experiences elsewhere, these temporary residents change and momentarily disrupt the host community's understanding of Rosendal. The character and identity of the town is challenged by second home owners and their guests. The second section considers the impact of second home owners on the host community through different types of community and social interaction. It is shown that these interactions are racialised and classed; moreover, they are interpreted differently by the host community. The final section provides insight into the socio-economic impact of second homes and their owners on the host community. Similarly, it is demonstrated that these impacts vary and that race and class position plays a role in how second homes and their owners impact the destination area. Prior to focusing on these themes, however, a brief historical outline of Rosendal's development history is provided.

## 2. The study area

Founded in 1912, Rosendal is a small town in the Eastern Free State of South Africa. Its primary purpose was to provide a site for a church, school, and support services for farmers in the surrounding area. Starting with cattle farming, the agricultural base of the area developed over time to include a variety of products such as cattle, sheep, maize, and fruit.

Rosendal did not grow as quickly as other towns in the region and remained small, probably because of the absence of a railway line. A cheese factory was a welcome economic injection and contributed to the town's prosperity in the 1950s and 1960s. The factory, however, closed in the early 1970s and the town was abandoned by the economically active, becoming a retirement town for farmers in the area and providing agricultural services for surrounding farmers (Hay, 2014). For much of the 1970s and 1980s, the town (in terms of the White population) slowly declined and depopulated. Whereas the former White Group Area of the town stagnated in function and population, the poorer part of the town – Mautse – experienced considerable expansion, particularly from the early 1990s onwards. This was largely the result of changes in housing legislation and a developing post-productivist agricultural economy (Atkinson, 2008). Currently, there are just over 2000 properties in Rosendal of which 47 in the former White Groups Area and around 100 in Mautse, the former Black Group Area, are second homes.

As was the case in nearby Clarens (Hoogenboom, Visser, 2004), the origins of Rosendal as a second home destination are closely tied to the development opportunities identified by one individual investor – a theatre personality from Johannesburg – in the town. An attractive, yet abandoned, former general store, located in the heart of Rosendal was transformed by this entrepreneur into a coffee shop, antique store and a theatre. Initially, he performed one-man shows but later started inviting friends from the broader theatre community of Johannesburg and Pretoria to present and view productions (Hay, 2014). Along with these performers came friends and supporters from the surrounding farms and other nearby towns. In addition, some city-based artists became aware of the town and relocated to Rosendal (Hay, 2014). From these beginnings, the tranquil and aesthetic nature of Rosendal laid the foundation for the development of second homes (Hay, 2014).

## 3. Socio-cultural impacts of second homes

Probably the least understood of all impacts of second home tourism is the issue of socio-cultural

al impacts (Coppock, 1977; Marjavaara, 2008; Van Noorloos, 2012). Subsequently, it has been shown that socio-cultural impacts are a source of many conflicts at destination areas (Gallent, Tewswr-Jones, 2000). Second home owners often represent urban lifestyles and values that are ‘temporarily injected into an environment with different norms and values which often leads to a collision with local life’ (Alalammi, in Marjavaara, 2008: 17).

Müller (2011) notes that, in Canada, second home development is often isolated from the rural landscape and changes the countryside into an elite landscape, which implies a clash of traditional rural lifestyles with urban images of rural life. Flognfeldt (2002) draws a different picture in rural Norway where second home owners are increasingly seen as an integrated resource for an evolving post-productivist countryside. The general point is that second homes impact the character and identity of the destination region. Rosendal’s ‘character’ and ‘identity’ is seen as split between week-days and weekends when second home owners and their friends come to Rosendal (Interviewee 1). Some local residents prefer the quietness and unspoilt environment: “*We relish the uncomplicated life in Rosendal and the fact is it energises us and gives our work a positive focus. All we have to do is to look at the clear unpolluted sky to understand the positiveness. We do not want to change this – rather becoming fully integrated with the area and its people*” (Interviewee 2).

The town was originally a meeting point for farmers from the area to buy stock and to attend church on Sundays. One elderly resident commented: “*If we look back, it is impossible to ignore the changes that took place – first ox wagons, horses, donkeys and later motor cars. We cannot blame people for changing over time. People’s ideas and views are so very different from those of fifty years ago, I think the question is rather: In what way did we adapt to our modern world or do we still yearn for old-fashioned things? Rosendal, it seems to me, is an excellent example of this yearning attitude by city people who come back again and again*” (Interviewee 3).

Some elderly residents think back with nostalgia and remember the VLV (Women’s Agricultural Union) which gathered once a month. They made homemade products and participated in competitions nationally with other unions. The hotel was a very popular gathering place in town after the farm-

ers bought stock from the local Co-operative: “*Saturdays they used to play tennis at the tennis club too*” (the tennis club is still well supported by the larger community and multiple events are held there). Nowadays, the elderly residents feel that ‘more and more artists buy properties in Rosendal’ whose gathering place, it seems, “*is the coffee shop in town*” (Interviewee 3). In terms of the second home owners, there is also considerable disquiet with the large number of people in the town over weekends and holidays as well as with the children of second home owners and guests quad-biking in the streets and the various trails in the surrounding area. In addition, second home owners and their guests tend to host rowdy parties during their visits, disrupting the tranquillity of the town (Interviewee 3).

The situation in Mautse is quite the opposite from former white Rosendal. ‘White’ Rosendal changed from a relatively active, wealthy farming community to a quiet, declining, yet, unspoilt town, whereas Mautse expanded significantly in terms of housing, especially after 1994 when the government provided social grants and basic housing to the previously disadvantaged. The impact second home owners make is especially evident at month-end and during the festive season. It was observed that on the one hand, the farmworkers bring along their traditional, conservative, farm norms and values with them. In this regard, one participant mentioned that “*... it is important for us to carry forward our traditions, you know, the initiation of our young children*” (Interviewee 4). On the other hand, the city-based second home owners bring along their city norms and values – such as a focus on materialism with modern clothes, latest model cars, non-traditional food, spending money on children etc. These different types of second home owners’ experiences clash with the locals, mostly related to differences in relative economic status. Then again, some second home owners from the city use the time during the Easter and Christmas seasons to catch up with their traditional values – referring to ‘mak[ing] our forefathers happy by holding certain rituals’ (Interviewee 5). These rituals include the slaughtering of cattle and visiting of forefathers’ graves.

The presence of second homes and owners provided a new lens through which permanent residents viewed the town. Rosendal came to be understood differently from what it was previ-



ously that was economically, socially and culturally a place to escape from rather than escape to (Hay, 2014). In the process, as is increasingly seen in a number of small towns in South Africa (Ingle, 2010), a creative class started to relocate to Rosendal, producing new spaces which acted as a catalyst to further development which created opportunities for permanent residents to re-think their economic prospects and opportunities which has subsequently produced a town focused on second homes tourism. New skills-sets were introduced by in-migrating artists, but also facilitated a re-imagining of existing skills. The contribution that second homes make to the town is not only supportive of the local economy but supportive of how permanent residents develop their livelihood strategies (Hay, 2014).

A similar narrative was observed in Mautse. Second home engagement with this part of town was closely related to economic opportunity and retaining family and friendship bonds. The social impact was also a re-imagining of how existing skills-sets could be re-worked to provide for the needs of second home owners located in that part of the settlement. The former Black township space has been re-configured as one that holds appeal to both permanent residents and visitors. As a consequence, there is new interest in entertainment, through traditional music and beer brewing, as well as spiritual life. These impacts relate directly to a second set of issues associated with second home development in Rosendal.

There is also conflict between the local government and second home owners, with some second home owners arguing that the government has 'no vision' (Interviewee 6) for Rosendal. The municipality is currently rewriting their Local Economic Development strategy, which outlines divergent views between second home owners and permanent residents in both the poor and wealthier parts of the town on the direction which the development of Rosendal might take. When the local government decided to implement a development programme aiming to create employment for unemployed Mautse residents, it provoked conflict, because of the question 'what kind of job opportunities will benefit the area?' (Interviewee 7). Second home owners and businesses attached to them argued that Rosendal is well-known for its natural amenities and unspoilt beauty. Most second home

owners in the wealthier parts of Rosendal bought property specifically for that reason. In addition, second home owners hold financial sway in the town as they are the people who pay their rates and taxes regularly and do not access social grants. Interventions by the local government should taking into account the unspoilt beauty of the area (Interviewee 7). For the poorer Mautse residents, development objectives had to focus on how permanent residents could better their material position. The preservation of unspoilt tranquillity was not a primary concern.

A further socio-cultural concern is related to the sexual orientation of many second home owners and their visitors. A resident of 30 years noted the different sexual orientations: "*They refer to our town as the 'pink town', because so many of the people are gay. I don't like that!*" (Interviewee 8). Within the gay second home owner cohort itself, there are also different groupings that relate to the permanent residents in different ways. Many of these different relationships can be connected to differences in income and professional backgrounds, and whether or not they are coupled or married, have children, as well as the frequency of their visits to Rosendal. On the whole, business owners and different gay or lesbian cohorts get along well, while the gay second home owners generally avoid the straight permanent residents. The overarching point is that the socio-cultural impacts on the host community of second homes and their owners, as well as of visitors, are complex and wide in the range of variables at play.

#### 4. Community and social interaction of second home owners

Second home owners impact host communities through involvement in various activities (Hall, Müller, 2004). Müller (2011) highlights the important contribution that second home tourism can make to rural towns and villages through the broader tourism system of second home destinations. Second home tourism can facilitate the expansion of domestic tourism to previously neglected peripheral regions (Hoogendoorn, 2010). Many investigations (Hoggart, Buller, 1994; Hoogendoorn, 2010; Müller,

2011) show that second home owners embed themselves in their adopted community through activities such as socialising at local pubs, eateries and shops. The activities of second home owners often occur in the host communities and usually include engaging in renovation work on their properties (cf. Chaplin, 2001; Hoogendoorn, Visser, 2011). Maintaining and changing the interior and exterior of the second home itself forms an important motive for second home ownership (Hall, Müller, 2004) and an expression of owners' identities, which impact those in the host communities too (Chaplin, 2001). New insights in housing and living are introduced to the host community through physical, but also social engagements.

In the Rosendal area, second home owners engage in, but also have sometimes introduced, a variety of activities to the town, which include a host of outdoor activities such as horseback riding, quad biking, hiking, and cave visits. These activities and engagements have expanded local residents' experiences of the town. One interviewee commented that *"Every three weeks or so there's a performance by South African artists and celebrities and the 110-seat theatre is sold out. The second home owners with their friends from the city also come, and also folk from the surrounding areas as far afield as Bethlehem come to enjoy the 'real big city Joburg' entertainment"* (Interviewee 9). Second homes owners and their guests have also facilitated the initiation of a monthly farmers' market where local farmers sell homemade produce such as locally produced cheeses, homemade yoghurts, herbs and other farm products. The production of these products is in part owing to the need for diversification in the agricultural economy (Atkinson, 2007) as part of an emerging post-productivist rural economy emerging in this part of South Africa (Hoogendoorn, 2010; Hoogendoorn et al., 2009) and also partly linked to the very presence of second home owners that provides a demand for such produce. These observations, at least in part, support Halfacree's (2007) contention that farmers adopt other production strategies to survive and second home owners can form part of such livelihood strategies. Another activity that was induced, introduced and supported by second home owners relates to the annual Valentine's Day and New Year festivals. Second home owners support these festivals by means

of advertising and organising it, which enriches the local social calendar.

Most of the second home owners are also accustomed to visiting their friends from the city or permanent residents who were previously second home owners in Rosendal. One second home owner observed that *"especially during the winter holidays, it is so nice to drink soup with some close local friends at our fire-place"* (Interviewee 11). Similar responses were detected from second home owners in Mautse: *"We like to visit our family"* and *"It is so nice to see my family and friends during the festive season,"* and *"hunt with our dogs on the outskirts of the town"* (Interviewee 6). An important observation is that the family/friend social bonding in the study area correlates with other similar investigations elsewhere (cf. Halseth, 2004). It is often argued that second home owners do not engage in any meaningful manner with the permanent residents of host communities (Marjavaara, 2008; Müller, 2011). Current discourse claims that second home owners mostly socialise with friends and relatives who visit them at their second homes, as well as former second home owners that have permanently relocated to the second home destination (Quinn, 2004). Evidence from Rosendal presented very mixed results in this respect, with class and race differences recorded. In the White and wealthier part of the town, for example, permanent residents who are business owners or part of the creative class of the town have extensive contact with White second home owners. These business owners, however, have no contact with the second home owners in Mautse. It was also found that White permanent residents on the whole have very little close contact with second home owners. The greatest social engagements are among second home owners themselves. Internal to the second home owner cohort, there were further divisions registered, the principal division relating to gay and lesbian owners *vis-à-vis* heterosexual family units, although considerable variation was recorded. The second home owners on the surrounding farms had limited contact with either permanent or second home owners in Rosendal as a whole. Contact with any people in Rosendal was mainly limited to staff members at the local farming cooperative. Social contact between permanent residents and second home owners in the Mautse part of town was found to be far more extensive. Indeed,

interaction between second home areas and permanent residents was found to be common. Second home owners are well-known to the small business owners and residents of Mautse. Then again, second home owners are very often connected in one way or another with permanent residents, often as direct or indirect family or through longstanding friendship networks. These strong ties are in many cases the result of circular migration between Rosendal, the surrounding farming districts and larger cities such as Johannesburg.

### 5. Socio-economic impact of second homes in the host community

Müller, Hall and Keen (2004: 26) have argued that for each property that is sold to a second home owner, there is a “*permanent household that potentially has chosen not to live in the countryside anymore*”. In addition, there are socio-economic differences between second home investors and permanent residents who compete for dwellings in the same location (Marjavaara, 2008). This causes property values to rise, increasing the property tax burden for permanent residents as well as the cost of labour. Parallels can be drawn with these claims, with some elaboration, to certain South African peculiarities.

The first socio-economic impact is that former local residents sense a loss of a former community member every time a local permanent resident is replaced by a second home owner. There are many reasons permanent residents leave places like Rosendal, most of them linked to the restructuring of the agricultural economy (Atkinson, 2007). In addition, those that remain are faced with the introduction of new transient residents forming a community they are often not part of. These themes are also present in Rosendal. Some of the elderly residents remember a time when the town flourished, especially when the cheese factory was still in production, and had a progressive school. Many people lived permanently in the formerly White parts of Rosendal while apartheid settlement restrictions kept the population of Mautse at a very low level of a few hundred. After the factory

closed in the 1960s, many houses were abandoned as people had to search for employment elsewhere. Years later, some of the houses were even demolished. For approximately three decades until the early 1990s, property prices were exceptionally low, which then led to considerable price appreciation subsequent to second home investment interest.

Some permanent residents used this opportunity to realise a profit from escalating property values. Older residents also sold their houses and moved to larger nearby towns as Rosendal does not have retirement or frail-care facilities. However, many soon realised that retirement accommodation elsewhere was expensive and the living costs higher. In addition, the chances of those residents being able to return to Rosendal are extremely slim. What is clear to the remaining permanent residents is that once they have left, there is very little chance of returning, as second home owners will take their place in the property market.

The socio-economic differences between individuals who compete for dwellings in Rosendal are something permanent residents are keenly aware of. The second home owners of Rosendal town represent individuals from the middle to upper classes of society who are in the position to buy a second property, whereas most of the locals in Rosendal town are retired residents, and cannot afford to pay the escalating property taxes nor the higher wages for domestic workers (cf. Hoogendoorn, 2010). The permanent residents often occupy an inferior position in terms of finances, which can result in displacement (Marjavaara, 2008). For the younger generation, the issue is that the employment opportunities in Rosendal cannot compete with salaries paid in the large cities where the second home owners originate. As a consequence, they are priced out of the local property market, and hence migrate, in most cases, to larger urban centres.

On the other side of Rosendal, these dynamics are differently articulated, and the persons involved are generally poor, but the effect of potential displacement of the permanent residents by second home owners is also a looming possibility. The South African government provides subsidised housing to citizens that are means tested for low income. There are, however, conditions attached to how those housing units can be utilised. The two most common conditions are an eight-

year prohibition on selling or letting and a further condition that there may be only one dwelling per property. ‘Both seemed reasonable at first, but as everyone who has anything to do with ‘Black townships’, ‘locations’ and ‘informal settlements’ knows, the real world bears virtually no relationship to the fantasy world of planners and legislators (Interviewee 12).

Most of the recipients of government provided housing are faced with the following intolerable choice: if they find employment somewhere other than where they happen to live, such as Rosendal, which is mostly the norm, they have to remain unemployed or abandon their most valuable asset, their house. If they choose to abandon these allocated properties, it is re-allocated to the next person on the waiting list – ‘or, some believe, the next person to pay a suitable bribe’ (Interviewee 12) – and they never get another, regardless of how compelling their reason might be for leaving. ‘Most [Mautse residents] ignore the lawful options and sell or let their RDP or other township house ‘informally’ (Interviewee 12). Since the law prevents them from having a secure or tradable title, they are forced to let the property at discounted rentals, allowing a relative to occupy the property on their behalf. This typically plays out in a circular migration scenario, with the person to whom occupancy has been given working in a large city such as Johannesburg, while his/her grandmother and children remain in the house; the lawful occupant returns to Rosendal once a month and during the main holidays. At issue is that those persons residing in the properties as ‘house-sitters’ are in fact homeless and have no security of tenure. Should the second home owner return to Rosendal on a permanent basis, the occupants have no access to housing.

A further socio-economic issue creating conflict between second home owners and local residents relates to different financial abilities. In this respect, the main point of contention has been the focus on wealthy (White Rosendal), or relatively better-off (Black Mautse) second home owners paying ‘urban salaries and wages’ (Interviewee 12) which are higher than permanent residents find affordable or realistic. Some of the permanent residents in Rosendal have lost staff to second home owners in this way. Similarly, Mautse residents have also experi-

enced this as problematic; workers employed by local residents feel unfairly treated in comparison to those employed by second home owners, and those unemployed feel even more despondent, as they are totally excluded. The difference in financial values with regard to employment practices, and what people hold dear, therefore holds conflict potential, and is described well by a businesswoman: “*Our values here are less materialistic compared to the second home owners. They have more urban values and are definitely money driven! For us here, it is not so important which car you drive. Your aspiration here is whether the jam you make is either good or bad*” (Interviewee 13).

## 6. Conclusion

The paper set out to provide a description of some of the social impacts second homes and second home owners have on Rosendal. The investigation was set against the argument that second homes not only have economic but also social impacts on the immediate and surrounding areas in which they are situated. It is important that these social impacts are recognised and investigated further as they have an equal, if not greater effect on host towns. This investigation also demonstrated that second homes are phenomena not only the elite engage with but a whole range of different socio-economic cohorts which include poor residents. The social impacts of second homes in this investigation were shown to vary along race and class lines, but also that other identity markers, such as sexuality, come into view when considering second home impacts. The social elements associated with second homes need to be taken into account in the design and future development planning in South Africa. This is particularly pertinent as the number of second homes is expected to grow in the coming years.

This investigation set out to highlight a number of themes related to the social impacts of second homes on a town in rural South Africa. The issues focused on supporting empirical findings and theoretical claims concerning the social impact of second home ownership seen in cities, towns and villages elsewhere.



## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Gijsbert Hoogendoorn (Wits) and Ruth Massey (UFS) for their helpful comments on an earlier version of the paper. The usual disclaimers apply.

## Note

The town of Rosendal remains divided into two distinctive areas: the former White group area of Rosendal and its accompanying former Black township Mautse. For ease of writing, we refer to Rosendal, but where analytically important, we make distinction between them.

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## Interviews

- Interviewee 1: Local resident of Rosendal, interviewed during December 2010.
- Interviewee 2: Local resident and well-known artist, interviewed during December 2010.
- Interviewee 3: Local retired resident, interviewed during June 2010.
- Interviewee 4: Second home owner working on a farm in the Rosendal district, interviewed during December 2011.
- Interviewee 5: Second home owner in Mautse – primary residence in Gauteng, interviewed during December 2011.
- Interviewee 6: Local resident – previously a second home owner, interviewed during June 2010.
- Interviewee 7: Second home owner from the Free State, interviewed during December 2010.
- Interviewee 8: Local retired resident, interviewed during June 2010.
- Interviewee 9: Manager of the coffee shop in Rosendal, interviewed December 2012.
- Interviewee 10: A second home owner from Gauteng, interviewed during December 2010.
- Interviewee 11: A second home owner from KwaZulu-Natal province, interviewed during December 2010.
- Interviewee 12: Municipal worker in Rosendal, interviewed during December 2012.
- Interviewee 13: Local businesswoman, interviewed during December 2010.