

Rural and regional development: The need for cross-border collaboration in the Karoo

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Some common features of the Karoo ...

Do you know where these places are?
(Hint: They are all in the Karoo)

Desert landscapes



Expansive plains



Small towns



Awe-inspiring churches



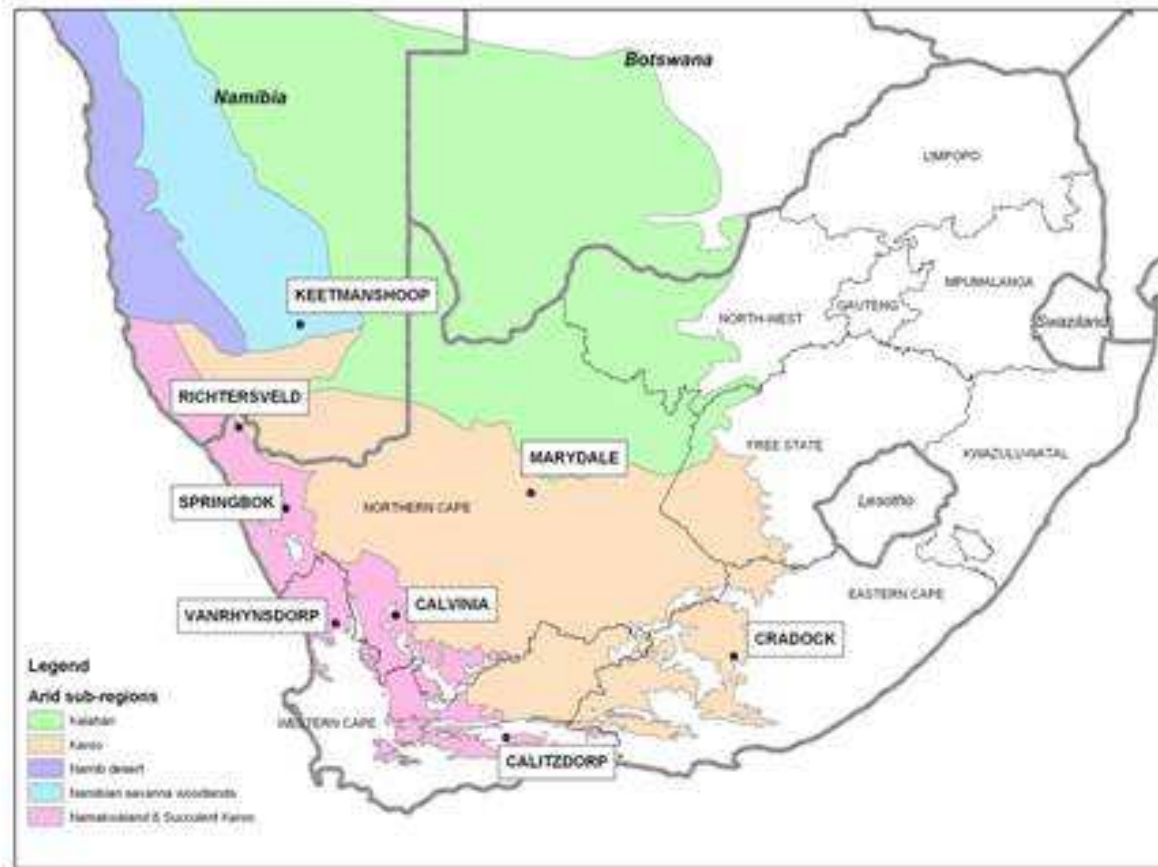
Karoo architecture



Victorian architecture ...



The Karoo should be developed as a single regional economic entity



Rural development is often low on the national public agenda

“Once the national economy’s rural component has been given a passing acknowledgement, the conversation usually turns to the various reasons for the forms that urbanization might take” – agglomeration, urbanisation, size of urban centres, metropolitan development”
(World Bank)

For a rural development strategy, three questions ...

1. The **WHAT** of development: What industries, sectors in rural areas and small towns?
 2. The **WHERE** of development: What spatial units?
 3. The **HOW** of development: What institutions will work best?
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WHAT should rural development focus on?

A balanced approach to development

- 1. Rural renewable resources:** agriculture, fisheries
 - Impacts on the poor; job creation, wages, basic skills
 - impacts on the non-farm sector (towns, service industries)
 - impacts on the rest of the economy, including exports, foreign exchange, food security, inflation

Agriculture may decline as share of GDP, but may increase in importance! And new agricultural products ...
 - 2. Rural non-renewable resources:** Mining – mixed blessing
 - 3. Rural non-farm economy (towns):** Agro-processing, services to agriculture, social services, manufacturing, tourism, environmental conservation, small towns ...
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The WHAT: Some recent lessons on rural development

1. Promote linkages between agriculture and down-stream industries, e.g. agro-processing
 2. Diversify beyond agriculture: The “post-productivist” rural economy – agriculture is no longer the mainstay – also tourism, leisure, lifestyle, public institutions.
 3. Promote public investments, e.g. transport, communications, training, research, irrigation, soil conservation, environmental management, extension, microfinance, disaster management
 4. The *type* of public expenditure is more important than the *quantity* – need careful analysis of what works!
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The WHAT: More lessons ...

5. Importance of peri-urban land, e.g. smallholdings and commonage
 6. Promote links between farmers and towns
 7. Towns are important service centres
 8. Rural industries are important – creative energies
 9. Appreciate “ecosystem services”
 10. Conduct rural “policy proofing” – assess unintended impacts of national and provincial policies on rural areas (e.g. closure of schools).
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The WHERE of rural development: Spatial strategies

1. There are no generic “rural areas” – no “one size fits all”!
 2. **Economic** regions and **ecological** regions transcend political boundaries
 3. Identify competitive advantage, economies of scale and critical mass
 4. Poor areas CAN grow faster than rich regions, if there is the right investment
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The WHERE: Regional strategies (contd)

5. Cheap transport and communications can change your comparative advantage
 6. In-migration could contribute capital and skills (“reverse migration”) – change the spatial footprint
 9. Promote symbolic regional identities (or invent new ones!)
 10. Promote (or invent!) regional brands, e.g. “outback”, “Karoo”.
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The HOW of rural development: Institutions

1. Need purposeful government support for cross-border collaboration – LEADER programme in Europe; more than 70 Euro-regions)
 2. “Regional governance”: Informal networking, joint decision-making, partnerships, voluntary co-operation - Build on common interests
 3. Decentralise functions to institutions at local level and build their capacity, political stability and fiscal resources – sub-municipal level
 4. Need institutions at different scales – local, district, regional, provincial, national, supra-national – “glocalisation”
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What should the SA government do? Next steps ...

1. Help rural regions to determine their competitive advantages and commercialise their assets (e.g. tourism and agriculture) – *according to their ecology*
 2. Promote the flow of information, lesson sharing, transport and communications – reduce barriers
 3. Build cross-border partnerships – create new institutions
 4. Promote **international** networking
 5. Plan and fund strategic infrastructure (e.g. Roads, airports) – create new spatial dynamics.
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Lake Xhariep: Straddles 3 provinces

