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Debating Some Past and Present Research Frameworks and Methodologies in History on Places and their Peoples in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Histories regarding places and their peoples in South Africa can be traced to the early days of History being practised as an academic discipline. However, practising this form of history under (and outside) the flag of regional history was formalised only in the mid seventies, while informalised research practices in the field continued as methods complementing various schools of thought. Narrowly perceived local histories were considered as inclusive of the formalised and informalised regional history practices as knowledge contributing towards a broader understanding of a (geographically defined/politically demarcated) region. Of interest is not only the historiography in this field (of which a few pointers are shared in this discussion) but some of the frameworks and methods to research and to record regional histories that have been used in the past. Equally of interest are the ways in which these frameworks and methods are still applied and thought of as dynamic and progressive to assist the historian to progress towards producing and packaging research as part of a comprehensive, all inclusive approach in creating knowledge as regional history studies. In South Africa, an extensive debate on how regional history studies should be broadly defined and understood when undertaking research, still falls short. This is due to the variety, diversity and complexity of knowledge contributing to the pool of information that should be packaged as regional history studies. To contribute towards a framework of understanding and packaging knowledge in this field of meaning to regional history studies, the reader is further exposed to an extended structure of perhaps understanding and doing research in this field: a field that has always been regarded as having the potential to be both integrative and multidisciplinary by nature. Yet its integrative analytical abilities also rest on the outcome of narrow-defined histories done on spaces and places before it is possible to embark on bigger research analyses in, for example, the spirit of modern social history applications to regional history studies. This discussion on ways to understand the limited past and present of regional studies (historiographically and methodologically) in South Africa is offered to encourage further debate.

Keywords: local history, regional history, research framework, research methodology, historiography, integrative multidisciplinary research, humanities, social sciences, history from below, modern social history.

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INTRODUCTION

Historical research on places and their peoples in South Africa is observable under a variety of themes, phenomena and schools of thought, all of which spontaneously found their way during an ‘informal phase’ of practising regional history up to the late 1960s.² Formal regional history studies as research practice in South Africa and in 1975 as established by the former Institute of Historical Research (IHR) at the Human Sciences and Research Council (HSRC)³ under the research umbrella of a variety of local, rural and urban frameworks, trends, themes and phenomena, will soon attain its 40th year of activity.⁴ During this time, regionally related history studies were still informally practised in especially politically related themes and phenomena in places – thus exposing politically disadvantaged peoples. It appears as if academically friendly and intellectually open institutions mainly practised this kind of history, which was also very much associated with urban trends. The milestone initiatives of the History Workshop Group at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) can correlate these informal practices.

The main purpose of this article is to debate some past research frameworks and methodologies in History on places and their peoples in South Africa during the formal phase of regional history studies practice (but not ignoring the ongoing informal ways). Because a clear-cut conceptual deliberation regarding what regional history studies actually entail or ought to entail, hardly anyone has so far arrived at a constructive outcome that pleases historians practising in this field. This can be attributed to its complex broadness and consequent greyness.⁵ However, its explicit understanding is not going to form part of this discussion. The reality that in regional history studies one supposedly embraces over time all developments, in particular geographical or politically demarcated places and spaces will momentarily remain the broad understanding thereof.

2. Compare, for example, the work of the distinguished revisionist historian W.M. Macmillan who, in the early 20th century, did some research among local communities, focussing on socio-economic issues (such as poverty, landlessness, conditions of rural and urban life such as sanitary reform in Grahamstown) as in P. Maylam, ‘Reminiscences – Herinneringe. A Hundred Years of History at Rhodes University: Some Reflections on the Department’s Centenary Colloquium’, *Historia*, 57, 1 (2012), 165–171.
3. C.M. Bakkes, ‘Editorial’, *Contree*, 1 (1977), 2.
4. E.S. van Eeden, ‘Regional, Local, Urban and Rural History as Nearby Spaces and Places: Historiographical and Methodological Reflections Towards Modern Day Practice’, Special Edition, *New Contree*, 63 (2012), 1–34.
5. S. Rikukulehto, ‘The Concept of Region in Regional History’, in www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/events/2010/may...Riukuleht.pd.,30, April 2010, 1–7; F.A. van Jaarsveld, ‘Oor die Onderrig van Sosiale Geskiedenis en Riglyne vir sy Metodiek’, *Historia*, 17, 2 (1972), 118–133; G. Sheeran and Y. Sheeran, ‘Discourses in Local History’, *Rethinking History*, 2, 1 (1998), 67; V.H.T. Skipp, ‘Local History: A New Definition and its Implications’, *Local Historian*, 14 (1981), 325–391; B. Freund, ‘Urban History in South Africa’, *South African Historical Journal*, 52,1 (2005), 27.

Since the late 1960s research done by historians about places and their peoples in South Africa was spontaneously categorised in research and understanding as either local⁶ or regional history.⁷ Regional History Studies is a field of research that has always been regarded as having the potential to be integrative and multidisciplinary by nature. To visualise and articulate this attribute from past models of thinking, understanding and doing research in this field, an extended framework is also introduced for further debate.

After more than 25 years' experience in historical research in the field of regional history, the author's impression is that the considerations of space and place by historians have at times been rather peripheral, and that the selection of a research theme was (and perhaps still is) decided on or determined by specific interests, trends or controversial issues of the day. Though it cannot be 'wrong' to select a field of research as such, any random selection for doing research does not necessarily make provision for or contribute to a representative regional history study inclusive of several places and peoples.

In the past, the study of places as spaces of peoples in regional history gradually evolved as a popular accessible way of dealing with a variety of narrowly focused histories. Though these histories may or may not be perceived as having a broad "value" range, the embarking on more comprehensive research analyses for regions certainly rely on micro research efforts. This is particularly true if regional studies are to be done, for example, in the spirit of modern social history⁸ applications. In many ways, the nutshell understanding of regional history by environmental historian Donald Worster is complementary:⁹

What the regional historian should first want to know is how a people or peoples acquired a place and, then, how they perceived and tried to make use of it.

The 'make use of it' in Worster's suggestion brings me to the comments Nancy Brown has made on 'histories from below' in her study on the relatedness of environmental studies with social history studies. She argues that most works in both the fields of study 'have shown too little indication that the fields might intersect'.¹⁰ This observation has

6. S.P. Olivier, 'Die Onderrig van Plaaslike Geskiedenis', *Historia*, 13, 4 (1968), 237–245.
7. P.L. Scholtz, 'Streeksgeskiedenis – 'n Fassinerende Mikrokosmos' (Kaapstad: Belville, Publikasiereeks van die Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland, A26, 1978), 1–7; A.G. Oberholster, 'Streeksgeskiedenis en die Historikus', *Contree* 6 (1979), 29; P. de Klerk, 'Streeksgeskiedskrywing en Koloniale Verhoudinge: Die Wes-Kaapse Platteland en die Karoo', *New Contree*, 58, (2009), 1–35.
8. Compare with the discussion by Grundlingh on modern social history in, for example, A. Grundlingh, 'Herhistorisering en Herposisionering: Perspektiewe op Aspekte van Geskiedsbeoefening in Hedendaagse Suid-Afrika', *Historia*, 46, 2 (2001), 315–318.
9. D. Worster, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1992), 292.
10. N. Jacobs, *Environment, Power, and Justice. A South African History* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16.

two sides of thinking about regional history studies: on the one hand it wants to represent a very specific research focus, but on the other hand it should also be possible to integrate the outcomes as part of a broader knowledge pool to reflect a region's history even informatively to governing bodies and several fields of research. Present-day research themes in regional history such as debates on land, environmental problems and local issues regarding service delivery in communities, together with many other aspects related to place could provide backbone knowledge and interpretation on the well-being status history of peoples in communities.¹¹ Other than in the formal practising of regional history studies in the past in South Africa, more disciplinary integrative efforts will be required in future to ensure that narrowly focused disciplinary research efforts (which will always have a space and value) find their way into a broader context of understanding places and their peoples.¹²

A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL IMPRESSION ON RESEARCH REGARDING PLACES AND THEIR PEOPLES IN THE FORMALISED REGIONAL HISTORY ERA

Historiographical indicators about the practice of regional history in South Africa are represented in international trends that are particularly evident in ideas originating from the French Annales School since the early 20th century.¹³ Parts of the philosophies of some British historians such as Eric Hobsbawm, Edward Thompson and Gareth Stedman Jones¹⁴ were considered. Traces of the British 'History Workshop Model'¹⁵ that

11. Compare with the discussions and findings in C. Corvalán, S. Hales & A. J. McMichael, *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Health Synthesis* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2005), 53; M. Monto, L.S. Ganesh & K. Varghese, *Sustainability and Human Settlements: Fundamental Issues, Modelling and Simulations* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2005), 209; K.R. Chopra, *Ecosystems and human Well-being: Policy Responses: Responses Working Group* (USA: Island Press, 2005), 645; C.A. Vezzoli & E. Manzini, *Design for Environmental Sustainability* (London: Springer-Verlag, 2008), 300; L.P. Cain & D.G. Paterson, *The Children of Eve: Population and Well-being History* (UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 416.
12. Compare E.S. van Eeden, 'Considering Environmental History within the Transdisciplinary Methodology as Research Focus for Today and Tomorrow', *Interdisciplinary Science Review*, 36,4 (2011), 314–329; E.S. van Eeden, 'Using a Transdisciplinary Approach for Environmental Crisis Research in History', *The Journal for Transdisciplinary research in Southern Africa*, 6,1 (2010), 191–208.
13. A. Burguière, *The Annales School: An Intellectual History* (Translated from French by J Marie-Todd (New York: Cornell University, French version 2006 and English version 2009), 309.
14. Compare R. Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981), 141; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Victor Gollancz publishers, Great Britain, 1963 and reprinted several times by Penguin Publishers), 958; R. Samuel, G. Stedman Jones (eds), *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm* (UK: Routledge, 1982), 368.
15. A pioneering publication in the thoughts of followers of the British Workshop Model was

concentrates on the lives of ordinary people, and the German ‘Alltagsgeschichte’¹⁶ (an everyday history that reflects as part of the wider Marxian historical school of ‘history from below’) are evident in the way South African historians have approached research on peoples and places under the banner of a theme and/or phenomenon. The influence of these international trends locally are not always that obvious.¹⁷ For some researchers in the HSRC’s regional division, the thoughts of the British historians Finberg and Skipp on local history¹⁸ have been a methodological pointer in conducting regional history in their first decade of formal regional history research activity.¹⁹

Regional history from a broader point of departure covers a variety of themes in which human involvement and human interaction are stressed.²⁰ This reality necessarily implies direct and indirect exposure to fields of expertise and knowledge with which regional historians are not necessarily. In the 1970s already, historian F.A. van Jaarsveld strongly supported interdisciplinary research cooperations.²¹ The then emerging fields of social history²², followed by regional history (in South Africa also used as a synonym for

that of the social historian Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*; The website www.thamesdiscovery.org/events/black-british-history-workshop also contains information.

16. See A. Lütke’s contribution as quoted by G. Eley, ‘Labour, History and Social History, Alltagsgeschichte...’, *Journal of Modern History*, 61, 2 (1989), 322; A. Lütke, ‘Alltagsgeschichte - ein Bericht von Unterwegs’, *Historische Anthropologie*, 11 (2003), 278–295.
17. Compare Samuel (ed.), *People’s History*, 141; T.R.H. Davenport, ‘History in South Africa in the 1980s: Why Bother About It?’, *South Africa International* 19,2 (1988), 102; K. Smith, *The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing* (Johannesburg: Southern Publishers, 1988), 164–170; C. Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1988), 169–170; 184; R. Samuel, ‘Local History and Oral History’, *History Workshop*, 1 (1987), 199–204; P. Bonner, I. Hofmeyr, D. James and T. Lodge (eds.), *Holding Their Ground: Class, Locality and Culture in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), 318.
18. H.P.R. Finberg and V.H.T. Skipp, *Local History. Objective and Pursuit* (Newton Abbot Devon: David & Charles, 1967), 1–24; W.G. Hoskins, *Local history in England* (London: Longman, 1958).
19. A. Wessels, ‘Contree Die Eerse Tien Jaar’, *Contree*, 21 (1987), 26; C.C. Eloff, ‘Editorial’, *Contree*, 20 (1986), 2.
20. Compare with Finberg and Skipp, *Local history*, 1–130.
21. F.A. van Jaarsveld, ‘Geskiiedenis en Relevansie’, *Historia* 24, 1 (1979), 14–18; F.A. van Jaarsveld, ‘South Africa as an *Industrial Society*’, *Historia*, 34, 1 (1989), 95–99.
22. Compare F.A. van Jaarsveld, ‘Oor die Opleiding van Geskiedkundiges’, Deel 1, *Historia* 16,2 (1971), 74–88; F.A. van Jaarsveld, ‘Oor die Opleiding van Geskiedkundiges’, Deel 2. *Historia* 16,3 (1971), 146–160; D.J. van Zyl, ‘Geskiiedenis as Vak en Wetenskap: Nuwe Uitdagings’, *South African Historical Journal*, 19, 1 (1987), 1–5; Grundlingh, ‘Herhistorisering en Herposisionering’, 315–318.

local history),²³ paved the way for history researchers to become more aware of specific regional social trends.²⁴ These developments allow closer interdisciplinary and even transdisciplinary research opportunities in the history of regions because of the varieties of knowledge and insight required to conduct inclusive research.²⁵

From the late 1970s to the early 1980s, interdisciplinary regional history research by the HSRC developed alongside the ideas of the equally interdisciplinary-focused History Workshop Group (HW) at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), supported as “history from below” and associated with the international social history movement in its heyday in Europe and North America.²⁶ According to members of the History Workshop:²⁷

Social historians were driven by an underlying ethical and political commitment to “retrieve” the “hidden” lives of ordinary people and simultaneously to affirm the latter’s agency in the making of their own histories. It is in this tradition of social history as “history from below” that HW has its origins.

In 2010, some founders of the History Workshop described their intellectual agenda of the time as ‘more broadly a consciously political enterprise’, very much ‘pre-occupied with class’, and externally inspired by intellectual Marxism, then described as revisionism. Pioneers such as Belinda Bozzoli thought of it as the ‘new radical history’²⁸ An emphasis on a history from below in a historiographical and methodological environment of doing History meant that the everyday experience, role, input and knowledge of communities in certain environments and/or activities should be utilised or acknowledged in the scientific research process.²⁹

23. Van Jaarsveld, ‘Oor die Onderrig van Sosiale Geskiedenis’, 18-133.

24. C.C. Eloff, ‘History From Below: ‘n Oorsig’, *Suid-Afrikaanse Historiese Joernaal*, 25,1 (1991), 12.

25. Compare E.S. van Eeden, *Impressions on Conducting and Reporting Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Environmental Research in South Africa – a Historian’s Perspective* (Inaugural lecture 07/2010, Vaal Triangle: Platinum Press, NWU Campus, March 2010), 1–44; Van Eeden, ‘Considering environmental history within the transdisciplinary methodology’, 314-329.

26. P. Bonner, ‘Keynote Address to the *Life After Thirty Colloquium*’, *African Studies*, 9, 1 (2010), 14-15; Van Jaarsveld, ‘Oor die Onderrig van Sosiale Geskiedenis’, 19; F.A. van Jaarsveld, ‘Demokratisering in die Geskiedwetenskap: Van ‘n Elitegeskiedenis van bo tot ‘n Alledaagse Geskiedenis van Onderaf’, *Historia* 32, 1 (1987), 34-42.

27. A. Lissoni, N. Nieftagodien & S. Ally, ‘Introduction: *Life after Thirty - A Critical Celebration*’, *African Studies*, 69, 1 (2010), 3.

28. Lissoni, Nieftagodien & Ally, ‘Introduction: *Life after Thirty*’, 1; Bonner, ‘Keynote Address’, 14-15.

29. See, for example, B. Bozzoli, (ed.), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983).

Thus, while a section of mainly English-speaking historians in the 1970s and 1980s were especially occupied with giving a voice to the ‘ordinary oppressed’ South Africans ‘silenced by white and bourgeois domination’³⁰ in the contentious apartheid years of South Africa’s history,³¹ a mainly Afrikaans-speaking group of historians engaged in the formalised regional history research (as inspired by the HSRC) vaguely or explicitly based on the Finnberg and Skipp model.³² Then there were many other historians frequently engaging in particular research themes on places and their peoples,³³ but some apparently ‘just’ doing research, and sometimes engaging in critical issues but not necessarily having any preference for a research methodology other than utilising basic principles to research in History.³⁴ Those who labelled their work as being a social history or modern social history, concentrating on issues of political economy and/or specifically the proletarianisation of Africans, lacked, for example, attention (according to Jacobs) to important issues such as methods of production and environment as well as technical factors.³⁵

The HSRC’s approach to regional histories (inclusive of, for example, social history and environmental history elements) complemented bottom-up history similar to some thoughts of the Wits History Workshop, but not ignoring research on the course and impact of top-down activities and trends.³⁶ Though the contributions in the mode of thinking

30. Bonner, ‘Keynote Address’, 22.
31. The history of the apartheid ideology and how it may have impacted on the Schools of thought in History is not the focus of this article. Historiographical trends in History since the sixties up to the present require some extensive revisiting. Trends and outcomes of apartheid are traceable in solid standard contributions that have been published over the past decades. The most recent ones are F. Pretorius (Red.), *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika. Van Voortye tot Vandag* (Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 2012), Chapters 17, 19; H. Giliomee & B. Mbenga, *New History of South Africa* (Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 2007), Chapter 15.
32. Van Eeden, ‘Regional, Local, Urban and Rural History’, 1–34; Bakkes, ‘Editorial’, 2.
33. See, for example, J. Carruthers, *Sandton, The Making of a Town* (Randburg: Celt Books, 1993), 1–80; E.L.P. Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad* (Pretoria: Haum Opvoedkundige Uitgevery, 1978); P.H.R. Snyman, ‘Daniëlskuil – Die Tronk Mite’, *Contree*, 17 (1985), 21–24; P.H.R. Snyman, ‘Die Langeberg-rebellie en die Totstandkoming van Olifantshoek’, *Contree* 19 (1986), 26; E. van Heyningen, ‘Poverty, Self-help and Community: The Survival of the Poor in Cape Town, 1880-1910’, *South African Historical Journal*, 24 (1991), 128-143; H. Mäki, ‘Comparing Developments in Water supply, Sanitation and Environmental Health in four South African cities, 1840–1920’, *Historia*, 55, 1 (2010), 90-109.
34. Compare with the thoughts on the principles of History in P. Lambert and P. Schofield (eds.), *Making History: An Introduction to the History and Practices of the Discipline* (Routledge: London, 2004), 26-37 and the contributions of A.H. Brookes, C. de B Webb, A. Duminy and B. Guest on their versions of the history of the former Natal province (now KwaZulu-Natal) as referenced by C. Saunders, ‘What of Regional History? Towards a History of the Western Cape’, *South African Historical Journal*, 22, 1 (1990), 131.
35. Jacobs, *Environment, Power, and Injustice*, 17.
36. Also compare the view of Bakkes, ‘Editorial’, 2; Van Eeden, ‘Using a Transdisciplinary

about research and doing research by the HSRC's regional division were dominantly disseminated in Afrikaans (and which still require an extensive historiographical and theoretically contributive perspective), the socio-environmental study of Kuruman by Nancy Jacobs reflects traces of the value of the HSRC regional division's contributions. Of PHR (Piet) Snyman's regional historical study titled 'Kuruman: Vervloë pad na Afrika'³⁷ she, for example, mentioned that she benefitted greatly and added his contribution when remarking that:³⁸

With thorough and well-researched explanations of cultural, political, and economical processes, these [three] books provided me with a framework of doing environmental history. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of these books for my own research.

The inclusion of various themes in research on places and their peoples as captured in a single study and labelled as a local or regional history has not always been applauded since the 1970s (and still appears not to be).

Saunders, for example, in 1990 criticised the status of and approach to regional history³⁹ from both the works of the revisionist historians (particularly the History Workshop Group) and the HSRC.⁴⁰ His view on the History Workshop contributions was that their emphasis was mainly on the social consequences of the Witwatersrand and its gold mining industry, and not because of any concern for writing a regional history. Saunders affirms:⁴¹

Approach for Environmental Crisis Research', 191-208; E.S. van Eeden, 'Exploring Local histories in the Use and Appreciation of Heritage and History in history curricula', *Yesterday & Today*, 5 (2010), 23-50; E.S. van Eeden, 'Land Reform in South Africa: Questions and Politics with regard to Land Claims as Officially Proposed: A Case Study of the farm Deelkraal IQ142, North West Province', *South African Historical Journal*, 57 (2007), 179-200; Eloff, 'History from below', 50-51.

37. See P.H.R. Snyman, 'Kuruman: Vervloë pad na Afrika' (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1992).
38. Jacobs, *Environment, Power, and Injustice*, 24.
39. Saunders did not provide any extensive clarity on what regional history conceptually means to him. Another historian, and editor of the journal *Contree* for some time after the IHR of the HSRC closed, Louis Grundlingh, thinks differently on regional history. He is of opinion that the History Workshop Group did not ever aim at complementing regional history. See comments on article of E.S. van Eeden by L. Grundlingh, GL54, 27 Aug 2012.
40. Saunders was in a position to efficiently criticise regional-like histories done in the Western Cape because of his experience with research done in the region. See T. Strauss and C. Saunders, *Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula Post 1806: A Working Bibliography* (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies University of Cape Town, 1989), 1-141.
41. Saunders, 'What of Regional History?', 131-140.

For all their brilliance, Charles van Onselen's studies in the social economic history on the Witwatersrand were also limited in range, as "studies" implies, and did not address issues of regionalism. The same is true of the papers in the three volumes in the Wits History Workshop series, despite the claim made by Belinda Bozzoli after she pointed out the focus of the second workshop had moved from the townships on the Rand to "town and countryside".... Bozzoli's reminder of the importance of the specific regional dimensions of, say, capital accumulation, resistance or culture, was a useful one but it was not followed up...

Besides his critique of the History Workshop Group, Saunders also criticised the HSRC's regional history research division (and their newly pioneered journal, *Contree*) for being 'parochial and narrow in focus':⁴²

The Division for Regional History of the Human Sciences Research Council has divided the country into as many as twenty-eight regional [areas], but *Contree* has not significantly furthered the study of the history of those regions as such.

Whether the research force of the Division was narrow minded in its vision and was narrowly focussed in its application of research in regional history (the critique by Saunders) is another debate – one which should be assessed within the context of the era. That the Division of Regional History of the HSRC did advance regional research in, for example, the Northern Cape and Free State,⁴³ despite a limited capacity with regard to researchers and in a short active timeframe, should not be overlooked. The Division also intellectually supported research elsewhere by tertiary academic institutions before it finally had to close (a top-down decision) after just more than a decade of formally innovated research of that nature.⁴⁴

When closing down, the HSRC's regional division in 1992 inevitably had to pass the responsibility for the then quite popular journal, *Contree*, for urban and regional history to historians in tertiary academia.⁴⁵ An active and visible way of doing and publishing research as regional history in South Africa from that decade onwards declined because of a lack of funds and researchers. At this time, the History Workshop still thrived – also financially – but not necessarily by contributing to a methodology or methodologies and historiography by producing regional histories. The History Workshop Group's approach to regional history research continued to occasionally receive criticism, and they themselves also perceived that a clear focus had been lost by the late 1990s. The

42. Saunders, 'What of Regional History?', 134.

43. See, for example, the work of P.H.R. Snyman, 'Ontstaan en Groei van Postmasburg', *Contree* 13 (1983), 4-26; 'Daniëlskuil, 21-24'; 'Die Langeberg-rebellie', 6-26; 'Die Rol van Sendelinge, die Owerheid en Ekonomiese Faktore in die Ontstaan van Kuruman, 1886-1913', *Contree*, 22 (1987), 5-14.

44. Memories, Dr. A. Oberholzer/E.S. van Eeden (Interviews), May 2012 (Information in possession of the author).

45. See Van Eeden, 'Regional, Local, Urban and Rural History', 1-34.

change in South Africa's political landscape after 1994 partly contributed to this loss of direction by them and led to a temporary, but dormant, Group up to 1998.⁴⁶

Also, in the regionally focused history research (and discussions on the research methodology or its historiography) that was done by historians after the heyday of the HSRC's regional division, few had a consistency in and healthy ways of dealing with postgraduate historical research on places and their peoples.⁴⁷

However, by 2011, the History Workshop Group had experienced an active decade of engaging with the demands of non-governmental organisations and government officials on themes such as land restitution, urban governance, labour movements and HIV/Aids.⁴⁸ However, a proactive, self-initiated research focus within the Group was absent by 2005. To remedy this 'deficiency', the Group revised its focus and so received Centre of Excellence status from South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF). Within this NRF Centre and funding, the programme called 'Local Histories and Present Realities' saw the light in 2006. This provided the History Workshop Group with an opportunity to 'link more systematically its attempts to serve community needs with a wider research project'.⁴⁹ According to Bonner, these needs projected more research in social, urban and local history.⁵⁰ No particular research methodology related to this kind of research in 'local' areas⁵¹ was indicated,⁵² neither was it clear in what way these narrow focus themes, mainly undertaken by postgraduates, will eventually be transformed into regional history study contributions,⁵³ if any.⁵⁴ Posel in 2010 confirmed the theoretical absences in the

46. Bonner, 'Keynote Address' 20-22.

47. The author's experience in the field and impressions based on knowledge gained.

48. See as example in urban history in the context of apartheid in P. Maylam, 'Explaining the Apartheid City: 20 Years of South African Urban Historiography', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21, 1 (1995), 19-38.

49. Lissoni, Nieftagodien & Ally, 'Introduction: *Life after Thirty*', 2.

50. Bonner, 'Keynote Address', 24.

51. The impression is based on the author's interpretation on information obtained on 2012 seminar activities themes of the Wits Workshop under the NRF "Local Histories and Present Realities" programme. See also Lissoni, Nieftagodien & Ally, 'Introduction: *Life after Thirty*', 1.

52. Later in the discussion it is mentioned by Nieftagodien that the 'Local Histories and Present Realities' project was meant to fill an analytical and theoretical gap. See N. Nieftagodien, 'The Place of The Local in History Workshop's Local History', *African Studies*, 69, 1 (2010), 57. Whether it has in fact done so since 2006 is unclear.

53. See examples of the lively kept monthly/weekly History Workshop activities currently under the project NRF, *Local histories and present realities* under the auspices of practitioners in History and the education of History currently communicated regularly to an interest group by Zahn.Gowar@wits.ac.za

54. A typical multidisciplinary regional contribution to space and place (thus not only historical), is: R. Ronaldson & L. Marais (eds.), *Small Town Geographies in Africa: Experiences from South Africa and Elsewhere* (Nova Science Publishers, USA, 2012). See also Maylam,

perceived social history contributions of the History Workshop:⁵⁵

... a friendly challenge to the current HW to grapple more explicitly with the current character and place of social history in its oeuvre – an undertaking that would prompt a more theoretically reflexive turn than has been the Workshop’s predilection for much of its past.

Of additional concern currently is that too little is being done by History subject groups/History departments of other institutions about research on places and their peoples, which could be anchored to a firm theoretical and methodological foundation.⁵⁶ Without it, any intentions to contribute or any growing towards an understanding of the histories of regions in a broader, more inclusive way, research on places and their peoples can apparently only remain vague, too narrow and severely grey. An understanding of and learning from the way in which South African historians think about research about places and their peoples is long due epistemologically, historiographically and methodologically. After the concise historiography shared in this section, specific past research methodologies in regional history-related research activities are shared in the next section with the intention to provide a glance at present-day thinking.

ARGUING PAST AND PRESENT RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES ABOUT PLACES AND THEIR PEOPLES

To identify, list or describe the varieties of research methodologies in a broad field that can be regarded as part of regional history studies is challenging. It is a field that sometimes is shared between academic and non-academic (amateur) historians;⁵⁷ one which remains greyish when defined⁵⁸ and a field where local histories (as part of ‘half done’⁵⁹ regional histories)⁶⁰ still struggle to be clearly defined in national and transnational histories.⁶¹

‘Explaining the Apartheid City’, 19-38.

55. D. Posel, ‘Social History and the Wits History Workshop’, *African studies*, 69, 1 (2010), 29.
56. A personal impression of the author based on her research so far. Sheeran & Sheeran in 1998 also expressed similar concerns with regards to the UK. See Sheeran and Sheeran, ‘Discourses in Local History’, 82-83.
57. Finberg and Skipp, *Local history*; Skipp, ‘Local History’, 325-391.
58. Compare with the thinking of Riukulehto, ‘The concept of region in regional history’, 1-7; P.N. Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (USA: Norton, 1987), 396; Worster, *Under Western Skies*, 292; S.H. Armitage, ‘From the Inside Out: Rewriting Regional History’, *Frontiers - A Journal of Women’s Studies*, 22 (2001), 1-2, 30.
59. In this context it is meant to be still “parochial” or still “narrow-like” with no intention to contextualise it as part of a broader history.
60. See, for example, Saunders, ‘What of Regional History?’, 131-140; Nieftagodien, ‘The Place of The Local’, 41-58.
61. Compare the internal debate by History Workshop historians in Lissoni, Nieftagodien & Ally, ‘Introduction: *Life after Thirty*, 5.

Like international experiences,⁶² there is a strong possibility of quasi-research methods and/or personal preferential research methods.

Research packaged as part of regional history should at least show signs of contributing to the epistemology in this field, within the historiography and thinking of particular research methodology or methodologies, together with its value of exposing new or revised research frameworks. Years ago, Finberg and Skipp (and later Hoskins)⁶³ raised the same concerns regarding the local histories in England:

The reasons why so many of the older local histories fail to satisfy us are now clear. The writers were content to heap up all the facts they could discover, without order, art or methodology, and with no criterion for distinguishing the trivial from the significant ...

Old-style or traditional local history in England, for example, was characterised by dull, parochial chronicles featuring an elitist conservative approach. Concerning the old-style local history methodology, Sheeran and Sheeran explicitly further add:⁶⁴

Methodologically, they [Finberg and Hoskins on old-style local history]⁶⁵ objected to the antiquarian, fact-collecting tradition, the lack of order and method, and the overdependence on documentary sources. Philosophically, they criticized the lack of a “central unifying theme” which would serve to distinguish local history as a discipline

As for the ‘central unifying theme’, I will respond later. Perhaps we should first look at Armitage’s critique of the methodological shortcomings and vagueness of the ‘regional’ definition usage in the USA by 2001, together with some inadequacies in the historiographical approach towards regional history in the past,⁶⁶ which also was or still is traceable in South Africa:

... historians used the concept of region both confidently and sloppily, assuming that something or things in the region bound people together in ways that superseded cultural and racial boundaries. This assumption of general regional commonalities, while recognizing differences between regions, ignored conflicts and differences within regions. In effect, then, regional historians wrote only the history of the dominant cultural group and not that of subordinate ones, ignoring class, race, gender, and other differences

However, ways of expanding the analytical and theoretical horizons, while compiling the

62. See the observations of Finberg and Skipp as well as those of Sheeran and Sheeran in their references earlier on local history practices in England. Present-day practices in South Africa may still be no different.
63. Finberg and Skipp, *Local History*, 19; Hoskins, *Local History*.
64. Sheeran and Sheeran, ‘Discourses in Local History’, 67.
65. Finberg and Skipp, *Local History*, 19; Hoskins, *Local History*.
66. S.H. Armitage, ‘From the Inside Out’, 1-2.

histories of places and their peoples, perhaps featured earlier in approaches related to the HSRC Regional History Division than in the circles of the History Workshop Group.⁶⁷ As far as the Group is concerned, Nieftagodien's impressions confirm this possibility:⁶⁸

... The proliferation in local histories was associated in the 1980s with the mounting anti-apartheid movement, especially in black working-class localities Although the triennial HW conferences during this period debated important questions related to the character of local communities and the contested meanings of "the local" ... the HW did not systematically engage the emerging theoretical discussions on the production of space and place. Consequently, histories of "the local" largely did not give appropriate attention to the importance of place.

The approach to place in the histories done by the HSRC Regional History Division is more obvious. An extensive study should properly reveal this aspect of their focus. However, as this represents a clear difference between the two 'schools of thought' (as some would want to label them), so there are other debatable features of commonalities and differences.

VIEWING RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES BY THE HSRC REGIONAL HISTORY DIVISION (RHD) AND THE WITS HISTORY WORKSHOP (WH)

Though some historians may contest the possibility of drawing any comparisons between the RHD and the WH,⁶⁹ there is indeed common ground when reflecting on their activities from a purely methodological (and historiographical) perspective. For example, in the formal regional history phase for the regional section at the HSRC and at those universities buying into this phase (with the WH Group operating separately with another *modus operandi*), at least three research modes in the histories of places and their peoples were identifiable: a history from below approach; a strong emphasis on oral recounts by ordinary people within the ambit of social history; and an awareness that research on places and their peoples requires multidisciplinary inputs.⁷⁰ Both could then be labelled

67. Currently the general perception may be that the WH Workshop Group in earlier days was more into some form of social history which was revisionist-like and/or progressive-like in their "place"-related research themes and methodology than others practising regional history. Though this perception is disputed by the author (based on personal experience in the regional history field) and the remarks by Nieftagodien in Nieftagodien, 'The Place of *The Local*', fact remains that this perception must still be addressed in more extensive research.
68. Nieftagodien, 'The Place of *The Local*', 41.
69. See comments on article of E.S. van Eeden by L. Grundlingh, GL49 and GL55, 27 Aug 2012.
70. No comparison has so far been done on the intellectual thoughts of either. For some statements compare Bonner, 'Keynote Address', 20-22; Eloff, '*History from Below*', 38-60; Van Eeden, 'Considering Environmental History within the Transdisciplinary Methodology', 314-329.

a mainly white-centric initiative, but given the time and context of exclusivity in South Africa, it may become a chastising⁷¹ topic for which historians at the time hardly can be regarded as the sole ‘culprits’. The list of differences in the methodology of knowledge production in both schools of thought is perhaps longer.⁷²

Both the RHD and the HW in their first years of existence shared impressions of having approached themes or the ‘complete’ history of places and its peoples in a pseudo-way⁷³ with no inclusivity in mind,⁷⁴ and the WH Group not necessarily considering place as being dominant.⁷⁵ After a decade and more, no research methodology framework for doing history on places and their peoples in various regions was explicitly offered.⁷⁶ Thus the utilising of Victor Skipp’s⁷⁷ local history methodology surfaced in discussions of the RHD researchers, though sometimes with no particular acknowledgement of Skipp’s research methodology framework⁷⁸ or any other for that matter, or intentions to theoretically engage a research methodology framework. A framework by Skipp (only exposed in the early 1980s after three decades of doing local history in England) suggested no particular ‘unifying theme’⁷⁹ or phenomenon (or possibilities of adapted versions of local histories).

The WH on the other hand, at the time when some others were using Skipp as a guideline for research, was more absorbed in the *Alltagsgeschichte*⁸⁰ of black people, and the

71. Compare Lissoni, Nieftagodien & Ally, ‘Introduction: *Life after Thirty*, 11.
72. A broader discussion on this statement will be dealt with in another article by the author.
73. Perhaps internal and external source critique was not efficiently applied by both the HSRC regional division and the History Workshop. Thus the standard historical methodology could have been neglected in working with local sources and memories. See, for example, the impressions of Bonner, ‘Keynote Address’, 20-22; E.S. van Eeden, ‘Die Geskiedenis van die Gatsrand vanaf die vestiging van die Trekkergemeenskap omstreeks 1839 tot die Proklamering van Carletonville in 1948’, (MA-dissertation, PU vir CHO, 1988); E.S. van Eeden, ‘Ekonomiese Ontwikkeling en die Invloed Daarvan op Carletonville, 1948-1988: ‘n Historiese studie’, (PhD-thesis, PU vir CHO, 1992), xvi-xxii.
74. De Klerk argues that the 17 studies that he has explored in some Western Cape areas and the Karoo, have many shortcomings. He suggests that a strong need for more research in the field of regional history should be attended to with a focus on colonial relations between the different races. See De Klerk, ‘Streeksgeskiedskrywing en koloniale verhoudinge’, 1-37; Saunders, ‘What of Regional History?’, 131-140.
75. Compare Nieftagodien, ‘The place of *The local*’, 57.
76. Bonner is of opinion that the HW has never been anti- or atheoretical, but that choices made have not been to the likings of critics. See Bonner, ‘Keynote Address’, 14-15.
77. Skipp, ‘Local History’, 325-391.
78. See Editorial, *Contree*, 21 (1987), 3.
79. See the critique by Sheeran and Sheeran earlier in Sheeran and Sheeran, ‘Discourses in Local History’, 82-83.
80. A. Lüdtkke, *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* Translated by William Templer (USA:Princeton University Press, 1995), 336;

oppressive ways in which these people had to live and/or earn a living in South Africa.⁸¹ The German *Alltagsgeschichte* as a research trend of the eighties and beyond both consciously and unconsciously attracted more attention in the WH circle. Alf Lütke interpreted *Alltagsgeschichte* as being:⁸²

At the center ... are the lives and the sufferings of those who are frequently labelled, suggestively but imprecisely, as the “small people” It involves their work and non-work ..., housing and homeless, clothing and nakedness, eating and hunger, love and hate. Beyond this, certain thematic emphases have emerged, such as the history of work, of gender relations, of the family, and especially of popular cultures. Thus attention is no longer focused on the deeds (and misdeeds) and pageantry of the great, the masters of church and state.

‘Practising’ *Alltagsgeschichte* means to also associate with oral history recordings of ordinary people in communities (as a ‘people’s history’ or ‘History from Below’). Outsiders criticised the WH for being predominantly occupied with a research methodology in which possibilities of subjectivity, simplicity and a politicising of the past featured.⁸³ Industry’s impact on people and especially on the daily life experiences of the black working class,⁸⁴ as well as other themes and/or phenomena such as the development and status of gender, class, capitalism, poverty, industry’s impact on the environment, et cetera,⁸⁵ mainly featured. In some way, the WH appeared to have wanted to address these shortcomings (previously mentioned through the perspectives of Armitage in regional history studies). However, the intention to extend their research focus to be broader and more inclusive about space was lacking.⁸⁶ The WH research, in which the methodological suggestions of Skipp were perhaps traceable, did not necessarily originate with Skipp and/or similar thoughts of others,⁸⁷ but rather from an emphasis associated with some

Bonner, ‘Keynote Address’, 20-22; Saunders, ‘What of Regional History?’, 131-140.

81. Saunders, ‘What of Regional History?’, 131-140; Bonner, ‘Keynote Address’, 20-22; Bozzolli (ed.), *Town and Countryside*.
82. In the 1980s some German historians were active supporters of a “history from below” approach. See Lütke, ‘Alltagsgeschichte’, 278-295; Eloff, ‘History from Below’, 40.
83. L. Callinicos, ‘Popularising history in a changing South Africa’, *South African Historical Journal*, 25, 1 (1991), 22-37; Eloff, ‘History from below’, 38-60; Saunders, ‘What of Regional History?’, 131-140.
84. See the impressions of Saunders, ‘What of Regional History?’, 131-140; Van Jaarsveld, ‘Demokratisering in die geskiedwetenskap’, 42; Eloff, ‘History from below’, 38-60.
85. Van Jaarsveld, ‘Demokratisering in die geskiedwetenskap’, 42.
86. Compare Nieftagodien, ‘The place of *The local*’, 57.
87. For example, in the Johannesburg area where the Wits HW Group operated and supported a “history from below” methodology, it has to be noted that several English and Afrikaans histories (in the Skipp fashion) have already been recorded as serving at least as a contextual

form of social history,⁸⁸ one which closely related to places and their peoples.

Any study of a region's history would be inadequate if it were conducted with the exclusion of interviews with people at all levels about their local experiences (regardless, for example, of 'race' or culture). Even the exclusion of research on the leadership (the 'top down' people) and neglect to consult all available local archival sources may lead to distorted histories. Furthermore, if interviews are not properly conducted in a broader contextual setting – with acknowledged standards and/or recognised secondary sources to confirm and expand on regional/local trends – the historiographical value of such oral histories will be dubious.⁸⁹

REVITALISING AND EXPANDING METHODOLOGICAL HORIZONS

In 2005, the South African historian Bill Freund stated that a new approach to research in urban areas in South Africa should be considered, as the old way (prior to 1994 in the heyday of 'History from Below') was no longer sensible.⁹⁰

Probably the obvious point at which to start is to take up the present problems of the South African city and the discourses relating to those problems in policy circles. The decline of the city centre, the relationship of the private sector to the public sector, the arguments in favour of urban densification, the city and the changing nature of global capitalism, urban environmental issues: these are all important touchstones which could cause us to go back to the drawing boards and rediscover historical problems and themes. Obviously race would not disappear nor would apartheid, but they would be differently configured Policy issues might also point us in the direction of situating South African urban history within a comparative context ... many American universities offer multidisciplinary and intellectually committed programmes in Urban Studies, something entirely lacking in South Africa

The views and suggestions by Freund are endorsed and form part of the themes suggested further on with regard to methodological thinking about doing research in regional history studies.

basis for applying a more focused but extensive research methodology in thematic recordings of histories of ordinary people. See, for example, J. Shorten, *The Johannesburg saga* (Johannesburg: City Council, 1970), 1159; E.L.P. Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad* (Pretoria: Haum Opvoedkundige Uitgevery, 1978).

88. Compare Posel, 'Social history', 29-39; Lissoni, Nieftagodien & Ally, 'Introduction: *Life after Thirty*', 5.
89. E.S. van Eeden, 'Whose environment? Whose nature? – a transdisciplinary discussion on some inhumane actions in the destruction and construction in nature – case study, the Merafong municipal region', *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 2 (2006), 409-430; Van Eeden, *Impressions on conducting and reporting interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary environmental research*, 1-44.
90. B. Freund, 'Urban history in South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, 52, 1(2005), 27.

Nieftagodien of the Wits History Workshop also recently commented that the Workshop currently, with its ‘rubric of “Local Histories and Present Realities” [was] deliberately striving to expand its analytical and theoretical horizons’.⁹¹ As mentioned earlier, researchers engaging with the HSRC’s RHD in the past mainly unconsciously ‘considered’ the Skipp model of doing History in a local/regional area. To start doing so, an interpretative version (by the author) of Skipp’s methodological thinking on research about places and their peoples is provided in Figure 1, followed by discussions on how its research frameworks can be extended and contextualised to provide a more inclusive perspective on themes and trends in regional history (Figures 2.1 and 2.2):

THEMES IN LOCAL HISTORY RESEARCH	SUGGESTED METHODOLOGY(IES)
Topographical background	Follow an all-inclusive chronological approach covering all themes or a thematic-chronological approach to each theme with its own focus (covering, amongst others, documentary and oral sources).
Archaeological information (earliest inhabitants prior to township development), regional/district borders, land settlement and demography)	
Township settlement and management	
Political development	
Law, order and military activities	
Economic development	
Educational development	
Health and social welfare services	
Religious practices	
Communication services: visibility, availability and value	
Social activities (recreational and cultural)	

Figure 1: A research methodology framework for local history proposed by Victor Skipp in 1981 (as visually structured⁹² by E.S. van Eeden)

According to this framework, the local historian has to follow a narrative and descriptive approach to research on places and their peoples. This should include a strict analytical

91. Nieftagodien, ‘The Place of *The local*’, 57.
92. There is no definite order of the discussion of themes in the Skipp model, though it is spontaneously accepted that some themes will be addressed before others, based on historical time.

methodology, not forgetting to be comparative as well. The Skipp framework further suggests that the historical development of all basic themes as fields of research, namely the political, the economical, the cultural, et cetera, could be equally studied in one research project. The variety of fields could also be studied separately and independently (and perhaps under different trends or themes). Skipp did not provide any extensive description of how to approach each of these broad locally identified fields of research if they are researched and discussed as a separate entity, though their multidisciplinary nature is acknowledged.⁹³

Although not explicitly indicated, the Skipp framework (Figure 1) could be approached as research on places and their peoples from top down as well as from the bottom up, as it is also inclusive of oral testimonies and other contributions by all groups/individuals in communities sharing a geographically demarcated area of some kind. To address a specific theme or phenomenon in the histories of peoples in a specific place, as suggested in the Skipp methodological framework (Figure 1), the extended outline in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 could serve as a guideline:⁹⁴

93. Compare Skipp, 'Local History', 329.

94. Suggestions by the author, also complemented by the thoughts of several intellectuals, inclusive of B. Freund. The methodological approach to the theme of class by the British historian E.P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), which apparently has shaped the thinking of many historians in the United Kingdom, could additionally serve as a practical and specific example in the suggested broad framework above.

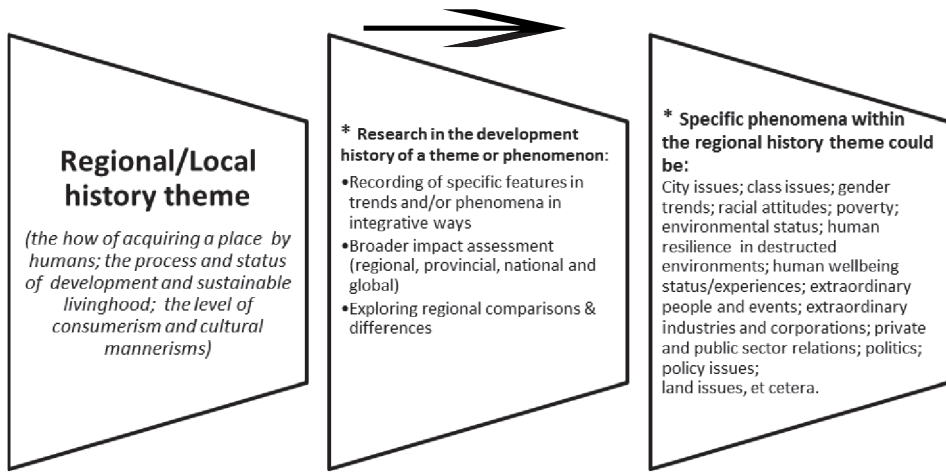


Figure 2.1: **Suggestions for a research framework of a theme/ phenomenon-specific discourse in regional/local histories (places and their peoples)**

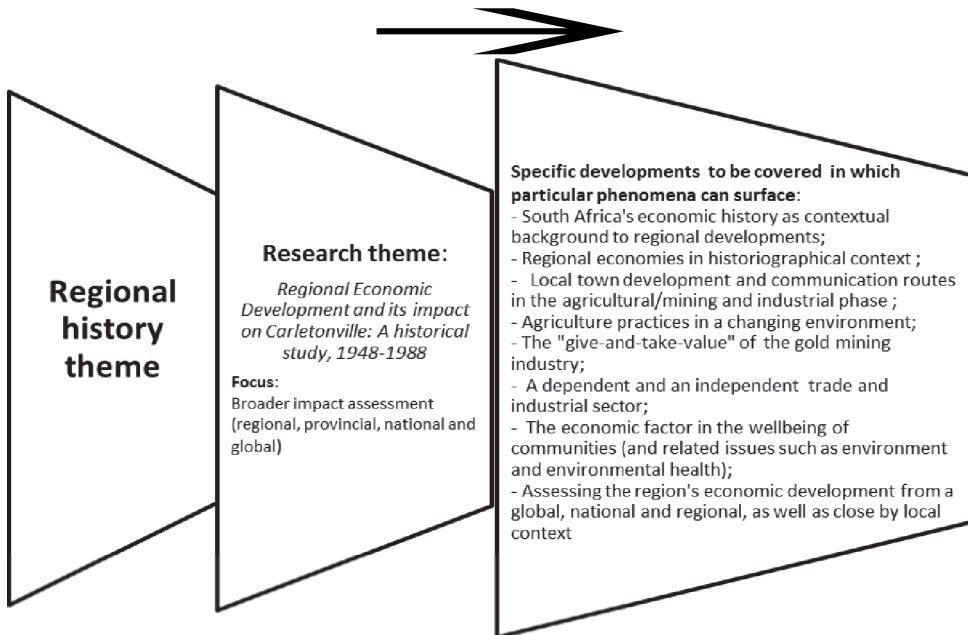


Figure 2.2: **An example of a suggested research framework in a theme-specific discourse on regional/local histories (Partially based on an interpretation of the Skipp model, along with considering the modern social history approach, as well as the general proposed framework in Figure 2.1)**

The following can serve as a summary of the most important criteria required to progress towards a regional history study to support inclusive thinking on themes and particular phenomena, especially for postgraduate students doing research on places and their peoples:

- All narrow histories in a geographic region should sufficiently cover all aspects of developments in a particular theme or phenomenon in a local environment/area (e.g. as in the Skipp model);
- All narrow histories in a defined geographic region (for the purpose of a study) must be representative of all the communities that form part of a particular theme or phenomenon in a local environment/area;
- The research approach and methodology should cover history from top-down and bottom-up angles to encapsulate local developments in all fields, as well as the experiences (well-being status) of a random but representative selection of local inhabitants;
- In the research approach and methodology on a particular local/regional theme, research information from all disciplinary angles should be considered. It could be indirectly through existing research data/reports, but preferably with the consent and input of other disciplinary expertise;
- Although a narrow history on its own serves the purpose of, among others, recording and disseminating knowledge on places and their peoples, its optimal epistemological value (to be considered in broader regional histories) probably lies in combining it with a particular theme(s) with the intention of reflecting its local, regional, national and international impact(s) or status (which could then be a reflection of modern social history).⁹⁵ To my mind, this particular challenge should be a project for mature historians. If postdoctoral students take up this challenge, they will have to be guided by substantially experienced promoters.

The WH also acknowledges the difficulty in writing local histories within national and international reflections⁹⁶ (thus modern social history challenges). According to Nieftagodien, ‘process generalisations related to the regional and national will undoubtedly emerge’,⁹⁷ but they cannot emerge at random and based on the ‘Local Histories and Present Realities’ project of the WH only. To be able to expand to ‘analytical and theoretical horizons’⁹⁸ in the histories of places and their peoples will require an in-

95. Compare, A.M. Grundlingh, ‘Social History and Afrikaner Historiography in a Changing South Africa: Problems and Potential’, http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/4230/1/Albert_Grundlingh_-_Social_history_and_Afrikaner_historiography_in_changing_South_Africa,_problems_and_potential.pdf, 1993, 1-10.

96. Lissoni, Nieftagodien & Ally, ‘Introduction, *Life after Thirty*’, 5.

97. Nieftagodien, ‘The Place of *The Local*’, 57.

98. Quoted from Nieftagodien in N. Nieftagodien, ‘The Place of *The Local*’, 57.

depth revisiting of all baseline theoretical points of departure since the founding of the WH. The same exercise will be required when reviewing the HSRC’s RHD research in various regions.

It is doubtful whether progress towards a very specific methodological structure in doing regional histories is possible within a central unifying theme as suggested by Sheeran and Sheeran.⁹⁹ Communities simply are too complex to recommend an ultimate theme or particular field of history as focus. However, if historians can agree on themes and phenomena that mainly feature in regional histories and if they can also consider a broadly structured research methodology as a standard/baseline undefined framework and point of departure, many narrow research foci on places and their peoples will eventually contain the ‘ingredients’ to be considered in broader regional history reflections. It is not possible for one individual to provide true meaning to a regional historical study because of the comprehensive field of research that must be covered to produce an all-inclusive study of a richer value. Teamwork by historians (and even by experts of other disciplines) might be the only answer. As an example of the comprehensive nature of places and their peoples in a region, Figure 3 serves as an extended draft outline¹⁰⁰ of Figure 1.

<u>Some fields of study</u>	<u>Some themes of study</u>	<u>Considerations for focussed research in theme(s) of study(ies)</u>	<u>Some outcomes of studies for the region/local area</u>	<u>Research methodology possibilities during the process of doing research</u>
<u>Regional history</u> – Local – Rural – Urban – Townships – Family – Community – People – Public	– Settlement patterns – Local governance & management patterns/issues – Urbanisation – Social structures and cultural patterns – Political trends	– Growth, decline and change – Indigenous knowledge systems – Race (all-inclusive and/or specific) – Class (all-inclusive and/or specific)	* Analysing growth, decline and change * Recording the physical experience * Reflecting on the psychological experience of people (e.g. sense of	– Recording knowledge systems – Philosophical – Archaeological – Social/modern social – Multidisciplinary – Perspectives from the bottom up and top down

99. Sheeran and Sheeran, ‘Discourses in Local History’, 82-83.

100. A draft outline developed by the author. This framework is regarded as not final and still open to debate to work towards an acceptable research framework and methodologies when dealing with places and their peoples in regional studies history.

<u>Some fields of study</u>	<u>Some themes of study</u>	<u>Considerations for focussed research in theme(s) of study(ies)</u>	<u>Some outcomes of studies for the region/local area</u>	<u>Research methodology possibilities during the process of doing research</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment - Place - Space - Area - Heritage - Development ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demographic patterns - Infrastructural features - Industrialisation - Economic trends - Agricultural patterns - Ecohealth patterns - Human wellbeing - Education development - Communication patterns - Heritage and tourism development - Spiritual practices - Law, order and military impacts - Land - Environmental crises - Conservation... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender (all-inclusive and/or specific) - Identity - Relations (e.g. colonial; public versus private sector) - Policy issues - Poverty - Environmental destruction and/or remediation and/or other issues - Regionalisation - Globalisation ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * space & place and/or impact byspace, and place due to human activity) * Practising the integrative multidisciplinary experience towards all-inclusive knowledge * Gaining regional, national and global insights * Awareness of differences and/or similarities * Providing perspectives for policy-making decisions ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixed methods - ...

Figure 3: An extended framework of research ideas for progressing from micro/narrow varieties of regional/local history research to a more collective regional understanding of places and their peoples

* The ellipsis at the bottom of each column indicates the openness of possibilities that can be added to the current list.

ADVANCED THINKING IN THE PRACTICE OF REGIONAL HISTORY RESEARCH AS PART OF REGIONAL STUDIES

Knowledge- and skill-inclusive considerations on regional/local research themes and phenomena have become a present-day debate and challenge in especially environmentally related concerns.¹⁰¹ To also integrate or combine the ‘ultimate’ History research approach in regional histories with the methodologies and knowledge repositories of other disciplines is possible, but still not fully ‘tested’ or efficiently suggested in literature.¹⁰² Integrative research opportunities in a traditional multidisciplinary way are not the challenge, but the challenge is rather to efficiently participate in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary modes in order to deliver inclusive knowledge in regional studies.¹⁰³ Heyday researchers in local and/or regional histories usually acknowledged the inevitable necessity of integrative multidisciplinary discourses, yet seldom advised on the ‘how to’ of it.¹⁰⁴ Advanced thinking in this regard is currently progressing¹⁰⁵ and also firmly grounded in philosophies like those of Ken Wilber, as well as in the transdisciplinary discourses by Julie Klein, Getrude Hirsch-Hadorn and others.¹⁰⁶

101. Consider these contributions, because of their multidisciplinary inclusivity: J.T. Klein, W. Grossenbacher-Mansuy, R. Häberli, A. Bill, R.W. Scholz, M. Welti (Eds.), *Transdisciplinarity: Joint Problem Solving Among Science, Technology and Society. An effective Way of Managing Complexity* (Birkhäuser Verlag: Basel, 2001); Van Eeden, ‘Considering Environmental History within the Transdisciplinary Methodology’ 314-329; E.S. van Eeden, ‘A Practical Exploration of the Feasibility of Integrative Multidisciplinary Research from a Broad Ecohealth Perspective in South Africa’, *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 7, 2 (2011), 23-50; R.W. Scholz, D.J. Lang, A. Wiek, A.I. Walter and M. Stauffacher, ‘Transdisciplinary Case Studies as a Means of Sustainability Learning: Historical Framework and Theory’, *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 7, 3 (2006), 226-251.
102. Skipp and others like Nieftagodien and Van Eeden pointed out the inevitability of the inclusivity of a variety of disciplines in the histories of places and their peoples. See also Skipp, ‘Local History’, 325-391; Van Eeden, ‘Considering Environmental History within the Transdisciplinary Methodology’, 314-329; Nieftagodien, ‘The Place of The Local’, 57.
103. Van Eeden, ‘Using a Transdisciplinary Approach for Environmental Crisis Research’, 191-208; A. Goebel, T. Hill, R. Fincham & M. Lawhon, ‘Transdisciplinarity in Urban South Africa’, *Futures*, 42 (2010), 475-483; E.J. Hollingsworth, ‘A **Multidisciplinary** Review of the Study of Innovation’, *A Transdisciplinary Research Program for the Twenty-First Century, Public, South Africa*, 7, 1995.
104. Skipp, ‘Local History’, 325-391; Armitage, ‘From the Inside Out’, 1-2; Van Eeden, ‘Considering Environmental History within the Transdisciplinary Methodology’, 314-329.
105. Van Eeden, ‘Considering Environmental History within the Transdisciplinary Methodology’, 314-329; Scholz et. al., ‘Transdisciplinary Case Studies’, 226-251.
106. K. Wilber, *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality* (Massachusetts, Shambhala publications, 2000), 208; J.T. Klein et.al., *Transdisciplinarity*; B. Nicolescu, ‘Transdisciplinarity as Methodological Framework for Going Beyond the Science-religion Debate’, PA: Metanexus Institute, *The Global Spiral*, 8, 3 (2005); G.H. Hirsch-Hadorn, H. Hoffmann-Riem, S. Biber-Klemm, W. Grossenbacher-

Along with these quests for exploring renewed research options in regional historical studies also comes the need for proper training to accommodate theories and methodologies in this field in tertiary education.¹⁰⁷ Acceptable theory and methodology will be the connections that bind regional historians who are united in their efforts to progress towards research and discussions on places and their peoples.

CONCLUSION

Doing research in History on places and their peoples in South Africa was formalised by the mid-seventies as regional history with an open agenda and no particular defined framework, though its undertaking resulted from an extensive research visit internationally. At the time, different schools of thought engaged in research on ordinary people in particular environments, and thus informally associated with places and their peoples. These undertakings coincide with decades in which South Africa's legal apartheid between 'races' was a detrimental factor in causing dissatisfaction leading to political turmoil,¹⁰⁸ and which implicitly or explicitly impacted on the historiographical landscape¹⁰⁹ of recording some regional histories of South Africa. Though the contextuality of the time may have influenced the ways intellectuals (particularly historians) have recorded places and their peoples in South Africa, the focus of this discussion was mainly aimed at sharing some historiographical impressions on past ways of recording narrow and broader regional history studies amidst the presence of global influences. An understanding of research methodology or methodologies at the time by the regional history division of the HSRC and of the History Workshop Group of Wits was offered in the light of refreshed insights into how research towards regional history studies could advance towards being more structured, more digestible to manage and inclusive regarding approach and thinking about research.

Mansuy, D. Joye, C. Pohl, U. Wiesmann, E. Zemp (eds.), *Handbook of Transdisciplinary Research* (Austria: Springer, 2008); R.W. Scholz et.al., 'Transdisciplinary case studies', 226-251.

107. Compare T. Bender, P.M. Katz, M.C. Palmer, *The Education of Historians for the Twenty-first Century* (USA: American Historical Association, 2004), 1-222; J.E. de Steiguer, *The Origins of Modern Environmental Thought* (Tucson USA: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 202; C. Pyne, 'Environmental History without Historians', *Environmental History*, 10, 1 (2005), 72-74.
108. See Pretorius (Red.), *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, Chapters 17, 19; Giliomee & Mbenga, *New History of South Africa*, Chapter 15.
109. Compare with the impressions of Lissoni, Nieftagodien & Ally, 'Introduction: *Life after Thirty*', 1.

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